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Thursday, 31 March 2005 • Issue No. 829 • Price 30 Yemeni Riyals • Founded in 1991 by Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf

Atawani: Ruling party makes press fuss, unserious about reform

Sincerity of political Dialogue debated

By MOHAMMED BIN SALLAM & HASSAN AL-ZAIDI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The ruling party deliberately creates much press rumpus talking about an alleged dialogue for political reform, said Mr. Sultan al-Atawani, Secretary General of the Nasserite Public Unionist Party.

"They have succeeded, threw official and close newspapers in making up such press fuss which has overshadowed the dialogue itself," added he.

In a press statement to the Yemen Times last Tuesday, al-Atawani said, "The ruling party has done nothing regarding true dialogue. Nevertheless, we hope that they would be earnest enough in their invitation for the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) to hold a responsible dialogue that would result in efficacious solutions to the country's problems. This is the basis for comprehensive political reform which will reinforce the national unity against all

sorts of risks. "Political reform is a necessity to lead the country out of the dark tunnel. It is known that political reform will never be realized unless dialogue includes the political system both in the government and opposition." He further pointed out, "We, in the opposition, support any dialogue aimed at finding out solutions and treating the many problems Yemen is suffering. Political dialogue is the actual relation that should be established between the

authority and opposition." President Ali Abdullah Saleh, when heading the General Committee of the General People's Congress (GPC), Yemen's ruling party, last Friday approved formation of a dialogue committee with the opposition. The governmental side of the committee is to be led by Dr. Abdul-Karim al-Eryani, GPC's Secretary General, provided that it involves opposition parties and NGOs.

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Akhdam shelter catches on fire... again

By YASSER AL-MAYASI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

A huge fire broke out on Tuesday March 28 in one of the Sana'a zones near Adhban School that is resided by Akhdam, a marginalized category in the Yemeni society, left 14 people injured. A number of modest huts and tents were also destroyed by the fire whose causes are still unknown.

This is considered the third fire incident in the zone over the past few years. The horror-stricken Akhdam expressed melancholy over such incidents that compelled them to sleep on the streets. Many of the residents were cited carrying their furniture and kitchen tools to escape the fire to safer places in the neighborhood.

Fire vehicles were also cited at the scene, in an attempt to put out the fire and save the lives of women and innocent children.

Some of the victims confirmed that such fire incidents cause recurrent catastrophes and makes their living standards go from bad to worse, also saying that the government does not pay any attention to them.

They added that they do not receive any help except at the times of catastrophes and most of the previous aids were tents and kitchen tools that were destroyed by the fire.

They demanded that the concerned sides build them houses out of stones

Horror-stricken Akhdam in the street with their kitchen tools after the fire incident. Yemen Times photo by Yasser Al-Mayasi

and cement instead of tents in order to enable them to maintain their dignity and live equally like other people in the society.

They cried that they live in tents where no public services such as electricity and water are provided.

It is worth mentioning that marginalized Akhdam is considered one of the poorest categories that dwell in different

areas all over the country and they mostly live in thatched huts. Most of these people work as street cleaners and their career has become prominent over the last period of time in the main cities.

They proved to be able to make the capital more tidy and clean despite their low payments. With respect to this marginalized category, many researchers hold the view that the role of govern-

ment and the non-governmental organizations operating in Yemen are totally absent and no attention is drawn to their problems.

Contrarily, other researchers hold the view that non-governmental organizations tend to exploit pictures of this marginalized category to receive financial aids in the guise of attempting to improve their standards of living.

At least 43 killed, dozens wounded in Sa'ada

Battles resume between al-Houthi followers and army

By HASSAN AL-ZAIDI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The battles that erupted last Monday between elements of the "Believing Youth" (al-Houthi followers) and government troops have led to the deaths of 15 people, with more than forty wounded. Clashes broke out when some of al-Houthi's followers attacked a military vehicle in Suq al-Anad, between Suq al-Talh and Sa'ada.

An official source in Sa'ada confirmed that the clashes erupted when some of al-Houthi's followers attacked a police station in the District of Sahar and other check-

points along the highway between Sa'adah and Dhehian. These attacks killed seven policemen and wounded twenty others.

Eyewitnesses told the Yemen Times that the death toll reached over 40 and dozens more have been wounded in the ongoing clashes, in which the authorities have used aircrafts. Accurate numbers of casualties have not been confirmed.

Some military divisions began moving toward the area of al-Rizamat and Nushour Valley last Sunday where they believe Badre Addine al-Houthi, father of Hussein al-Houthi, was staying.

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Terrorists plot to bomb western interests

By YASSER AL-MAYASI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The trials for several suspects of a gang planning to bomb Western interests in Yemen, particularly the US and British Embassies and the French Cultural Center in Sana'a, commenced at the counter-terrorism court on March 27.

The session contained a confession from Anwar al-Jailani, that his gang

intended to carry out the bombings, and that Saudi elements were involved in the plot.

Al-Jailani, who is an Iraqi with a Swiss citizenship, responded to the

prosecution that he and his accomplices were supported and authorized by Saudis to bomb the British Embassy.

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Photography exhibition organized by House of Peace

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Under the auspices of Minister of State, Sana'a Mayor Ahmed al-Kuhlani, House of Peace Organization organized Monday, in cooperation with the Capital Secretariat Schools, a photograph exhibition accompanied with theatrical shows, which targeted many schools.

This comes within the two-month campaign, which aims at generating awareness regarding the negative impact of revenge, violence and misuse of small arms by individuals, families, tribes and humans in general.

The Peace House Organization is trying to highlight the suffering of some affected families, giving a brief look at the size of the problem and calamity so that schoolchildren get informed on the serious consequences of revenge and get back home to tell their parents.

House of Peace has been able to provide the bridge of communication and cooperation with schools including building up capacities and boosting students' hobbies and artistic

tendencies such as drawing and activating the values of art, beauty and creation.

This is meant to implant the values of tolerance and peace and acceptance of the otherness in the minds of the young generation so that they combat detrimental phenomena.

House of Peace has also been targeting female students and girl schools pointing out how girls can actively participate in saving their families, and future children from the evil of violence and arms misuse.

Yemen, Saudi exchange 33 suspects

YT NEWS SERVICES

SANAA, Yemen, March 28 : Yemen and Saudi Arabia swapped 33 criminal and terror suspects as part of an agreement to boost security cooperation. A Saudi Interior Ministry official said Yemen handed Saudi Arabia 25 suspects and Riyadh repatriated eight Yemeni nationals wanted

for security violations. "The operation came in line with the security cooperation between the two neighboring countries, which have already exchanged a number of wanted persons," the official said. Saudi Arabia and Yemen signed a security agreement in June 2003 to increase cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

YJS calls for Press Law modifications

Yemeni Journalists Syndicate (YJS) held a meeting with a number of pressmen on Monday March 28 at its headquarter.

The meeting aimed at discussing the punishments and limitations confining freedoms stated in press and publications law.

20 journalists presented a letter to YJS calling it responsible for not conducting its professional duties in protecting the journalistic family from

the various violations.

The journalists in their letter asked YJS chief and other members to make a move in this respect holding intensive and urgent discussions on the draft of modifying the Press Law.

They asked for finding a strategy and following it up at all establishments and concerned authorities in order to insure that the modifications are in favor of press and freedom of expression.

A committee was formed by YJS for

Woman asks for divorce on Mother's Day

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The occasion of Mother's Day would turn into a painful memory in the life of a couple in Sana'a if each side sticks to his opinion.

Al-Thawra Daily reported in its Tuesday issue that 28-year-old husband, Adel, insisted that Mother's Day be celebrated in his mother's home.

Afrah, his 26-year-old wife, rejected the idea saying that last year's celebration was at her mother-in-law's, home and that this year it is her mother's turn.

Having failed to reach agreement, the wife, fighting her tears back, asked for divorce.

Lightening kills four in Yemen

YT NEWS SERVICES

SANAA, Yemen, March 27: Four people were reportedly killed by lightening Sunday during a thunderstorm in Yemen. An official statement said lightening struck and killed two men in the province of al-Hudeida.

A woman in Hajja province and a child in al-Mahweet were also killed.

Earlier this month, eight people were killed by rainstorms in Yemen, including a family of three. Some of them drowned in floods that enveloped their homes.

This winter Yemen recorded the most rainfall it has received in 10 years, following several years of drought.

Training course for police officers on human rights

TAIZ BUREAU

The activities of the training course from March 23rd to April 4th on human rights for a number of police officers are being held at Sofitel Hotel in Taiz.

16 trainees (male and female) are participating in the course.

The opening celebration was started with the recitation of the Holy Quran. It was followed by a speech from Ezaldin Al-Asbahi, Head of Human Rights Information and Training Center (HRITC), who welcome the audience.

He pointed to the most significant accomplishments of the HRITC in training more than 350 police officers, publishing books and the publications that are going to be issued mentioning their contribution to the field of human rights.

Brigadier Dr. Ahmed Al-Ofifi, Director of Taiz Security, said that this course is distinguished in the sense that it includes what is concerned with training and what the trainees will come to know of the suitability of law items and their implementation in the legal work.

Micheal Gifford, British Ambassador in Sana'a, said: "There are many examples within the teachings of Prophet Mohammed that point to the deep-rooted respect for fundamental principles of human rights within Islamic law and teachings.

I believe that the aims of this project, and the activities and training it provides, whether for police officers, diplomats, officials in the Ministry of Human Rights, or for members of civil society are not only within the strictures of the Islamic faith, but aim to enhance the capacity of

Yemen's citizens to uphold those principles within their professional and private lives."

Dr. Ahmed al-Obaid, representative of the UNDP, said that the course is considered a direct practice to contribute to the field of human rights according to the international and local legal system.

He thanked the UNDP partners, the governments of Denmark and The Netherlands for their generous support for the project in general and the Ministries of Human Rights and Interior and Human Rights Center for reinforcing the principles of human rights.

Ali Saleh Abdullah, Deputy Minister of

Social Affairs and Labor and the member of the Human Rights Technical Committee, pointed out that tireless efforts devoted in taking care of human rights in our society.

The evidence is that there are 470 non-governmental organizations practicing various activities and 7 organizations specialized in human rights and 60 international agreements concerning the freedoms and human rights.

Mohammed al-Haj, General-Secretary of the local counsel in Taiz, exposed the concepts and principles that are encouraged by our Islamic religion and what our country has achieved in this respect.

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Oxfam GB is a development, relief, and campaigning organization 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.

In brief

- University of Science and Technology inaugurated on Tuesday March 29 the program of joint cooperation with the Malaysian Open University.
- The Woman and Child Development Society staged on Tuesday March 29 a media day to mature awareness of people about the importance of the national campaign that recommends the possession of personal documents.
- The Palestinian Kan'an Society celebrated on Wednesday March 30 the anniversary of the Palestinian land.
- The event was held at the Faculty of Commerce and Economics, Sana'a University.
- The ninth cycle's meetings of the Yemeni-Tunisian Committee are being held today with the aim to discuss a number of projects forwarded to the committee to endorse them as well as to revise the implementation of previous agreements.
- Yemen was awarded last week a grant of Euro 120,000 from the German Organization of GTZ to foster moun-

- tain tourism in Yemen.
- Book Friends Forum is to be launched today. It is aimed to publish the creative works of writers and help them reach all readers. The Forum is under the auspices of President's son Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh.
- The training course on teaching media women to master journalistic editing arts and ethics was concluded in Sana'a on March 22 with the participation of 25 women from different Yemeni media means. The course was organized by the Media Women Forum.
- Lebanese-Yemeni Brotherhood Society held on Saturday March 26 a commemorative ceremony for late martyr Rafiq al-Hariri
- The third training course on coastal reserves management began at Hadhramout University last week. Some 30 local parties took representing local communities from both Hadhramout and Shabwa coastal reserves.

More calls for children's rights

By FAHMIA AL-FOTIH
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

Under the patronage of Mr. Abdulkareem Al-Arhabi, the Minister for Social Affairs and Labor, the deputy of the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood (HCMC) and the Swedish Organization-Save Children, inaugurated on a national five-day training course for children's rights advocacy.

Ms. Nafesa Al-Jaefi, the secretary general of HCMC, said in a statement to the Yemen Times "today's training course is the result of demands for rehabilitating and training all those people who work in children's rights either in governmental, non-governmental or civil society organizations."

There were two lecturers from Lebanon, Ms. Rania Fazah and Mr. Nizar Rammal.

The Yemen Times met Ms. Rania Fazah, Arab Resources Collective, who commented that "I have read the Yemeni report on the alternative reports and do contact with Mr. Walid Basheer at the Save Children Sweden.

In Yemen I know that there are some problems regarding violence against children as well as child trafficking.

We believe that education is very important in Yemen and we have to work on this issue.

I think we will be working more with NGOs to know more about the priorities and the needs in this country."

US Embassy inaugurates Info Quest Center

The American Embassy's Public Diplomacy Office in Sana'a opened its new research and information services center on the campus of the Yemen America Language Institute on March 21.

The center, which bears the name "Info Quest Center" employs a mix of specialized resources, that provide a vital venue for the locating and accessing of a wide-range

information and information related services.

The IQC is the first of its kind in the region and the only one providing free specialized research services in Yemen.

The IQC has state-of-the-art digital resources to access relevant information from all over the world otherwise not available to the general public. The IQC also has experienced and qualified researchers to provide assistance in multi-levels and through research queries.

Among its services, the IQC provides a PC Lab with a high speed internet connection, a TV Room with DVD-VCR collection of documentaries on a variety of topics.

Symposium on citizenship and democracy

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

A symposium on the importance of civil education in citizenship promotion and democratic transformation started last week.

It was organized by the Women's Forum for Research and Training (WFTR) in collaboration with the Sana'a-based NED organization.

The symposium reviewed the results of research on the concept of civil education in the basic and secondary school curriculum.

The symposium pointed out the significance of human rights education in developing a civil community.

Dr. al-Tarb to Jeddah

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Prof. Abdulaziz al-Tarb is going to participate in the Third Administrative Forum to be held in Jeddah on March 29-30. It's organized by the Saudi Management Association.

Papers will be discussed about the prospects of regional and international changes in terms of management, investment, and management in the public sector.

Mumbai, INDIA, 27 March 2005 - Air Arabia LLC, one of the UAE's national airlines and the first low-cost airline of its kind in the Middle East and the North African region, made its inaugural flight to Mumbai yesterday with Air Arabia officials, guests and press accompanying the flight.

Air Arabia's first flight flew an official delegation; led by Air Arabia's Chairman Sheikh Abdullah Bin Moh'd Al-Thani, CEO Adel Ali and other officials to Mumbai Airport where they were met by dignitaries, press, airport and governmental authorities.

Following the flight, guests were greeted with a reception in the airport.

Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Moh'd Al-Thani said: "India is a key market for us and was part of Air Arabia's initial business plan when our operations commenced; we are extremely pleased to start operations to Mumbai today. We are committed to offering our passengers the best value and the highest quality of service. We look forward to increasing trade and tourism between our two countries.

Our thanks goes to the Indian government and civil aviation authorities for their role in facilitating the start of operations to Mumbai."

Flights will depart Sharjah International Airport daily at 16:40 and arrive in Mumbai at 21:00 local time.

From Mumbai, flights will depart every day at 21:45 and arrive in Sharjah at 23:25 local time. With these convenient timings, business travellers can enjoy the day in Mumbai for meetings and visitors get to enjoy the whole day sightseeing and shopping before returning on the evening flight to Sharjah.

As Air Arabia's fare structure is based on supply and demand and fares increase as more seats are booked on a particular flight, booking early will allow customers to take advantage of

these fares. Air Arabia will offer substantially lower fares than other airlines and will ensure that fares will be at least 15-20% lower than other airlines at all times.

CEO Adel Ali commented: "After announcing the start date for flights to India and simultaneously loading the flight schedule into the system, 2,800 passengers were booked in the first 24 hours.

This is an important route for Air Arabia as by connecting India to our existing routes, we can now offer Indian nationals in the region the opportunity to travel more often at lower fares to India for business or leisure.

We look forward to enabling Gulf residents and tourists that have not been able to afford air travel in the past to start travelling and those who do

travel to do so more frequently."

With the addition of its fifth Airbus A320 earlier this year, Air Arabia will be offering travellers to and from India the very best in customer comfort with brand new aircraft combining the widest and most spacious seats in its class and the largest seat pitch in the market - that of 34 inches - in comparison to 29 and at the most 31 inches offered on most regional airlines.

In addition, Air Arabia offers an in-flight entertainment system with both video and audio choices to passengers on short and long haul routes.

Air Arabia is a Sharjah government owned airline currently flying from Sharjah ten times a week to Alexandria; daily to Bahrain, Beirut, Colombo, Damascus, Doha and Muscat; five days a week to Kuwait;

four days a week to Dammam; three days a week to Khartoum and Aleppo; and two days a week to Assiut, Jeddah, Riyadh and Sana'a.

Committed to enabling customers who have not been able to afford air travel in the past to start travelling throughout the region and those who do travel to travel more frequently, Air Arabia offers tremendous opportunities to travellers who are looking for competitive fares.

It aims to make air travel more convenient and frequent, while providing the lowest fares in the market without sacrificing the standards of safety, quality or service offered.

Bookings can be made through Air Arabia's call centre in Sana'a tel :009671 440001-2-3; the website www.airarabia.com; Air Arabia Travel Shops; or appointed travel agents.

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Sincerity of political Dialogue debated

On the other hand, Dr. Ahmed al-Asbahi, GPC's Assistant Secretary General for Foreign Affairs said in a statement to the Yemen Times that democracy is based on dialogue which is meant to arrive at consensus over major national indisputable issues.

He confirmed that the dialogue invitation is not the result of the recent events in the country. However, they are "originated in GPC's culture and President's beliefs who declared GPC's acceptance to carry the burden of initiating dialogue anew with the opposition as dialogue is always needed in all

cases."

Concerning the dialogue agenda, al-Asbahi mentioned that the dialogue will cover a variety of different issues among them woman's role in political and public lives.

"The theory of national work is based on dialogue. In past dialogues we reached codes of ethics, and recently the dialogue has taken a certain turn because of the events in the country instead of resorting to press battles."

Ruling party's invitation came after official media launched unprecedented attack against the opposition parties

accusing them of implanting mischief and engendering disunity among people as was apparent in demonstrations and riots that took place in the previous days.

The opposition, however, represented in the JMP, accused the ruling party of plundering the public property, imposing unbearable taxes on citizens, and misusing the public post to serve their own economic and suppressive policy as well as misleading the public opinion in order to terrorize the opposition and disseminate hatred and incitement against the opposition.

Battles resume between al-Houthi followers and army

Eyewitnesses said the Kahlan Military Division increased the number of troops in the areas of Noshour and al-Rizamat in preparation to attack al-Rizamat, Dhehian and Al Shafea areas believed to be the main strongholds of al-Houthi supporters, particularly Abdullah Eidhah al-Rizami the second leader in the "Believing Youth". Al-Rizami returned to Sa'ada after the failure of negotiations between himself and the government in Sana'a last Ramadan over the release of detainees and compensation

for properties damaged during the Sa'adah military operations.

The sources emphasized that confrontations broke out once again after the return of Hussein al-Houthi's 86 year-old father.

The old man left Sana'a last week and was received by over 2000 of al-Houthi's supporters. The authorities accused Badre al-Houthi of standing behind his son's supporters, saying that he left the capital suddenly after he was granted safety by the government.

He has been charged with violating his promise of not to support an insurgency against the government.

While interviewed by al-Wasat Newspaper, Badre al-Houthi asserted that the authorities have not kept their promises concerning the release of the 1000 detainees who supported his son's insurgency last year. He claimed that some of his son's followers are still being hunted by the authorities despite the fact that he responded to the government orders by coming to Sana'a.

Terrorists plot to bomb western interests

Al-Jailani, aged 17, denied that the plans included the French Cultural Center but confirmed that Italian Embassy had been a potential target. He said that he was authorized to collect information about the British Embassy as a primary target while he was in Saudi Arabia.

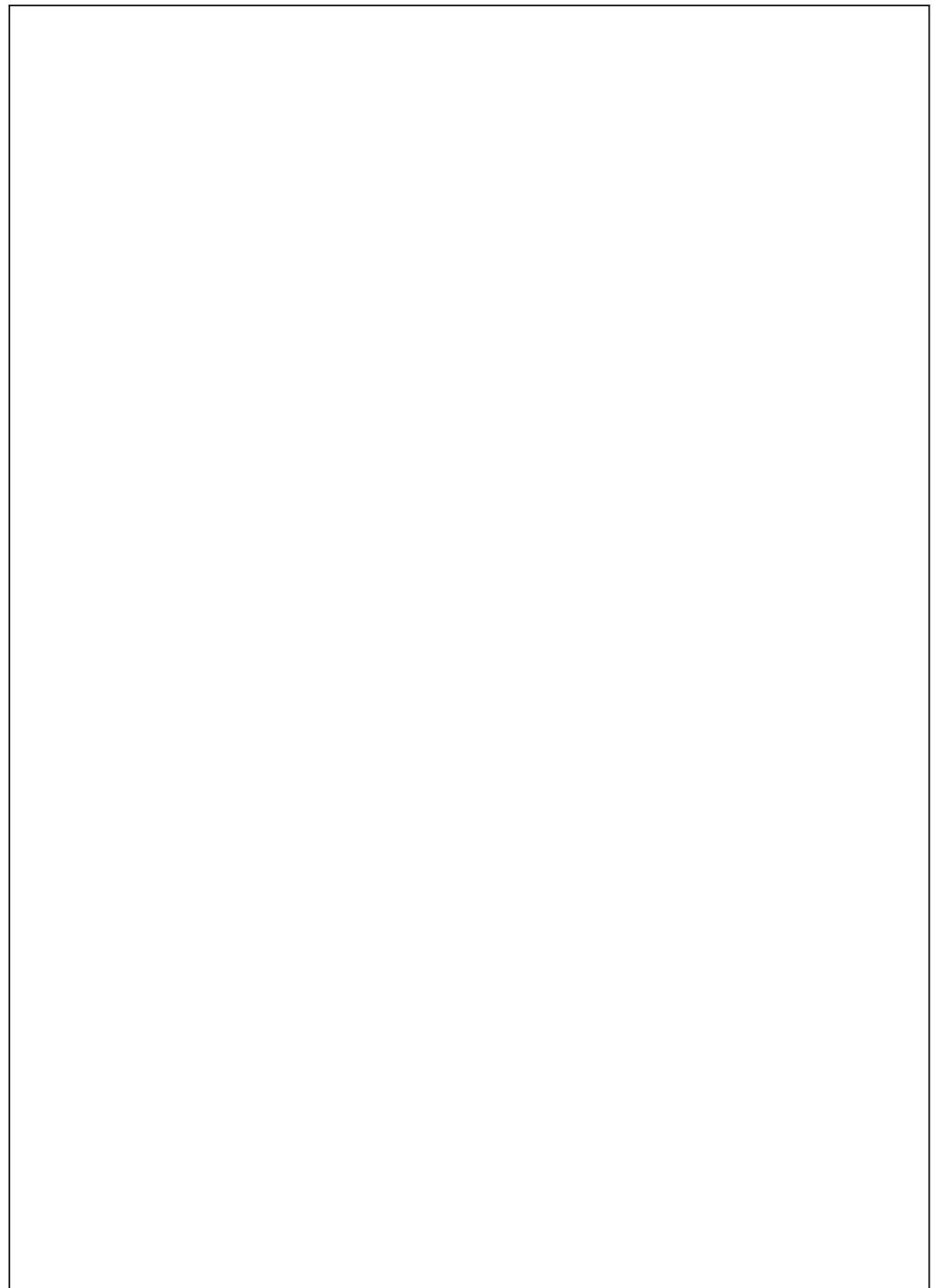
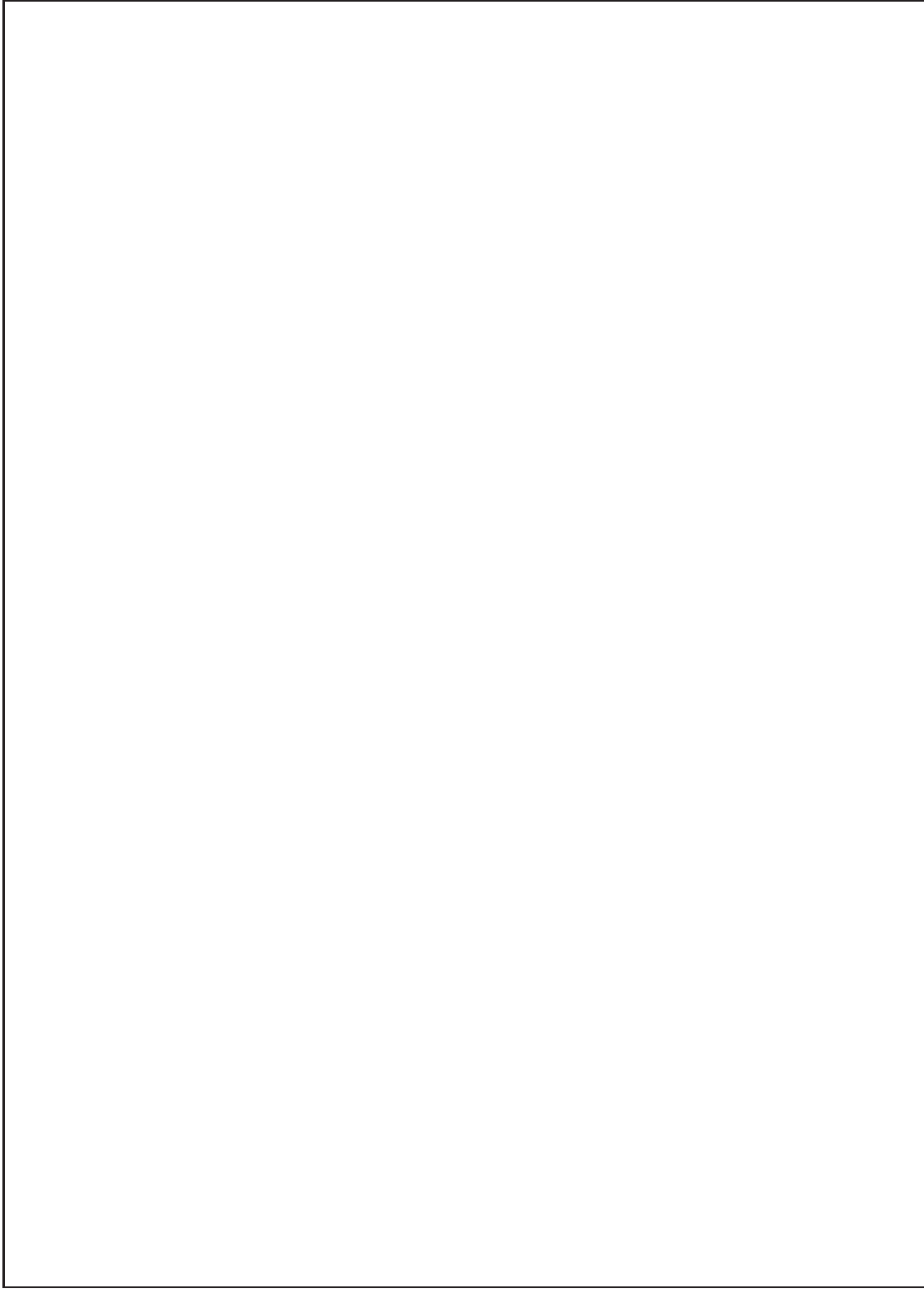
After al-Jailani's confession, some

present claimed that the suspect Abdurrahman Bassurah was ordered by al-Jailani to collect information about the French Cultural Center.

The Judge told the suspects and the many attendees that lawyer Mohammad Naji Allaw refused to attend the session to defend the suspects upon their request in the previous

session, and that Allaw is boycotting the court.

Defense-advocates Mohammad al-Ezzami and Fadhl al-Riashi were appointed to defend five of the suspects while defense-advocate Abdulaziz al-Samawi will defend suspect Anwar al-Jailani. Two of the suspects requested that Dr. Hassan Mujalli to defend them.



Forming an Islamic democracy

BY SOHAIB N. SULTAN

Before we explore the relationship between Islam and democracy, it is important to understand what exactly the idea of democracy entails because too often the notion of democracy is confused with Western culture and society. As such, analysts often dismiss the compatibility of Islam with democracy, arguing that Islam and secularism are opposite forces, that rule of God is not compatible with rule of man, and that Muslim culture lacks the liberal social attitudes necessary for free, democratic societies to exist.

Arguments that dismiss the notion of an Islamic democracy presuppose that democracy is a non-fluid system that only embraces a particular type of social and cultural vision. However, democracy, like Islam, is a fluid system that has the ability to adapt to various societies and cultures because it is built on certain universally acceptable ideas.

So, what is democracy? In its dictionary definition, democracy is "government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives." As such, elections that express popular consent, freedom of political and social mobilization, and equality of all citizens under the rule of law become essential components of a healthy, functioning democracy.

Those who argue against the compatibility of Islam and democracy usually begin by saying that a democracy gives sovereignty or power of rule to the people, while Islam gives sovereignty or power of rule to God, which would not allow for a "government by the people." In other words, these skeptics believe that the opposite of democracy in relation to a religious political system must be theocracy, meaning the rule of God on earth by a religious authority or class. However, this argument presupposes that there is a single religious authority or class within the Islamic tradition that has special access to God's will and therefore has the right and power to impose divine will on the land. This is where the argument fails in relation to Islam, because the Islamic tradition, at least in the majority Sunni teaching, does not recognize a pope-like figure, nor does it preach the establishment of a religious class that has special access to divine will.

In fact, to the contrary, it can be argued that the Qur'an warns against the

establishment of a religious class. The Qur'an says that past religious communities took their religious leaders [for their lords beside God] (At-Tawbah 9:31) and accuses many in the religious class of Jews and Christians of stealing people's wealth and turning people [away from the path of God] (At-Tawbah 9:34). Furthermore, Muslims believe that after Prophet Muhammad there is no one who has direct access to God's will, and therefore no one person or group has the legitimacy or authority to claim a pope- or priesthood-like status in the Muslim community. As such, Islam's political system is not a theocracy.

There is no doubt that an Islamic political system would be bound by the laws, principles, and spirit of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which would serve as the overarching sources of a constitution in an Islamic state. Furthermore, violating or going directly against any sacred teaching of Islam could not be tolerated in an Islamic political system, for doing so would be going against the sources of the constitution. So, in this sense God is recognized as the sole giver of law.

There is no doubt that an Islamic political system would be bound by the laws, principles, and spirit of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which would serve as the overarching sources of a constitution in an Islamic state.

However, implementing the laws of God, as articulated in the Qur'an and Sunnah, necessitates the role of man who is given the position of God's vicegerent or representative on earth (Al-Baqarah 2:30) because of his superior intellect, ability to acquire knowledge, and ability to exercise free will. All of these God-given qualities enable man not only to implement sacred law, but also to interpret sacred law and derive from sacred sources the wise principles that form the basis of new laws needed for an ever-changing world with new ethical and moral complexities.

As such, the Islamic political system does not entail a struggle or competition for power between God and man. Rather, God and man function with a unified purpose to bring social benefit and civilization-enhancing laws to the world. Simply put, God is the giver of law in Whom sole authority rests, while man, as a collective body, interprets and implements these laws as God's representatives on earth. As such, the democratic ideal of a "government by the people" is compatible with the Qur'anic understanding of man's role on earth, and therefore compatible with the notion of an Islamic democracy. It is important to remember, however, that just as man's ability to govern is shaped and limited by the founding constitution in a secular

democracy, the sacred sources of Islam shape and limit man's ability to govern within an Islamic democracy.

Now, if a government is by the people, then it only makes sense that the people choose or elect those who will govern on their behalf. Is the notion of elections compatible with Islamic teachings? The answer to this question can be found in the Qur'an's insistence on using shura, or mutual consultation, in deciding communal affairs (Aal `Imran 3:159, Ash-Shura 42:38), which would include choosing, or if you will, electing leaders to represent and govern on the community's behalf.

Interestingly, a model exists in Islamic history for Muslims in using mutual consultation as a process of selecting a new leader. When Prophet Muhammad was on his deathbed, many of his Companions urged him to name a successor who would lead the community, but the Prophet refused to do so—a clear indication that he wanted the next leader to be chosen through mutual consultation rather than be imposed upon the community. As such, when the Prophet passed away, the most pressing issue for the community was to choose its next leader. Three Companions were nominated to take the post of *khalifah* (caliph) and in the end, the Prophet's closest Companion, Abu Bakr, was chosen to be the community's new leader. Abu Bakr and his three successors, known collectively as the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, were also chosen in a similar fashion that reflected popular consent. So the idea of choosing a leader in accordance with popular will is certainly not a new idea in the Islamic tradition. As such, the notion of elections is compatible with the idea of an Islamic democracy.

However, electing leaders to govern is not enough. Holding those who govern accountable is also an essential principle of democracy if government by the people is to work. First, the Qur'anic teaching of mutual consultation does not end in selecting leaders but forms an essential part of governance in which leaders must conduct their affairs in a non-dictatorial manner. Second, leaders are not left to govern based on their own whims and desires; rather their governance must be in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah (An-Nisaa' 4:59), which form the Islamic State's constitution. Third, the Qur'an mandates that leaders pay back their trusts to those

When Prophet Muhammad was on his deathbed, many of his Companions urged him to name a successor who would lead the community, but the Prophet refused to do so—a clear indication that he wanted the next leader to be chosen through mutual consultation.

entitled to it (An-Nisaa' 4:58), meaning that leaders are responsible to the citizens of the land.

Both Abu Bakr and `Umar ibn Al-Khattab, second caliph of Islam, reflected this notion of accountability in their inaugural addresses when they said to their community, "If I follow the right path, follow me. If I deviate from the right path, correct me so that we are not led

astray." So certainly the role and responsibility of the people within a society extends far beyond choosing a leader within the Islamic political system.

The final two pieces to the puzzle of forming a functioning democracy are the essential notions of equality and freedom in society, without which a people cannot truly govern themselves.

The Qur'an says what means [O humankind, we created you from a male and a female, and We made you races and tribes for you to get to know each other] (Al-Hujurat 49:13). In another verse, the Qur'an says what means [And among the signs of God is the ... diversity of your languages and colors] (Ar-Rum 30:22). These verses and many more make human equality in society and before God an essential teaching of the Qur'an and a core characteristic of an Islamic ethos. As such, any Islamic political system would necessitate the respect for equality and diversity of all men and women.

We are all born free, which makes freedom our destiny. This is reflected strongly in the Qur'an's understanding of human free will, which distinguishes man from the rest of God's creation. The notion of free will necessitates freedom of choice, and this is why the Qur'an so

emphatically states [There is no compulsion in religion] (Al-Baqarah 2:256). The Qur'an also encourages the free formation and mobilization of social and political groups when it says [And let there be a people among you who invite to good and enjoin what is fair, and forbid what is wrong] (Aal `Imran 3:104).

Of course freedom, just as in any other functioning society, is not absolute. There are moral, ethical, and spiritual guidelines for what a society can and cannot tolerate as part of freedom. Islam

does teach a rather conservative morality on most issues ranging from modesty laws to business transaction laws, especially in comparison to Western cultural trends. But if the universality of democracy and its fluidity are true, then it must be able to embrace Islam's value system, which itself is based on universal truths and social benefit for humanity.

Sohaib Sultan is the author of The Koran for Dummies.

Rig Superintendent, Drilling Engineer, Senior Tool Pusher, Tool Pusher/Night Tool Pusher, Driller, Senior Electrician, Senior Mechanic, Mud Engineer, Accountants, HSE Managers, materials Supervisor.

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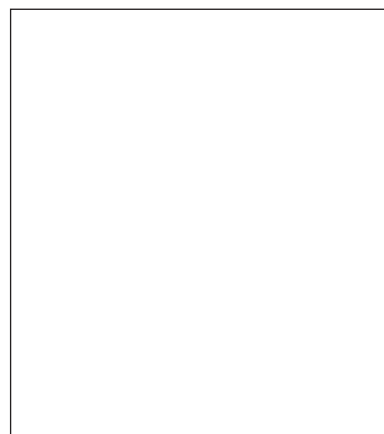
Embassy to move for security reasons

BY EMAD AL-SAQAF
 YT TAIZ BUREAU MANAGER,
 CHIEF EDITOR OF FAMILY AND
 DEVELOPMENT MAGZINE

Britain has shown consistent support for democracy and human rights in Yemen. The Yemen Times met with Britain's Ambassador in Sana'a, Mr. Michael Gifford to discuss his views on developments in Yemen.

Mr. Gifford commented that Yemen has made significant advances in human rights, but that there is still more work to be done. He expected the future to be better, and described the current status hadn't yet exceeded to the degree of perfection.

He commented that it is nice to have a ministry that deals specifically with human rights. He doesn't want to record my thanks to Amat Al-Aleem Al-Souswah, Minister of Human Rights, for her complete cooperation with us. He also expressed his readiness for any kind of help that may contribute to the tasks of



Mr. Michael Gifford, British Ambassador

this ministry in the field of human rights.

Mr. Gifford said he believes that the most important thing the embassy is doing is its support for democracy and human rights. There is an intention to commence a project supporting the political system that will be presented to the parliament and some of the governmen-

tal authorities. It includes training programs for a number of governmental authorities to help raise awareness of the principles of human rights and other liberties that are rooted in the Islamic religion.

There is also a project supported by the embassy and executed by an international organization concerned with women, illiteracy, and public health. There will be some projects to be presented to Yemen such as the project of the economic development at the cost of 11-12 million pounds.

When asked about Yemen's request for membership of the Commonwealth Union and Britain's refusal, he said that any country has the right to request membership and that all members of the union (not just Britain) must agree.

Mr. Gifford says that the embassy headquarters will be re-located close to the US Embassy, although this is not political. They have been eager to strengthen security protection for the embassy with the help of the Yemeni government.



IRAQ WRAPUP 11: Iraq parliament in uproar over stalemate

BAGHDAD, March 29 (Reuters) - Iraq's parliament erupted in acrimony at only its second sitting on Tuesday and journalists were thrown out after lawmakers berated leaders for failing to agree on a new government, two months after historic elections.

There were no reports of damage. Two months after more than 8 million Iraqis braved suicide bombers and insurgent threats to vote in the Jan. 30 polls, many are increasingly angry that despite haggling no agreement has been reached on forming a government.

contributing to the delay in forming of government. Shi'ites and Kurds also say Sunni Arabs need to speed up the nomination of a speaker.

When parliamentarians were told that despite last-minute talks that delayed the session no agreement had been reached, even on the post of parliamentary speaker, several stood up to say leading politicians were letting down the Iraqi people.

"It is a farce," said 30-year-old taxi driver Mohammed Ahmed Ali.

MPs said they would meet again on Sunday to try to agree a speaker. The Shi'ite alliance and the Kurdish coalition have agreed that the speaker should be a Sunni Arab, to give the Sunni minority more involvement in politics.

"The Iraqi people who defied the security threats and voted - what shall we tell them? What is the reason for this delay?" Hussein al-Sadr, a politician in the bloc led by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, asked the assembly before the news blackout.

Stalemate

The mainly Shi'ite alliance, which holds just over half the seats, and the Kurdish coalition that came second in the polls have been arguing for weeks on a cabinet line-up.

Most of the 17 Sunni Arabs in the 275-member parliament favour Adnan al-Janabi as their candidate, but he is an ally of Allawi, a secular Shi'ite who has so far declined to join the government, saying his bloc will move into opposition.

As the meeting grew heated, the interim speaker ordered journalists to leave and Iraqi television abruptly switched to Arab music.

They have been trying also to involve Sunni Arabs, who dominated Iraq under Saddam Hussein but have been left with little representation because most voters in Sunni Arab areas stayed away from the polls.

The Shi'ite alliance is backing Fawaz al-Jarba - a Sunni who joined their bloc. But other Sunnis are against this as he is seen as too close to the Shi'ite alliance.

Allawi walked out of the session shortly afterwards.

But no deal has been reached, and several government officials say the delay has stalled key projects, deepened chaos and hampered efforts to defeat the Sunni insurgency.

Mishan al-Jibouri, a Sunni Arab politician, said if Jarba was pushed through as speaker - which the Shi'ites could do with their majority - Sunni Arabs would walk out of parliament, leaving attempts to draw them into politics in tatters.

"You can say we are in a crisis," Barham Salih, a leading Kurdish politician, told reporters.

Political uncertainty also dents Washington's plans to increasingly hand over security to Iraqi forces and cut back foreign troops.

Long road ahead

Once a speaker is agreed, the National Assembly's next task will be to elect a president and two vice presidents. A two-thirds majority is

Ahead of the meeting blasts echoed across Baghdad and a militant group said in an Internet statement it had fired four mortars into the fortified Green Zone where politicians were meeting.

needed for that, which will mean the Shi'ites and Kurds must reach a deal to muster enough votes.

The presidential triumvirate will then have two weeks to choose a prime minister, who will then appoint a cabinet.

"It could take up another two weeks to name a cabinet after the presidential council names a prime minister," said Jawad al-Maliki, a Shi'ite politician.

The Shi'ites and Kurds have broad agreement that Shi'ite Ibrahim Jaafari will be the next prime minister with Kurdish politician Jalal Talabani taking the president's post.

But officials have not agreed on the distribution of cabinet posts.

The Kurds are expected to retain the Foreign Ministry, with the Defence Ministry going to a Sunni Arab.

But the key Oil Ministry is a source of disagreement - the Kurds covet it, but the Shi'ite alliance insists it should get the ministry.

"The Kurds will have enough key posts. We insist on retaining the Oil Ministry," Maliki said.

As politicians focused on horse-trading, insurgents pressed on with their campaign of violence.

Three Romanian journalists - Marie Jeanne Ion and Sorin Miscoci of Prima TV and Ovidiu Ohanesian of Romania Libera newspaper - were

UDT's Interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi (R) sits next to President Ghazi al-Yawar (C) and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Islamic Revolution party, in Iraq as they attend the second session of the FRXQWU parliament in Baghdad, March 29.
REUTERS

kidnapped in Iraq on Monday, officials said.

In Kirkuk, a car bomb exploded near an Iraqi army patrol and the convoy of a local official, killing one person and wounding 15.

In Basra, the head of the South Oil

company survived an assassination attempt, police said.

Insurgents posted video footage on the Internet showing them shooting dead three Arab drivers who said they worked for a Jordanian firm that transports goods to U.S. forces.

Sharon set to win vote crucial to Gaza pullout

JERUSALEM, March 29 (Reuters) - Jewish settlers vowed on Tuesday to take their protests to the streets to block Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to remove them from Gaza, as the project was about to clear its last hurdle in parliament.

A deal with opposition lawmakers was expected to see the national budget passed later in the day, smoothing the way for Sharon to push ahead with Israel's first dismantling of settlements on occupied land Palestinians want for a state.

Frustrated in efforts to torpedo Sharon's Disengagement Plan, settler leaders have raised the spectre of civil war but have urged their followers to resist without violence.

Officials have given settlers until the last week of July to accept compensation and leave voluntarily or face eviction.

But settler leaders have pledged to send hundreds of thousands of protesters into the territories slated for evacuation and which many say is theirs by biblical birthright.

The army intends to seal off the areas ahead of the pullout.

"We will block the disengagement with our bodies," Gaza settler Arieh Yitzhaki told Israel Radio.

Sharon won a key victory on Monday when parliament rejected holding a pullout referendum, a proposal he had branded a delaying tactic by opponents of a plan most Israelis support.

Sharon, once considered the godfather

of the settlers' cause but now reviled by them as a traitor, was expected to overcome the last legislative obstacle with approval of the 2005 budget.

Failure to pass the 264.4 billion shekel (\$61 billion) package by March 31 would trigger a snap election, delaying the withdrawal from Gaza or possibly shelving it altogether.

Despite a rightist mutiny in his own Likud party, Sharon assured passage of the budget by striking a deal with the centrist opposition party Shinui.

Its 15 votes will give Sharon up to 68 votes in the 120-seat Knesset.

"Sharon will be the big, strategic winner" once the budget is ratified, said political analyst Hanan Crystal.

pullout plan as a catalyst for negotiations. Hopes have been raised by a ceasefire that has largely held since Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas took office in January, succeeding the late Yasser Arafat.

However, Israeli far-rightists say ceding land after the Palestinian uprising would be a "reward for terrorism".

"We don't have any other options to stop this horrible plan so we have to go out on the streets," settler leader Shaul Goldstein told Reuters.

The YESHA council of settlements vowed to foil any Gaza withdrawal. "He who believes it is possible to implement the destruction of communities and the expulsion of families is deluding himself," it said in a statement.

While settler leaders insisted on non-violence, security officials fear a hard core of ultranationalists could use more extreme methods. Sharon has been the target of death threats in recent months.

Several thousand protesters rallied against Sharon outside parliament on Monday, but their numbers were small compared to other recent demonstrations.

Opinion polls show about two thirds of Israelis favour quitting Gaza. Settlers facing evacuation are to receive government compensation to buy new homes and businesses.

Officials expect most to leave peacefully but one official said recently up to 300 families might have to be expelled.

Israeli soldiers detain three Palestinian police officers (C) during an army patrol in the West Bank city of Hebron March 29. Palestinian witnesses said that the Israeli army detained three unarmed Palestinian policemen. The army has not yet commented on the incident.
REUTERS

Gazaplan

Sharon's plan calls for evacuation of 8,500 Israelis living in 21 Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and four out of 120 settlements in the northern West Bank.

Sharon views the settlements in those areas as liabilities in terms of cost and security.

But he has made clear that Israel will now tighten its hold on large swathes of West Bank land where the vast majority of its 240,000 settlers live.

Many Palestinians are wary of Sharon's plan. They want all of the West Bank and Gaza for a state.

Still, U.S.-led mediators see the

Armed man holds hostages briefly in Turkish school

ISTANBUL, March 29 (Reuters) - An armed man took a teacher and a laboratory assistant hostage in an Istanbul school on Tuesday after fleeing police but later released them both, officials said.

A police officer said the hostage-taker had been injured in the incident and had been taken to hospital.

It was not clear how he was injured.

Police pursued the man, armed with a gun, as he ran into the school and took

the two hostages in a laboratory.

Pupils at the school, which television channels said numbered around 2,000, remained in classes in a different part of the compound during the ordeal.

Special force police armed with rifles had taken up positions around the laboratory while negotiators spoke with the hostage-taker before he released the two.

It was not immediately clear why police had been chasing the man.

Woman MP wants to run for president in Iran

TEHRAN, March 29 (Reuters) - A female lawmaker said on Tuesday she wanted to stand in Iran's presidential elections in June, despite the fact no woman has ever been allowed to run for president in the Islamic state.

The Guardian Council watchdog, a panel of hardline clerics and jurists which vets the suitability of election candidates, in January reiterated its constitutional interpretation that only men could stand for president.

Reformist clerics and politicians have repeatedly challenged the Council's opinion, saying women should be allowed to run for president, but to no avail.

Rafat Bayat said she hoped the Council would change its mind and allow her to compete in the June 17 vote.

"Governing a country needs

someone with revolutionary ideas based on Islamic laws and an understanding of peoples' problems ... These are qualities both men and women can have," she told the semi-official Fars news agency.

Iranian women enjoy better rights than in many neighbouring Gulf countries but are poorly represented in senior public positions.

Outgoing reformist president Mohammad Khatami appointed just one woman to his cabinet and there are only a dozen female lawmakers in the 290-seat parliament.

Khatami is ineligible to stand for a third consecutive term in the June elections. Political analysts expect his successor to come from a group of more conservative politicians vying for the post.

Lebanon pro: Syrian PM expected to resign in two days

BEIRUT, March 29 (Reuters) - Lebanon's pro-Syrian prime minister is expected to step down this week after he failed to persuade opposition figures to join a government that could run the country until elections in May, associates said on Tuesday.

Omar Karami resigned a month ago after coming under immense popular pressure from Lebanese angered by the killing of his predecessor Rafik al-Hariri. But he was reappointed by parliament to form a national unity government bringing together both anti-Syrian opposition members and pro-Syrian loyalists.

Lebanon's opposition, which blames Syria and the Lebanese security agencies it backs for Hariri's death, has refused to join any government until after elections it believes will give it a majority in a chamber now largely allied to Damascus.

"I expect Karami to resign on

Thursday," pro-Syrian Environment Minister Wiam Wahhab told Reuters after meeting Karami.

An aide to Karami also said he would go within two days.

If the prime minister resigns, President Emile Lahoud would have to consult with deputies once again to choose a new prime minister, a process that could delay the general election.

Opposition figures accuse Karami of procrastinating to avoid elections and have urged him to form a government without them.

His old cabinet still holds office in a caretaker capacity.

Karami and Lahoud are both due in Cairo on Wednesday to meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, an Egyptian government official said.

It was not clear what they would discuss.

Hariri's killing in a Feb. 14 bombing prompted the biggest street

protests in Lebanon's history and plunged the tiny country into its most serious political crisis since the end of the 1975-1990 civil war that divided it along sectarian lines.

Christian, Druze and Sunni Muslim opposition figures, many of them wartime foes, seized upon popular anger to demand Syria withdraw forces it first poured into Lebanon early in that war.

SYRIAN PULLOUT Facing immense international pressure, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has promised to withdraw all troops, intelligence agents and equipment from its neighbour.

Damascus has completed the first stage of a two-phase withdrawal plan, pulling back to the Bekaa valley and withdrawing nearly half the 14,000 troops it kept in Lebanon.

More than 2,000 Syrian troops have left in the past week, inching Syria closer to ending its 29-year

military domination.

About a dozen Syrian vehicles crossed the border on Tuesday, witnesses said.

More were packing in the southwest of the Bekaa.

"Assad has given instructions for the withdrawal to happen quickly," Lebanese Defence Minister Abdel Rahim Mrad told Reuters.

"But nothing has been set."

A Syrian-Lebanese military committee is due to meet next week to set a timeline for withdrawing the remaining forces.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said he expects Syria to complete the pull-out before elections.

The U.N. Security Council was expected to discuss this week ordering an international probe into Hariri's death in line with the results of a U.N. fact-finding mission to Beirut. Karami has said he wanted to form only a broad national unity

cabinet.

He has not officially been approached about leading a possible smaller cabinet of relatively non-partisan figures both sides could accept, sources in his office said.

"It is obvious they were wasting all this time, a month and a few days, so as not to form a government and avoid elections," Druze opposition lawmaker Ghazi al-Aridi told Reuters.

"The talk is now of a government of 10 people, trusted, credible people, able to hold parliamentary elections."

But Environment Minister Wahhab said he did not believe a new government would be formed any time soon.

"We have entered a long stage," he said.

"No one has to give them a government they are comfortable with ... If they want elections they must enter a national unity cabinet."

Militant group kills three Arab drivers in Iraq: Web

DUBAI, March 29 (Reuters) - Islamic militant group Army of Ansar al-Sunna shot dead three Arab drivers in Iraq and posted an Internet videotape of the killings on Tuesday.

The hostages on the tape said they worked for a Jordanian firm that transports goods to U.S. forces. The video later showed gunmen repeatedly shooting the three men outdoors.

"I advise everyone to repent and quit their jobs," said one hostage in the tape, which was posted on an Islamist Web site.

"I regret what I have done," said another.

The tape's authenticity could not be immediately verified.

"While the brave soldiers of God defend the honour of Muslims ... there are those who sell their religion and honour for cheap earthly interests by working as servants beneath the crusaders' feet," Army of Ansar al-Sunna said in a statement.

New Kyrgyz leader tells silent officials to behave

BISHKEK, March 29 (Reuters) - To stony silence, Central Asia's newest leader told civil servants in Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday to keep their hands out of the state till and their noses out of politics.

"We are all servants of the people. We must all serve the people," Kurmanbek Bakiyev said in his first meeting with government officials since coming to power in a coup last Thursday that forced President Askar Akayev into exile in Russia.

Kyrgyzstan's acting president spoke to about 300 officials crammed into an auditorium in the main government building, which is still not cleaned up after it was besieged by thousands of opposition protesters — led by Bakiyev.

They listened to the about 30-minute speech in complete silence. Bakiyev made clear he felt they were partly responsible for rigging the latest parliamentary election in which the opposition was crushed, triggering fury that led to the March 24 coup.

"We have all seen what happens when the executive branch gets involved in elections.

I think we will not get into that now ... I think that staff should get back to work," he said.

A supporter of UJVWDQ s outgoing parliament argues with backers of the new chamber in the capital Bishkek, March 29. REUTERS

"We need to deal with the economy ... A huge part of the state system was devoted to the election process. That is not a secret.

Fighting corruption and paying pensions and benefits is our number one priority now."

Most people in the mountainous ex-Soviet state struggle to get by on a dollar a day.

The country has little natural wealth. Its few exports include some gold and hydroelectric power to its neighbours

but about 10 percent of national income comes from renting out two military bases to Russia and the United States.

The opposition has accused officials in the previous government of pocketing much of what wealth the country had and keeping the bulk of the 5 million Kyrgyz in abject poverty.

"We will set up public hotline so that people can complain against corruption," Bakiyev added.

"Whoever is ... on my staff, if I hear that they got promoted for money or

because they are someone's relative, or they belong to particular clan, then this person will be removed immediately."

Bakiyev, who was briefly prime minister and a provincial leader during Akayev's 14-year rule, started his speech with decisive and strong language.

But he looked unsettled by the silence of his audience.

They declined his offer to ask questions, quietly filing out of the auditorium at the end of the speech.

The opposition, whose leaders are mostly former insiders, appears to have consolidated its control in the country after the violence and looting that followed the coup and questions over whether the new leadership had any legitimacy to rule.

On Monday, the newly elected parliament finally took over and named Bakiyev prime minister, a position that automatically made him acting president.

The country is due to hold a presidential election on June 26.

But some analysts say that with few clear policies on offer there is a danger that Kyrgyzstan could end up following the more autocratic style of government adopted by its Central Asian neighbours.

Indonesia president delays Australia trip for quake

JAKARTA, March 29 (Reuters) - Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has postponed a planned visit to Australia until next week after a huge earthquake devastated the island of Nias off Sumatra, officials said on Tuesday.

"On the Australia trip, it has been cancelled.

We will have a top-level emergency meeting soon," Information Minister

Sofyan Djajil told Reuters, referring to a planned March 29-30 visit.

A presidential spokesman said that Yudhoyono would visit Nias "in one or two days".

The overnight quake is believed to have killed at least 1,000 people.

An Indonesian diplomat close to preparation for the Australia trip told Reuters that the president's visit had been rescheduled for April 3-4.

A video image shows a relative mourning over the body of a child after a strong quake on Nias island near the Indonesian island of Sumatra March 29. More than 1,000 people are believed to have died in a massive earthquake that hit a small island off western Indonesia overnight, but panic across Asia that it would trigger another devastating tsunami soon receded. REUTERS

Libyan court to rule on Bulgarian nurses in May

SOFIA, March 29 (Reuters) - Libya's supreme court will rule in May on an appeal by five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor who are facing the death penalty for infecting hundreds of children with the HIV virus, media reported on Tuesday.

Bulgarian state radio reported the court said it would announce its decision on May 31.

The medics, sentenced to death by firing squad last year for deliberately infecting over 400 children with HIV, insist they are innocent.

A protestor holds a picture of the Bulgarian nurses sentenced to death in Libya during a protest in front of the Libyan embassy building in Sofia, March 29. A Libyan court began hearing an appeal on Tuesday by five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor sentenced to death for injecting Libyan children with the HIV virus. REUTERS

S.Africa AIDS activist recovers after heart attack

JOHANNESBURG, March 29 (Reuters) - Leading South African AIDS activist Zackie Achmat, who was nominated for a Nobel peace prize last year, is recovering at home after suffering a heart attack, a spokesman said on Tuesday.

The attack on Thursday followed a stressful period for the 43-year-old Achmat, who is HIV-positive, Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) spokesman Nathan Geffen said.

"He's doing fine now. He's at home actually but he's going to need to rest for a few weeks," Geffen said.

"The doctor said it was unlikely to be related to his HIV and his anti-retroviral treatment."

Achmat was nominated for a Nobel

peace prize last year, together with his TAC lobby group, for their work in pressuring South Africa's government to provide life-prolonging anti-retroviral drug treatment in public hospitals.

Following years of domestic and international pressure, the government unveiled an anti-retroviral roll-out in 2003.

But progress has been slow, with only around half the 53,000 people targeted receiving treatment thus far.

Critics accuse President Thabo Mbeki's government of still not doing enough to fight the world's biggest AIDS epidemic.

More than 5 million South Africans are infected with HIV — more than 10 percent of the global pandemic.

French churches urge "yes" vote on EU constitution

PARIS, March 29 (Reuters) - France's Christian churches spoke up for the European Union constitution on Tuesday and urged voters not to turn a referendum on the treaty into a plebiscite over Turkey's entry bid or local political issues.

Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox leaders said the constitution, which voters will judge in a referendum on May 29, "brought substantial improvements to the existing treaties".

Opinion polls have shown a growing majority of voters ready to reject the treaty, a move that threatens to scuttle the whole project. Critics cite Turkey and dissatisfaction with French government policies as reasons to oppose the constitution.

"The referendum has no other object than to accept or reject the

treaty," the church leaders wrote in a joint letter.

"The purpose is to decide on the treaty itself, without being distracted by purely national issues or side debates.

"Turkey's possible membership does not depend at all on the acceptance or rejection of the treaty."

The letter argued the constitution deserved support because it respected human dignity, expanded democratic procedures and recognised the contribution religion made to modern society.

"Europe today faces the challenge of assuring the well-being of all its inhabitants while contributing to peace and development in the rest of the world," it said.

"As a founder member of the EU, France and the French have a special

responsibility to meet this challenge."

The letter was signed by Metropolitan Emmanuel Adamakis, president of the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops of France; Pastor Jean-Arnold de Clermont, president of the French Protestant Federation; and Archbishop Jean-Pierre Ricard, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of France.

Europe's Catholic bishops' conferences endorsed the treaty last week and urged the faithful to back it despite the fact it did not mention the continent's Christian heritage, an element the Vatican campaigned hard to have included in the text.

The French churches' letter said: "While it does not honour the past with an explicit reference to the Christian heritage, the treaty takes care of the present and the future."

The issue of mentioning Christianity in the constitution's preamble made headlines last year, but religious leaders say the most important part for them is Article I-52, which promises "an open, transparent and regular dialogue" with churches.

This would give them an official status in the EU with a right to be consulted on issues of concern to them. Some militant secularists say this is a reason to reject the text.

The latest opinion poll on the French referendum, published in Tuesday's edition of Le Figaro newspaper, said 54 percent of voters opposed the treaty.

The Ipsos polling group said its survey found many "no" voters were dissatisfied with the economic policies of France's conservative government, which backs the treaty.

Russia to use YUKOS: style moves again-Kremlin aide

MOSCOW, March 29 (Reuters) - Russia will continue to use legal measures to stamp out tax evasion even if contentious cases such as the one involving oil company YUKOS hurt the country's image, a top Kremlin adviser said on Tuesday.

"No one wants to repeat the YUKOS thing again, but even if it is negatively affecting the country's image, such measures will continue to be used when it comes to taxes," said Igor Shuvalov, one of President Vladimir Putin's most loyal supporters, at a conference.

Economists say Russia's investment climate has deteriorated dramatically since the attack on YUKOS started in 2003 to recoup taxes.

A number of foreign companies have said they might review their strategy for Russia and think twice before investing.

YUKOS, once one of Russia's most successful companies, is now crippled by a \$27.5 billion back-tax claim and stripped of its biggest oil-producing asset.

The former oil major says the state's attack is retribution for the political activities of its former boss, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, now in jail and accused of fraud and tax evasion.

He could face 10 years in a labour camp if convicted. Most YUKOS shareholders and managers have fled Russia for exile in the United States, Israel and Britain.

"Everyone has to pay taxes," Shuvalov said.

"Even if it were not YUKOS itself, there would have been some other company that would have had to answer for not paying taxes."

YUKOS's downward spiral has set the tone for the Russian equity market for more than a year and has sent many top Russian companies — owned like YUKOS by billionaires who built them from nothing in the 1990s — scurrying to prove their probity.

YUKOS filed for bankruptcy protection in the United States in December in a failed bid to prevent the Kremlin from auctioning off its key

oil production arm, Yugansk.

Yugansk was sold to a previously unknown company, which itself was taken over by state-run oil group Rosneft.

Chaired by another Kremlin adviser, Rosneft is seen by some analysts as the frontrunner to pick up YUKOS's remaining assets if the dismantling resumes.

Rosneft is due to merge with state gas monopoly Gazprom. Some analysts have criticised the plan, saying it was part of Putin's plan to consolidate his power in the key energy sector.

But Shuvalov strongly defended the move.

"This merger is very good for the economy. I've received clear instructions from the president, and the deal will be finished.

And that will happen very soon," Shuvalov said.

"It's a good step and has nothing to do with strengthening the role of the government in the economy."

Russian YUKOS oil magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky smiles as he stands behind bars during his trial in Moscow, March 29. REUTERS

Colombia says moving toward peace talks with rebels

BOGOTA, Colombia, March 28 (Reuters) - Colombia said on Monday it was moving toward peace talks with the Andean country's second largest rebel group and called for international support.

The 5,000-strong National Liberation Army, known by its Spanish initials ELN, at the same time asked for the help of Brazil, Venezuela and Spain in ending the group's 40-year war against the state.

Since June of last year, the ELN and the government of President Alvaro

Uribe have been in contact. Mexico acted as an intermediary.

"We are studying initiatives aimed at assessing the success of this exploratory phase and moving toward a peace process," Colombian Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo said.

It was a rare statement of optimism that peace with the country's Marxist guerrilla's might be possible.

"The government and the ELN highlight the effective assistance of Mexico and call for international assistance

once this new drive for national peace comes to fruition," said Restrepo's statement.

The ELN meanwhile sent a letter to the left-leaning presidents of Brazil, Venezuela and Spain to help the country reach peace and create "a hopeful democracy that will make social justice possible."

The three presidents will meet with Uribe for a summit on trade and terrorism in Venezuela on Tuesday.

A peace deal will not be easy. The ELN wants Uribe to free ELN

prisoners held in Colombian jails and negotiate a bilateral cease-fire.

Uribe has said the ELN, which funds itself by kidnapping, must unilaterally disarm if talks are to take place.

While Colombia's biggest guerrilla force, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, and right-wing paramilitary militias have grown rich on the country's huge cocaine business, the ELN has sworn off drug smuggling.

This leaves it at a financial disadvantage that may help prompt it to fol-

low the steps of former rebel group M-19, which in 1989 negotiated a deal to disarm.

Uribe, an ally of Washington, criticized the previous government's failed effort at negotiating with the FARC.

But peace with the ELN may help Uribe clinch international backing for his effort at demobilizing Colombia's paramilitary groups.

Critics have said Uribe's approach does not take into account the complexity of Colombia's criminal organizations.

Words of Wisdom

The Yemeni population today is among the poorest in the world. With a per capita income of less than US\$1 per day, it is indeed a wretched lot. That is why socio-economic development is a priority. A key issue in socio-economic development is the population growth rate. The reason is that the population growth rate eats away from the gross economic growth rate, and reduces the possibilities of savings, and subsequently investments.

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



OUR OPINION

Before it fades away

There is a saying in Arabic that the best made one can have is a book. Actually, this thought is found in most cultures in the world, praising the value of literature and celebrating the most significant invention in man's history; print media. The ability to share information across continents, cultures and various languages.



Nadia Al-Saqqaf
Editor-in-Chief

Historically, Yemen is one of the countries in the region that started print media early in the sixties called "al Fadhool". Yet ironically, after so many years still the illiteracy rate is very high with just below 50% of the total population are able to read or write. In Sana'a, there are hardly any public libraries and those few are quite outdated and not so accessible to the majority of the people. If this is the case in the capital what could be expected of the rest of the country? Eventually there is a clear urgent need for spreading information and accessibility to knowledge resources. Recently, there has been an attempt to launch a "Friends of the Book Forum" initiated by Dr. Farris al-Sakkaf director of the "General Book Association", that is still an idea and looking for channels through which it becomes reality. There seems to be many people interested in creating a huge modern public library in Sana'a but this idea is still pending because of very basic issues starting from the land on which this library would be built and other basic issues relating to organization...etc.

Every passing day that goes without progress in this issue is only an indicator of how much this country, both people and government, is not aware of the importance of knowledge. Previous attempts to create alliances and lobby that aim at creating literature associations have failed for a variety of reasons most important of which is the negligence and ignorance of the importance of education. The young generations in Yemen know much less than what their parents had known in their age. This is because there are new interests today that are not in favor of knowledge and constructive learning.

Even on personal basis, Yemeni people do not read much, even those whose fields are so much related to information such as teachers, academics, researchers and even journalists. This is a tragedy, and any attempt to revive the value of reading in this country must be given all support and highest attention. Newborn ideas must be nourished before they are forced to die before their time. We MUST join forces to help this project as soon as possible; we must live it before it fades away.



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

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A free media?

Thank you, Mr. President

By RAIDAN ABDULAZIZ AL-SAQQAF
alsaqqaf@gmail.com
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

Of all the ups and down that face Yemen today; the freedom of the press is witnessing the rise of a better day. The president repeatedly stated his commitment for tolerance and differences of opinion, and today he proves it, again, giving the democratic process and freedom of press in Yemen another tribute with the freeing of a journalist, Al-Khaiwani.

There is no doubt that the media plays an important role in our lives and on the Yemeni street as we have seen during the past few weeks; the recent anti-tax demonstrations in the Yemeni cities have stained Yemen's image as a stable and attractive investment location, confirming the influence the media has on the Yemeni society and the regional and global audience.

This influence is almost monopolized by non-independent, either governmental or opposition media, exchanging arguments and pointing fingers at each other ignoring the most important role the media should play in the develop-

ment of the nation; creating awareness and educating the people.

The Yemeni society is less sophisticated than most societies in the rest of the democratic world, with an illiteracy rate of over 50 per cent and a poor education system. The ignorant Yemeni citizen becomes subject to the manipulation of the media; was it government media deceiving the facts or opposition creating illusionary crisis. This is something that has to be changed.

The most influential media in Yemen is controlled by the government, such as TV, radio, and widely-circulated newspapers. This adds great responsibility in educating the public and creating awareness about the important issues the society needs to know and implement for the development of the nation. But in spite of this huge responsibility, governmental media has done very little in this regard, even less than the opposition media.

Governmental media has to understand that its role isn't limited to glorify the regime's milestones or cover-up for its faults; its contribution should exceed this mindset to bridging the gap with the audience and tackle issues that are relevant and most needed for the development of the nation.

These include the importance of family planning and danger of population growth, efficient use of scarce resources such as water and other utilities, educating the public about the current economic affairs and the importance of maintaining and respecting law and order, and various rights of the Yemeni citizen.

This need is evident through the recent demonstrations taking place in a number of Yemeni cities in objection to the tax reforms. As a result of non-awareness of the subject; most of the demonstrators had no idea how these reforms will benefit the country, in fact, they were misled by all kinds of rumors and press articles, as the governmental media with the biggest influence, allowed such a scenario to take place by not doing enough to clarify the subject and educate the public.

I sincerely believe that the role and responsibility of media in building great and positively - active societies is enormous. History books tell us that unproductive and uncompetitive societies are systematically swept away by productive societies with no exception.

So I ask the question, what good is a free media if it doesn't contribute to the development of the nation?

Where should Muslims go?

By BARKATULLAH MARWAT
bumarwat@hotmail.com
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES
KUWAIT

This is with reference to the page one story "Drop your guns" in The Yemen Times, March 21-23. It is a general impression that the possession of weapons by the public shows that the government's hold is not as strict as it should be. At the same time, it also reflects the government's failure to provide security and safety to the people. That is why they are forced to take arms in their hands at least to defend themselves from their enemies. Thus, from a legal standpoint, they possess the arms as a means of self-defense, provided that they have been issued proper licensing by the authori-

ties. Before coming to Kuwait, I was working in Pakistan, where I came across hundreds of incidents in which armless people were brazenly shot dead by their enemies in broad daylight, even in front of security men. Now you can well imagine as to why they carry such deadly and sophisticated weapons.

Therefore, the practice of disarmament, not only at international level but also at grassroots, should be initiated. But let us know, who will claim responsibility for a killing of an innocent and armless soul? Yes, a state is responsible for providing security, not to mention other fundamental rights, to its subject, be they Yemenis, Pakistanis or anyone else.

Needless to say, the United States has come up with a warning system of pre-

emptive strikes by any country around the world, just for the protection of her own people. But I am of the view that the rest, you, me and others are beasts.

On one hand, America is always seen and heard preaching the virtues and values of human rights, liberty, freedom and democracy, but on the other hand it has been breaking all the rules, laws, resolutions, regulations only for the sake of interest of her people. Is it not a sheer discrimination and injustice?

Should Muslims vacate the planet of earth for Uncle Sam? Where should Muslims go? Is there any Muslim leader who could lead them to a place that is beyond the approach of Uncle Sam? Why? Because here, Muslims have been branded as fundamentalists, extremists and terrorists and whatnot.

Letters to the Editor

Letter of the day

Arabs must unite

John Shannon
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In reply to Hassan Al-Haifi's article, "After 60 years: A dead Arab League Summit meeting," I suggest that the GCC soon will become the dominant (and dynamic) political organization representing the Arab world.

I believe the sooner Arab nations follow the EU and EC examples, creating a unified nation while respecting the rights and traditions of it's individual member states, the better by far, for Arab nations and their people.

Larger powers can divide and conquer smaller nations, either militarily or, more common these days, economically and culturally. There is strength in numbers, it is easy to break one stick, it is not easy to break 15 bound tightly together.

The weakness of the Arab world over the last century has been larger powers cutting deals with one Arab nation, to the detriment of other Arab nations. This causes resentment among members of the Arab League, preventing or hindering progress. Larger powers, (read, the U.S.A.) are experts at

doing this.

The prosperous, well-governed Europe we see today did not just happen all by itself. This process of building a secure union, started in the 1950's. So it's taken this long to achieve greatness. Look at the result! And the EU is STILL a work in progress - even now and getting better by the day.

However, I must say that the EU is much remiss in not recognizing the supremacy of God in their constitution and I take offence with the banning of headscarves and other religious attire in some EU countries. So, the EU still has some important things to work out yet. But surely Muslim nations would get those two things right off the bat.

If Arab leaders can get it together now, similar success can be sweeping the Arab world in five, ten or twenty years. If it takes longer, fine. At least get working on it, so that each Arab state does not end up being consumed and owned by a non-Muslim/non-Arab world power.

Because, at that time, Hassan, you and all Arab people will find out what it really means to be powerless.

anyone else.

If Israel had disappeared from the Middle East, which some Muslims would love, the problem within the

Muslim and the rest of the world would remain, as above mentioned.

H Adolf Hughes
surgentadolff@hotmail.com

COMMON SENSE

By Hassan Al-Haifi

A matter of law

Many will view the release of Abdul-Karim Al-Khaiwani as an important victory for press freedom in Yemen. That the news came just a few hours after the issuance of a decision by the Sana'a Appeals Court to uphold the decision of the Primary Court raised many questions in many a skeptic's mind. Nevertheless, the long ordeal of Mr. Khaiwani and the many who worked diligently to support the efforts to release the journalist came as a relief and a tinkling of hope that perhaps press freedom got the upper hand. On the other hand, there are those who felt that the release instigated by a Presidential Pardon was a clear indication that the various statutes and ordinances instituting press freedom as an essential element of the democratization process unleashed in Yemen with the Unification Agreement of 1990 have taken on less legal force. Many questioned the poor showing made by the judicial system in interpreting the relevant laws and in safeguarding the marginal democracy the Republic of Yemen still enjoys. Mr. Al-Khaiwani perhaps perceived that his criticism of the executive branch of the government was bound to entangle him in legal conflict with the Government, but more likely felt that after the President of the Republic issued the decree banning the imprisonment of journalists, journalists can count on the strength of the President's wise decree. No one was under any doubt that the President was indeed sincere in issuing the decree, which many in the press saw as a blessing that reinforced the Constitution and all the other legislations guaranteeing press freedom.

Whatever may be said about the Khaiwani case, one is inclined to believe that the law in Yemen is still unable to activate the instruments that set the law in motion and reinforce its application in an equitable just manner. The problem of getting the law to mean exactly what is implied by the legislators is an old one in Yemen and many attribute this to the weakness of the Courts as well as the obvious lack of independence that the Courts should enjoy, if they are to adjudicate the cases before them in a judicious and fair manner. It is understandable that political clout in a society as complex as that of Yemen is bound to influence the directions that some cases might take in Court, but when it comes to issues of constitutional stipulations, the Courts should be more stringent in their interpretations. After all, if the Constitution of the Republic faces difficulty in reinforcement of its stipulations, then how could any other legislations find their way to proper reinforcement?

A broad look at many of the problems facing the Republic of Yemen will lead to a general conclusion that most of the obstacles to development may be rooted in the poor application of law and the inability of the Courts to give weight to legal statutes that regulate our society. This is more evident in the area of human and civil rights and manifests itself in the inability of the common citizen to have access to the services and avenues of social advancement that will encourage initiative, creativity and entrepreneurship.

One of the major problems in the security situation in Yemen lies in the widespread blood feuds that have undermined not only the security of the countryside but also the peace and tranquility of the rapidly growing major urban centers. Why are people amongst the clans and tribes that make up Yemen's complex social structure resorting to taking the law in their own hands? In such serious crimes, such as murder or intentionally afflicted bodily harm, there are strong religious guidelines that victims can count on to obtain justice from their attackers. Furthermore, these guidelines are further backed by the relevant stipulations in the criminal and penal laws of the Republic. Yet poor reinforcement of most of these laws and statutes has become the rule rather than the exception. With most of the people hardly knowing how to go about seeking justice for such crimes, they resort to the traditional customs of avenging their dead or injured relatives by killing any relative of the culprit, if they are unable to find the culprit himself. This often leads to the punishment of a crime meted out to persons who may not have anything at all to do with the original crime. Accordingly, the relatives of the victim of the revenge then are forced to pursue their revenge on the killers of their kin. A vicious cycle is created that could drag on for decades. This observer once heard an old man complain that his clan and a clan they are feuding with over the case of wedlock that was consummated without the traditional approval of the parents of the girl in question has dragged on for years. Both spouses were killed, but the ensuing revenge and counter revenge has led to the killing of 39 people from both clans over the time span of a generation. There are legal solutions to most of the cases that eventually lead to a spiral of revenge killings, but the legal proceedings are often slow, cumbersome and quite expensive. If that was not enough, even if the Court comes out with the right verdict in the case, then there is the problem of reinforcement, where again time consuming and expensive procedures may be involved or there is interference by powerful social dignitaries or politically strong personalities that stand in the way of reinforcement. With the seriousness that honor is given amongst the tribes, many tribesmen resort to taking their own revenge on anyone who might be related to their culprit, who might be under protection or hiding away somewhere or may even be in jail awaiting the final outcome of the proceedings against him.

If such is the case in serious crimes, one can easily surmise that less serious offenses, but nevertheless detrimental to the stability of society are also beset with legal entanglements and proceedings and poor reinforcement of Court decisions. Thus banks find it difficult to collect their debts and legal contracts rely more on the good faith of the contracting parties than on legal support.

The point to be said is that Al-Khaiwani's case could have been solved much earlier if the relevant laws and statutes were given their right interpretations as intended by the lawmakers and if the Courts really enjoyed the freedom and authority that modern democratic states normally accord the bench. This would have saved Yemen a lot of international embarrassment and assured the citizens that their rights are not simply superficial legal décor meant to placate those outside of Yemen, who eventually do learn the truth anyway.

Presented by Mohammed Khidr

Al-Shumou weekly, 26 Mar.2005.

Main headlines

- Observers: Washington embassy disappointed the JMP and abandoned it at the first turning
- At the backdrop of a secret meeting of American officers with some media persons at a hotel, American efforts for establishment of Masonic clubs, the beginning in Aden
- Cleric al-Hittar: The president stressed on apology to the people, armed forces and security by those involved in Mran insurgency
- Yemen's government demands the UN and the U.S. lifting Zindani's name from terror list

The newspaper editorial says the course of events and their continuous ramifications on the Yemeni stage have revealed that the scenario of Mran sedition has not ended for good. We are still witnessing its first stages. The defeat of the insurgency and killing of its leader Hussein Badrudin al-Houthi was just closing the first chapter of the conspiracy.

When we presume that the insurgency has only completed its first chapter and is still in its beginning, we realize that and are aware of it. We also warn against a new chapter within the same scenario of those reactionary forces that planned for it and they aim at the similar goals of the first chapter.

With the remaining of the symbols of the sedition outside the reach of justice and continuation of those centers teaching sectarian fanaticism and extremism inside the society, could be indicators that the sedition has not been quelled yet.

Another of its chapters would begin and to be followed with others unless the radical reasons of that sedition are treated. The forthcoming chapter would target the revolution, the republic, the unity and the political system and gains of the homeland.

Al-Sahwa weekly, 24 Mar. 2005.

Main headlines

- JMP: The government objective misleading the public opinion and terrorize opposition
 - Parliament approves formation of investigation committee, ministers of information and interior summoned
 - Exposed attempt to hold the JMP responsible for the demonstrations, 15 people arrested, other 5 injured
 - People's committee in defense of al-Mouyad and Zaid calls on Algiers summit to protest to condemning them for supporting the Palestinian people
- Writer Majeed al-Hamidi writes about the conclusion of Algiers summit saying no one in the Arab street does attach hope to the Arab summit, adding that that was what opinion polls, conducted by a number

of media tools, had affirmed. On the other hand, the Israeli foreign minister was optimistic about that summit, confirming that Ten Arab States would begin normalization of their relations with Israel immediately after the summit.

While the level of Arab representation at the summit receded by the absence of one third of Arab leaders, the international presence was eye-catching.

The UN secretary-general, Solana representing the European Union, head of the African Union, the Spanish prime minister, and representatives from Russia, France, and Italy and many others from the world have attended the summit.

With the low level of Arab leaders' presence at the summit, observers noted the faintness of the level of talking about the project of Arab political reforms that Tunisia's summit had talked about. The summit of Algiers has continued affirming the local peculiarities the Arab regimes take as a pretext for hindering any efforts for a real reform.

Saut al-Shura weekly, issued by the Union of People's Forces of Yemen, 28 Mar.2005.

Main headlines

- Late political release of al-Khaiwani
- The Union of People's Forces welcomes the release of al-Khaiwani, calling for abolishment of journalists imprisonment
- Diesel disappearance due to importation
- Large-scale campaign to abolish punishments stripping the journalist freedom
- Poverty kills 420 children in Ibb
- Trade Unions demand Abdulrahim to pay all debts, Aden Refinery administration intends to lower workers salaries
- Islah conference denounces the government practices against the citizens, calling for more coordination among the JMP
- 14 October trade Union gains support the journalists in confronting the administration

Columnist Abdullah Ali Sabri wrote an article saying one cannot read the question of the release of journalist al-Khaiwani and the ending the publication suspension of al-Shoura newspaper but in the context of the struggling context related to the unprecedented movement of solidarity that accompanied the case all the way.

The whole process was not confined to the local interest but rather had gone beyond to include international interest expressed in statements of denunciation and protest. Both stands considered the imprisonment of al-Khaiwani as flagrant evidence of the reality of press freedom in Yemen. Against the successive reactions, the authority tried in vain to distract the attention from the case, but at last conceded and recognized the right of freedom for al-Khaiwani.

The presidential decision came to

prove that the whole case was rather political from the beginning to the end.

Annas weekly, 28 Mar. 2005.

Main headlines

- JMP leaderships welcome the GPC's call for dialogue, fear it may be pulling of leg
- Khaiwani out of prison, Al-Mithaq newspaper prepares for strike
- Deputy American ambassador: America makes mistakes; we have information on increase in number of smuggled children and women from Yemen
- Prospects of tribal war in Al-Mahweet
- 15 persons still detained at the backdrop of demonstrations in Taiz

Columnist Dr Hosni al-Jawshaie says in his article we have not noticed any new stance in the Algiers Arab summit but that of the Arab League secretary general Amr Mousa who declared that Israel announced that Ten Arab States would come crawling and demanding for normalization with Israel.

The summit conference did not mention about the situation in Iraq or the date of the American occupation forces withdrawal or the plundering of the Iraqi oil. The conference did not mention about the problem of Darfur except with general naive phrases whereas all are aware that American had taken very serious decisions against the Sudan.

In general there is nothing new at the 17th Arab summit conference. The main goal of the conference, as some satellite channels have mentioned, was the normalization of relations with Israel. But the courage and sincerity of the AL Secretary-General Mousa have foiled the attempts of some Arab leaders running after the normalization with the Zionist entity.

Al-Wahdawi weekly, organ of the Nasserite Unionist Organisation (NUO), 22 Mar. 2005.

Main headlines

- JMP warns against the policy of impoverishment and spread of the culture of hatred and suppression of freedoms
- Armed clashes between security forces and al-Houthi followers in Saada
- JMP wonders about the instigating campaign against the opposition
- Universities teaching staff suspends strike
- Members of the NUO in the US congratulate the secretary general on success of their conference
- Citizens kidnapped in Hardh, arrests in Mahweet
- Arrest of six persons accused of forming armed group and planning to blast western embassies

Writer Abdulhameed Abdullah says in an article that the political process is need of continuous change and

SKETCHED OPINION

We quit kidnapping foreigners and hijacking Come on!! precede me to Mars

development in order to keep pace with political action and consequences that dictate certain variables for dealing with all components of political spectra.

For the guarantee of that continuity, whether the political party is in power or in the opposition, it has to coexist with all changes and to manage its relations with the rest of political parties and organizations present on the political arena. It has to define the type of its relationship with those parties and its relationship with the masses of the people as well as its sticking to the national constants.

Stagnation from which the political process is suffering is a normal thing because of the youthfulness of the democratic experiment and narrowness of the democratic margin.

However, it has been noticed recently a kind of political action represented by a number of political parties holding their general conferences after holding a complete internal electoral sessions. That may be a result of a number of accelerating political changes and rapidity of international, regional and local events, politically and economically.

Hence, there comes the importance of changes inside the parties as an important strategic necessity so that they can embody the democratic practice inside their ranks in the first place. Prospects of hope in this political action are big. If the political parties, especially the opposition ones have tried continuation of this momentum and energies with their members they would have achieve much in interest of the political party and achievement of its goals that would pour in interest of the homeland.

Al-Umma weekly, issued by al-Haq party, 24 Mar.2005.

Main headlines

- The president gives directives for setting up a new dialogue committee, confirming non-targeting al-Zaidiya
- Submitting their case to the

parliament, demands for the release of the two scholars al-Dailami, Muftah and the rest of detainees

- JMP condemns demolition of houses and arrests among Thi Sifal citizens in Ibb
- Soufan denies depletion, confirms oil sector promising in the long-run More than 16 police officers in Taiz trained on principles of humans rights
- Women Forum and evaluation of citizenship and democracy

Columnist Hussein Zaid Bin Yahya writes that there is a proportion of corruption inside the opposition parties but the problem is not that only despite that the opposition parties indulgence in corruption is a problem in itself. The demanded stance before thinking of change is to think first of the qualified alternative that is capable of good governance. Thus, we have first to reform the opposition that is hoped for leading the state after the triumph of the movement of democratic and peaceful change.

All the opposition parties, until now, have no national project to after change stage and rather this question has not come to their minds. Therefore, we do not see any sign to be counted in favour of the political opposition as evident of their preparation with a clear-cut vision and program under active leadership and cadre to lead and establish for the modern civilian state.

Reform of the political opposition acquires significance inside and outside. The call for reforming the opposition is first through pushing it towards preparing itself as a live political system, interactive with the masses and convincing to them in the manner restoring the flux of life and communication between the partisan organization and the people.

The new thinking of the opposition parties has to admit first the diversity of the Yemeni society components and that the volume of destruction that was practiced by corruption system was not confined to economy and the state military and civil organizations only but extended to the environment, ethics, generation and the national unity.

This requires inevitably a broad and

diversified opposition whose common denomination could be the modern civic state, its stage program is first to stabilize the principle of the peaceful transfer of power and enhancement of the democratic regime and the freedoms.

Al-Thawri weekly, organ of the Yemen Socialist Party, 24 Mar.2005.

Main headlines

- Draft law leading to raise prices
- Taiz security arrests tens of tradesmen and levies taxes
- Salary strategy at the forum of parliamentary dialogue
- Lawyers union demands activation of the case of aggression on al-Jaabi and Allaw

Columnist Abdeh Farie Nouman writes that the personality of the human is completed and grown in learning and growth of knowledge with regard to influencing and being influenced with the events of life and everyday life for the laying of its constituents via their development.

A scrutinizing look at the present curricula would reveals that there is nothing that help scientific growth or paves the way for teachers in their educational work, i.e. linking the growth of science to the educational process for building the personality and completion of its role in life.

We in fact do not possess proper curricula put under scrutiny and continual revision according to remarks and comments of teachers and inspectors. Here the ministry of education bears the responsibility for enlightening the state and the society about the special attention to this question.

Yemen has abundance of qualified cadres and expertise for the preparation and re-formulation of modern school curricula compatible with developments of the age. If we do not benefit from those cadres and expertise for such modernization, the activity of education would be confined to the most dangerous things and accumulation of problems hard to solve.

A call for help from young Walid

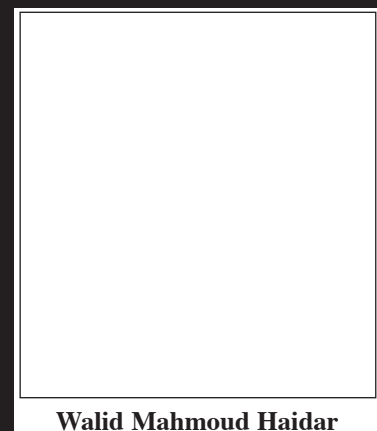
Who will rescue the child Walid, a young boy who is suffering from complete retinal detachment?

The 6-year boy, whose complete name is Walid Mahmoud Haidar, comes from a very poor family. He is suffering from retinal detachment in the left eye.

The doctors of Al-Thawrah Hospital in 6DQDD have asked for YR 350,000 in fees for the operation, which does not include the added costs of medicine and other requirements.

Since there is no health insurance for YePHQ poor, this child will lose his vision unless he gets help.

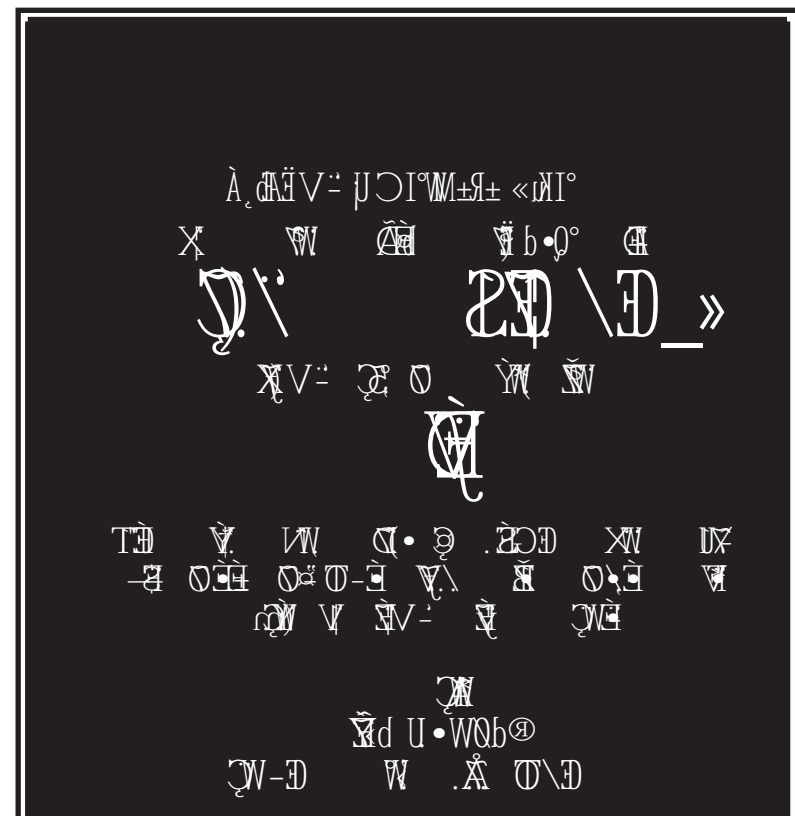
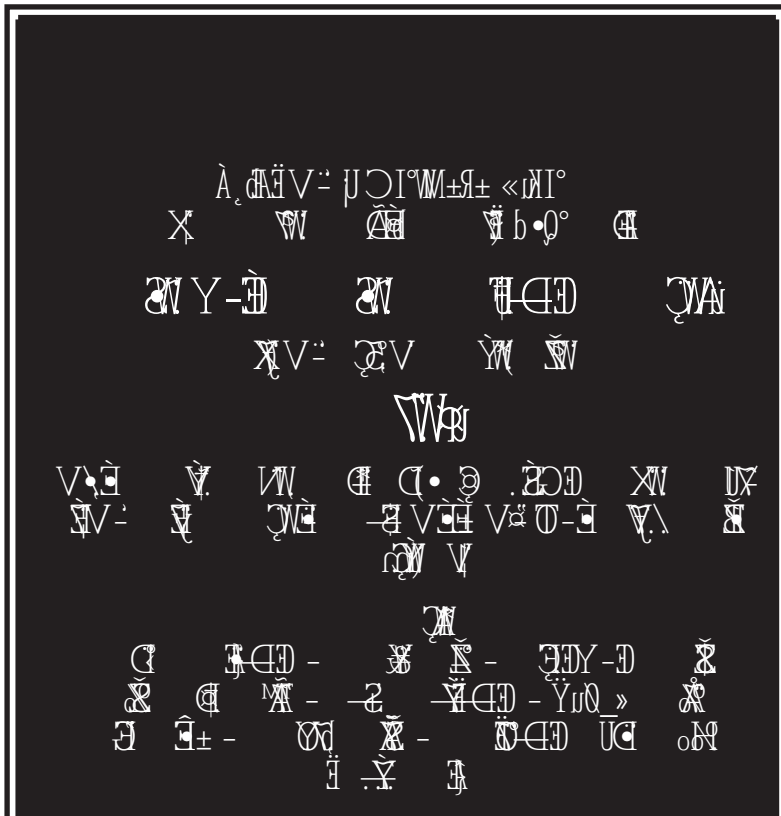
So this appeal is to all the charitable people who feel they



Walid Mahmoud Haidar

can help in order to rescue Walid and his sight, before LW too late.

If you can help, please contact Nahla Mahmoud 73686630



YT Business

Thumbs down to tax hike

Farmers want new marketing principles

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Gauging Yemeni farmers' reaction to the government's planned sales tax hike, some say it will damage the government's move to promote agricultural products, even though the farmers will have certain exemptions on agricultural materials.

Farmers believe that the government needs to adopt an agricultural policy that fosters product exportation, cut their tax burdens, improve the agricultural production sector, and increase loans to help achieve the following goals of agricultural development.

First: Create conditions that boost agriculture workers' stability and return of unemployed to grow their land and increase production.

Second: establish new centers close to agricultural lands, which ensure cost-effective transportation of products to export terminals.

Third: Support scientific research in the agricultural sector to identify reclaimable lands and provide necessary support for agriculture.

Fourth: Set up a step-by-step plan to limit qat shrub proliferation over fertile

agricultural lands.

Fifth: Bolster investment in food industries which depend on agricultural products and modern preservation technology.

Farmers confirm that development of agricultural products in neighboring markets need to take care of agriculture, and reconsider facilities granted to investors so that they get more involved in production and construction of dams and water barriers.

They are also of the opinion that the intended stoppage of diesel subsidization will further push local agriculture backwards, and hit farmers' resources and their income.

To bring evidence that the tax hike and unsubsidized diesel are detrimental, farmers affirm that agricultural products volume will decrease by 25 per cent. For instance, Yemen will lose some YR 1.5 billion of the whole amount (YR 6 billion) of products exported through Haradh outpost, through which 109,000 tons of vegetables were exported in 2004.

They add that there are other technical problems in terms of services, packaging and means of transportation, all of which hamper the development of agricultural export. They call on the

government to do its best to eliminate them and not to further add to them by enacting new taxes and unsubsidizing diesel.

They request agricultural committees set up under cabinet's decree for the years 2003-2004 regarding regulation and development of agricultural exports to hastily implement the local and external agricultural marketing policy.

Farmers criticize these committees on the basis that their functions are limited to certain tasks and distributed their responsibilities over specific agricultural, marketing and exporting zones. These committees, farmers say, have not helped agriculture workers to increase production and improve quality.

According to information gleaned from the field, it is needed to set up a work program regulating the works of agricultural subcommittees and reinforce the institutional aspect of quality control and agricultural exports regulation, as well as facilitate the marketing of production locally.

Interest in the agricultural aspect will inevitably help strengthen stability of the workforce in agricultural areas and alleviate unemployment among able-bodied people.

Farmers believe that the government needs to adopt an agricultural policy that fosters product exportation, cut their tax burdens, improve the agricultural production sector, and increase loans to help achieve the following goals of agricultural development.

In brief

- Dr. Ali Mansour Bin Safah, Minister of Technical Education and Vocational Training, expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the World Bank in supporting technical education and vocational training in Yemen. World Bank experts will visit Yemen during April 2005 to follow the results of the project.
- The Public Administration of Irrigation and Water Dams (PAIWE) has established an operations room to track the average volume stored water. Mutahar Zaid, General Manager of PAIWE, said his team submits their reports regularly to show the average of water flowing into dams across the country. He indicated that the average capacity in 14 dams in Sana'a hold 1,366,696 cubic meters, 60 percent of the total capacity. The 12 dams in Al-Bayda'a are currently at around 67 percent of total capacity, the 11 dams in Amran are at 31 percent and the three dams in Sada'a are at 18 percent.

\$US25 million fish project

By YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Minister of Fisheries, Dr. Ali Mohammed Majwar, has discussed preparations for the fifth Fish Project with a delegation from the World Bank.

This project will play a key role in developing Yemen's significant

fisheries potential, and helping to reduce poverty and improve living standards.

Dr. Majwar confirmed that the cost of the first stage of the project was US\$25 million, and has been financed by the World Bank, the European Union and the Yemen Government.

It will establish research stations and marine feeding centers along the coast.

Ministry of Finance Civil Service Modernization Project Implementation Project Unit Accounting & Financial Management Information System, (AFMIS) REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FROM INTERNATIONAL THIRD-PARTY SOFTWARE TESTING COMPANY FOR AFMIS COMPONENT.

NOTE: Only software testing Companies or Firms should Respond (not Individual Consultants).

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

This advertisement replaces previously published advertisement on Request for Expression of Interest of International Advisor / an AFMIS Component Test Third-Party Consultant. Now, only software testing Companies or Firms should Respond.

Introduction

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

AFMIS is designed to address three major parts of public finance management reform; those are budget preparation, budget execution and accounting. AFMIS is a main component of the whole modernization project, and will accommodate certain agreeable sets of reform steps in the public expenditure process, of Yemen, both at the Central and Local Authority Levels. The system in its first stage will be rolled out to three large spending units, and ultimately to all other governmental spending units. At this stage of implementation it has been agreed between the GoY and World Bank that technical assistance (TA) is needed to mitigate potential project implementation risks in the areas of Project Management, treasury design and independent third-party testing. To address these needs and help ensure that the target milestones of the AFMIS component are met, a Project Management Advisor and Conceptual Design Advisor have been recruited. The Bank has proposed deploying an independent third party testing company to test and certify the AFMIS applications to be developed by the project contractor (Yemen Soft and CEW).

Ensuring Effective Testing of the AFMIS System

Once the AFMIS system modules are developed by Yemen soft, the selected independent third-party testing firm should subject the system(s) to rigorous testing in order to provide assurance that it is working properly and provides the specified functionalities. System testing is broadly divided into two main categories: (1) unit testing and application testing, which are the responsibility of the vendor (Yemen soft and CEW); and (2) user acceptance testing including the testing of the integrated system as a whole is the responsibility of the client (GOY - Ministry of Finance AFMIS Project Implementation Unit). It is the testing of the second category that is very demanding and requires specialized skills of an independent third party testing company to supplement the skills of the client (MOF-PIU). The testing company should have highly specialized personnel with extensive experience in conducting systems testing of enterprise financial systems such as Treasury operations.

Responsibilities

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

- 1 Creating a Test Plan
- 2 Designing Tests
- 3 Implementing the Test cases
- 4 Executing Tests
- 5 Evaluating Test results

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

- 1 Ensuring that all Software components comply with the approved conceptual design documents, the following tasks should be carried out
- 2 Performing application software test process in accordance with all General Condition clauses and special condition clauses stated on the project contract signed between AFMIS and the contractor (Yemen Soft) on 31/5/2003.:
- 3 The deliverables, modules, and sub-modules

must be provided as part of an integrated system with clear specification for the central role of the general ledger.

- 4 A transition path for an AFMIS move to full accrual base accounting is well defined, implemented, and produced.
- 5 While remaining on a cash basis of accounting, a GFS2001 compliant budget classification is to be implemented as a main part of AFMIS.
- 6 A confirmed chart of accounts is developed and implemented.
- 7 A budget execution function currently undertaken by the CBY is taken over by MOF through AFMIS application.
- 8 Business process description for each modules and sub-modules is reflected in AFMIS deliverables through input process and outputs.

Qualifications and Experience

- 1 MS./Ph.D. in computing with extensive knowledge of governmental public expenditure computerized systems.
- 2 Extensive experience in testing and certification of large-scale financial systems including Treasury systems.
- 3 Industry accepted, best-in-class international standards of system testing methodologies.
- 4 Solid experience in AFMIS conceptual Design, Networking and Implementation
- 5 Excellent command of English; Arabic also would be very useful.

Deliverables

For each module and sub-module of AFMIS, in accordance with the responsibilities mentioned above, a testing procedures document should include the following: (a) Test processes or procedures; (b) Test indicators; (c) Test data; (d) Test measurements; and (e) Test results.

To accomplish the above, the broad tasks would include (i) preparation of a detailed test plan for each module/sub-module and the integrated system as a whole; (ii) development of any necessary test scenarios and test scripts; (iii) provision of advice on the need for any additional software for testing purposes, for example, load testing; (iv) training the assigned staff on how to undertake the detailed testing work; (v) managing the testing program; (vi) reviewing the test results in liaison with the PIU coordinator and software contractor (Yemen soft) to discuss errors and fixing them; (vii) managing and delivering re-tested outputs for user acceptance; and (viii) report the results of the tests and certify that each module/sub-module satisfies the specified requirements and make recommendations to the authorities that it should be accepted.

Reporting Responsibility

The independent third party testing company will be report to the Project Coordinator and Project Management Advisor; and shall work collaboratively with the AFMIS PIU Coordinator and Treasury Conceptual Design Advisor.

Scope of the Mission

Short term visits to Yemen at two-month intervals approximately between June/July and December 2005, with the possibility of extension depending on how much progress is made at the end of December, 2005.

The firm will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank Guidelines on Selection and Employment of Consultants/Firms by World Bank Borrowers (May, 2004 Edition)

Candidates firm who have the necessary qualification are invited to submit their Curriculum Vita with a copy of their qualification no later than 26 April, 2005 to the following address:

**Ministry of Finance
AFMIS Project Coordinator's Office
Alsafia 6DQDD-Yemen,
Tel-504164 -504161
Or by email: afmisyemen1@yahoo.com**

The color of coral:

The challenges of the Red Sea Region

BY IRENA KNEHTL
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

It is a history full of adventure, excitement and discovery. Time is right for greater Red Sea regional economic cooperation and investment projects.

Like a bustling super highway, this Middle Eastern sea-road serves the world's traffic today just as it did in the days of the Phoenicians. For thousands of years, the Red Sea has seen history made on her waters and along her shores. For a body of water that began life as a rift in a continent, the Red Sea has made an inestimable contribution to the life of her surrounding shores and the world.

Today, far from being a relic, it is as vital as ever to world trade and transportation. Sailors claim that the water itself lights their way. They may be referring to the bio-luminescence seen at night – a glow from those tiny water creatures which gleam so that the bow of a ship four miles away can be made out.

According to the legend, the Red Sea came into being when a king cut a channel through at Bab al-Mandab in order for the ocean to flow through and destroy his enemy's territory. Thus Arabia's break with Africa was a violent affair as the Arab Peninsula pivoted away to the east, creating a mountain wall the entire length of the Red Sea coast.

In between, the tectonic movement tore a huge rift in the earth's crust from Ethiopia to Jordan, more than 1600 kilometers long, into which poured the waters of the Indian Ocean, carrying marine life with them and creating what is known today the Red Sea. Like a finger pointing straight at the Mediterranean, it begins at the Strait of Bab al-Mandab, and ends 1,200 miles to the north-northeast at Suez.

Through the Strait of Bab al-Mandab, the Red Sea traffic reaches southward to all the ports of the Far East, though the Suez Canal at the northern tip, her trade sails to all the wharves of the Mediterranean, Europe and North America. Free-flowing trade has always carried new civilizations with it, and the Red Sea has played a significant role in helping to bring together the world's cultures.

Long before the days of the fabled Queen of Sheba, the Red Sea was being traversed by traders, adventurers and conquerors. The access to the Red Sea has always been of paramount importance to those who lived near it. The Red Sea is narrow, no more than two hundred miles at its widest point. At the Strait of Bal al-Mandab, only fourteen and half miles of water separates its shores.

Both shores, east and west, are low mostly sandy tracts, though sometimes



swampy, varying in width from ten to thirty miles and suddenly rising into lift tableland. The sea itself is partially filled in by coral-workings, which, extended in parallel lines at a short distance from either coast and have subdivided the sea into three different channels. There are also rocky islets that with the coral reefs, make navigation tricky. Particularly when the water is discolored, navigation has to be managed now by the most modern steamship exactly as it was by the trememes of the ancient Romans – by eye.

The history of the Red Sea is full of adventure, excitement and discovery. As one of the first large bodies of water mentioned in recorded history, it is a major or traffic route, serving as an outlet to the Oceans for its literal states, and on its other hand as a thoroughfare that links the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean.

The geopolitical position of the Red Sea is of special importance, bordering as it does the eastern coast of Africa and the western coast of the Arabian Peninsula. It is the vital route for the transportation of oil through Bab Al-Mandab in the south to the Suez Canal in the north. Thus this narrow band of water shared by a number of coastal states is an important shipping lane linking the world major oceans.

The red sea in history

International travel began early in the Red Sea. More than 5000 years ago, rafts, or simple boats dared its waters to bring obsidian – a black volcanic glass that yields sharp blades – from the Arabian Peninsula to Egypt, where it has been found in pre-dynastic archeological

writing in 1723 gives a hint of the sights and smells of this busy harbor, "full of English free merchants, Portuguese, Banyans, and Moors, vessels from Bossorah, Persia and Muskat all trading in coffee and myrrh, frankincense and aloes Soccatrina from Socotra, white and yellow arsenick, some gum Arabicum some balm of bilead, that comes from the Red Sea".

The coffee trade from Yemen up the Red Sea was so important that it made up two thirds of the value of Egypt's foreign imports in the second half of the 18th century. At Suez, the fastest camels awaited the news of the coffee fleets arrival in September or October, so as to race the 145 kilometers to Cairo with news that could make – or cost – fortunes on the coffee futures exchange.

Re-exported through Alexandria, half of Egypt's imported coffee eventually reached Ottoman and European markets. The Red Sea served as the gateway to Europe for many eastern products and trade on the Red Sea, despite the notorious risk of navigation in its reef- studded, coral – lined waters.

Although European ships had been sailing to Suez since the 16th century, the European ships brought Chinese export porcelain, designed for the Middle Eastern market featuring floral designs to Mocha and Jiddah to trade for coffee. Arab and Muslim ships took the goods along the next leg north in the Red Sea. Southbound, their cargoes included iron and Ottoman - subsidized supplies of wheat, oil, lentils and beans for Jiddah.

The sea link between Jiddah and Suez was considerably more important than historians had realized earlier. We know that Indian ships periodically carried goods north to Suez, for French and other merchants during the 17th and 18th centuries. Later in the 18th century, a French traveler commented that most Arab ships in the Red Sea had been built in India. For much of the 17th and 18th centuries, strong commercial ties existed between Egypt and India, so it would not be surprising to find Indian shipbuilding techniques adopted by Egyptian builders.

Problems of water and coal supply were solved by establishing a fueling station at Port Said and on Perim island in the gate of Bab al-Mandab. Until World War One, the shores of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden were under the domination of the Turkish Empire, the British Empire, France and Italy.

In the 20th century, the Red Sea reached the zenith of its importance as oil gradually replaced coal as fuel in industry – power generation and transportation in Europe and America. New supertankers, operating at relatively low costs were built and transported oil around the Cape of Good Hope to the Western industrialized world.

More recently, a stream of oil begun to flow through the Red Sea By 1990 the water of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden washed the coasts of ten independent states: Egypt, Sudan, Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, (Ethiopia), Djibouti, Somalia and Yemen. The important fact, however is not the great number, but their diversity and heterogeneity in almost every respect, natural resources, wealth, social development, history, religion, ideological orientation, tradition, form of government and relations to the outside powers. The Red Sea nevertheless preserved its importance as an outlet to the Indian Ocean for the literal states. Egypt since has undertaken important works for deepening of the canal, which enable large ships to travel through it. The Red Sea served as bridge between richest areas in Europe and the Far East but never managed to attract to its shores any significant portion of the wealth that flowed through the waterway.

To be continued next issue

Welcome to the Literary Corner

By Hassan Al-Haifi

The Yemen Times is pleased this week to introduce a new area for our readers to benefit from. It is really a corner which no important national newspaper with wide international outreach could really afford to be without.

This corner will on Mondays be dedicated to the world of literature. The literature dealt with here will not necessarily be confined to literature of a single language, subject matter or totally just about Yemen nor have its origins in Yemen. Obviously, Yemen will have the lion's share of areas that will be covered in the literature we will be discussing here.

However, with the YT having an international audience, there may be some articles that may try to extend to other matters that this humble critic will hope may be of interest to our readers, Yemenis and international. If many people think writing in itself is hard, one can surely surmise that writing about what others write is even more difficult.

But this effort will certainly be done with all due respect to objective analysis and literary critique. We welcome feedback from our readers and will treat both positive and negative opinions with the same amount of respect and appreciation.

So, let us begin this humble effort with the best that anyone can begin anything with: In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent-the Merciful, may God give the effort its blessings.

Ahmed Mohammed Al-Shami: An Exceptional Breed of Literary Genius – part I

From a poem entitled: Apologetically to My People (In an Hour of Reproach)

*In their existence, the most miserable of people they are,
Created for the shackle, the whip and the executioners*

No... not for the constitution and liberty!

They compete for politeness to oppression,

Revering ignorance and waywardness!

They submit loyally to those who impose humiliation upon them

And who eliminate the disdainfully defiant of souls!

We have offered to them guidance to awaken them by.

*So, this is what they said:
We are used to eternal unconsciousness!*

Whenever we came to them with a science or art,

They proceeded with the tribal chants!

*If we recited to them a manifesto
They turned away chanting (Snake-worm!)*

If we offer a remedy for a TB patient,

They would reject it, resorting instead to the shock-burn!

*If we waved a book to them;
They brandish the dagger and the rifle*

In their minds,

the images of Islam have become distorted;

*Faalty and factional strife;
And it implies differentiate by sect;*

The sect of that one is Shafe'i3, and this one is of the Zeidi creed;

*Yet, all in their state as such
Reflect darkness in comprehension
(Beset) With disputes,*

Like a people of an infidel nation

(Ahmed Mohammed Al-Shami apologetically portraying the current lot of his people; reproduced in English with thanks to *Al-Ummah Newspaper* for the Arabic version)

It only seems fitting at this juncture that this Literary Corner should commence with a look at one of the

greatest recent losses to modern Yemeni literature.

The passing away of His Excellency, Mr. Ahmed Mohammed Al-Shami, the man of letters, poetry, history, literary critique, with an output that is

unequally by any of modern Yemen's writers, thinkers and observers of the

political and literary scene in Yemen, both in terms of quantity and quality.

One of the most amazing phenomenon about Yemen's long and tumultuous history is that it still produced one of the most dynamic and constantly evolving culture, that has done much to enrich the Arabic language with literary wealth, nevertheless still holding on to some of its own distinctive qualities and flavor.

Notwithstanding the underdevelopment of the country in many fields, in literature, Yemeni writers continued to dish out over the ages, monumental works in literature, theology and other areas of the liberal arts.

Of course the prevalence of religion will be found in most of this long track record of literary achievement, since most of the educational institutions were primarily geared to produce a cadre of public servants and private citizens who were well-versed in religious doctrine and jurisprudence.

Mr. Ahmed Mohammed Al-Shami was mostly a product of the traditional schooling that most of his fellow literary peers, such as Mohammed Al-Zubeiry, Qadhi Abdurrahman Al-Iriani and to a certain extent Ahmed Nu'uman4.

Yet, of all his peers, he probably had the greatest output of published works, which will always be viewed as the greatest enrichment to Yemeni literature in modern times.

1- The word *zamil* (pl. *zoamil*) means the recitation of poems of tribal pride, which is usually done in a march.

2- An old fashioned means of treatment for many diseases, whereby they would shock the patient with a burn by a hot iron, presumably to remove the cause, which was often attributed to fright or an evil eye.

3- A member of the Shafe'i (Sunni) sect, one of the two leading Islamic sects in Yemen, the other being the Zeidi sect.

4- All four were active founders of the Yemeni patriotic movement.

Angola says Marburg outbreak risk controlled

By ZOE EISENSTEIN

A RODS outbreak of deadly Marburg fever claimed three more lives at the weekend bringing the death toll to 117, but the government said on Tuesday the situation was under control and there was no need for panic.

"WHUH preparing to hold a meeting with the donor community and foreign oil companies to calm them down. There is no reason to panic," Deputy Health Minister Jose Van Dunem told Reuters.

"Yes, the risk exists, but it is a controlled risk."

So far 124 cases have been recorded, underscoring the lethal nature of Marburg, a virulent viral infection in the Ebola family for which there is no specific cure and from which few recover.

The Democratic Republic of Congo said it was cooperating with Angola and the smaller Republic of Congo to stem the spread of the disease, but said the border remained open.

"The border is not closed. We have just taken preventative measures to

ensure that the virus does not cross into Congo," said Henri Mova Sakanyi, spokesman for the Kinshasa government.

"We have sent virologists to the border areas to step up the monitoring and get a better understanding of the situation. We have always had a commission with Congo-Brazzaville and Angola to deal with problems like this and we are coordinating."

In the Angolan capital Luanda, Van Dunem said two of the latest reported deaths were in the city and one was in the coastal enclave of oil-rich Cabinda.

But he said all three victims who died had travelled from Uige province, north-east of Luanda, epicentre of the outbreak.

Oil firms hold fire

The outbreak of the rare hemorrhagic fever has worried many expatriates working in ROD's large oil industry, with talk of some families wanting to evacuate. Oil firms and diplomats said they were taking no risks but agreed there was no need to panic.

"Up to now BUH just making sure people are aware of EDWs going on, but BUH not considering it a crisis," said a senior official at U.S. giant ChevronTexaco, the biggest foreign crude producer in Angola.

"KHUH no emergency but ,P sure companies will be dusting off their evacuation policies," said another industry source.

Western diplomats said they had updated travel advice to warn visitors away from Uige province, but noted that after decades of civil war travel to Angola was already discouraged.

Italy, which has a many aid workers and Roman Catholic Church staff in Uige and last week lost a doctor working in the area to Marburg, recommended citizens avoid travel to Angola.

"KHUH no obligation, but the information BUH giving is to avoid unnecessary travel to a country where at least one province is infected," Italian Ambassador Alfredo Bastianelli told Reuters.

With a health infrastructure shattered by the war, Angola faces a major challenge combating Marburg. The first case was detected late last year, and most victims have been children.

The virus is characterised by high fever, headaches, nausea, with vomiting and diarrhoea accompanied by blood.

Reuters

Vacancy Advertisement

An immediate vacancy exists at the World Bank Office in 6DQD for a **Receptionist**.

The applicant is expected to meet the following requirements:

- Have high school certificate.
- Have effective spoken and written communication skills in both Arabic and English.
- Have working knowledge of word-processing and be able to operate standard office equipment (fax machines, intercom system, photocopiers, etc.)
- Be a good team player able to interact tactfully with different internal and external clients.
- Pass a computer/language test.

The incumbent will perform basic office functions including answering telephones, sorting incoming and outgoing correspondence, handling courier services, etc.

For full consideration, please send your CV with a covering letter before April 15, 2005 attn.: Office Administrator, fax: 413-709/418-733

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

Facts of Life

By DR. KHALED M. NSOUR
NSOUR1977K@HOTMAIL.COM

Endangering a woman's Heart

"H eart disease is a man's disease." Doctors believe it. Insurance companies believe it. The press believes it. The general public does too.

But you mustn't believe it, the statistical truth is: more women die of heart disease than men. Fifty years ago heart disease was virtually unheard of. Today it is the number one cause of death in America. It kills nearly 30 percent of U.S. citizens. In fact, it kills more women than all forms of cancer, chronic lung disease, pneumonia, aids, diabetes and accidents combined.

The evidence is shocking, but true. Even most doctors still do not realize that heart disease kills more women than anything else. In fact, a woman's risk can be even greater than a man's

A low level of HDL (the so-called "good" cholesterol) spells danger for women more so than for men. While the greater risk for men is a high level of LDL (the so-called "bad" cholesterol), women must pay closer attention to their DL levels.

Triglycerides are the fats that deposit around your waist. They also build up in the blood and make your blood more capable of forming plaque and thus blocking your arteries. High triglyceride levels are more dangerous for women than men. In fact, a diabetic woman with high triglycerides is 200 times more likely to develop heart disease than a non-diabetic woman with normal triglycerides.

While a man with diabetes runs a risk for heart disease two to three times above normal, women with diabetes run a much greater risk — five to seven times greater than normal.

Women hospitalized for heart disease receive fewer diagnostic tests and procedures than men. They also have a higher rate of complications from surgical procedures.

Heart failure is a clinical diagnosis and occurs when the heart cannot maintain sufficient blood flow to the body. It is usually characterized by breathlessness and reduced exercise tolerance.

The main sign, though, is fluid retention, in the forms of pulmonary edema (fluid in the lungs) and peripheral edema (swollen ankles). Other signs include weight loss or gain, anorexia (loss of appetite), tachycardia (increase in heart beats), tachypnoea (abnormally fast breathing), Ascites (fluid in the abdominal cavity), abdominal discomfort,

lethargy and nausea.

The prevalence of heart failure is between 3 and 20 patients per 1,000 increasing to at least 80 cases per 1,000 among those aged 75 and over as the report by (Williams; *et al* 2002) published in the pharmaceutical journal (vol. 269) says. Of the 64 percent of women who died suddenly from heart attack, there were *no* previous symptoms. Menopause also greatly increases a woman's risk of heart disease. People who suffer from depression are three to four times more likely to die from heart disease than individuals who do not.

If you are a man reading this, please be sure the women in your life read this page carefully...

Consider these alarming statistics:

Being only 20 pounds overweight nearly doubles a woman's risk of heart disease. This means those "few extra pounds" have far more serious cardiovascular implications for women than men.

Tender Notice

Faculty of Engineering Phase (2) 6DQDD University

Sana'a University inviting the local and international contractors who are well experienced in the construction of big projects. To participate in the tender for construction of the Faculty of Engineering Phase (2) Sana'a University.

Tenders are requested to prove with evidence their successful of at least 3 projects of US\$ 8-12 million cost for each during the last five years.

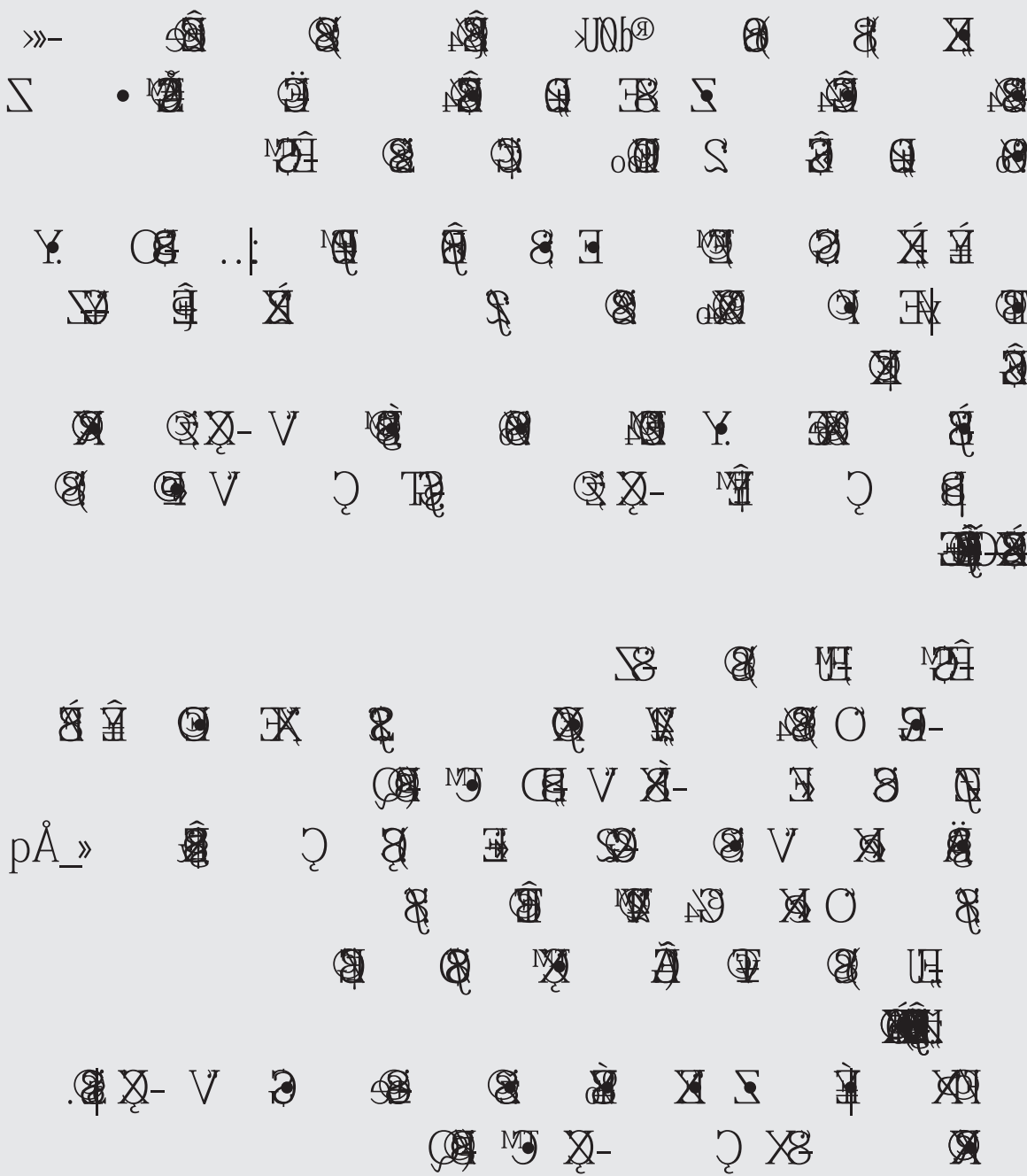
The interested companies can collect the tender documents starting of Saturday March 26 2005 till April 23 2005 from General administration for financial affairs (Alwadi Road) telefax: 01-464677 against non refundable amount of US\$ 2000.

Given that, tender bids submission must meet the following requirements:

1. Bids should be accompanied by a bid security "Bank guarantee or payable cheque" of a minimum of 2.5% of the total bid price valid for 90 days.
2. Bids should be accompanied by a copy of the Tax license renewed for 2005, along with the original for verification and insurance card with the original for verification.
3. Tender bids should be delivered in envelopes sealed with ted wax.
4. Tow copies of the submittals are to be delivered by hand or courier at the above address not later than May 24-2005 at 11:00 pm.

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Reception for Italian Team

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF 22, 2005.

The Italian Embassy in Sana'a organized a reception banquet on the honor of the visiting Italian football team on Tuesday evening March

The team won 1982 World Cup. The Italian team had stood against the Yemeni national team in a cordial match which they lost to their Yemeni hosts in

plenty kicks after the 3/3 result. The stadium was attended by large crowds of fans which indicated the popularity of football game in Yemen and the respect for the Italian stars.

The aim of the visit is to reinforce relations between the two countries. It also targets tourist promotion and heralds other visits that will strengthen cooperation links in a variety of areas.

Eriksson plays down hopes of England goal blitz

SLALEY (Reuters) - Sven-Goran Eriksson believes Azerbaijan's 8-0 defeat by Poland was a freak result that his England side will not be trying to match in Wednesday's World Cup qualifier.

England beat Northern Ireland 4-0 on Saturday to stay top of Group Six, while Poland's demolition of the Azeris kept them a point behind with a far better goal difference.

Unhappy with the newspaper euphoria over how many goals England might score in Newcastle, the England manager told reporters on Tuesday: "I didn't like what I saw this morning."

"I spent 15 years in Italy and the Italians say that talking about how many you're going to score in your next match always brings bad luck."

"Azerbaijan's game on Saturday was unreal."

Everything went well for Poland — every time they got the ball in the box they scored — and everything went wrong for Azerbaijan.

"I don't think Azerbaijan are as bad as that result showed or that Poland are that good."

It was just one of those games where everything went well for one team and everything went badly for the other."

Rather than trying to match Poland's feat, the Swede wants

England to focus on reproducing the sparkling form they showed in Saturday's victory at Old Trafford and making sure they take all three points.

"I will just talk to the players about putting on the performance we did on Saturday and trying to win the game," he said.

"As a manager, I don't think you can tell your players to go out and score five or eight goals."

Football's not like that." Eriksson will field the same starting line-up on Wednesday as at Old Trafford, but said he may make changes in the second half depending on the performance and scoreline.

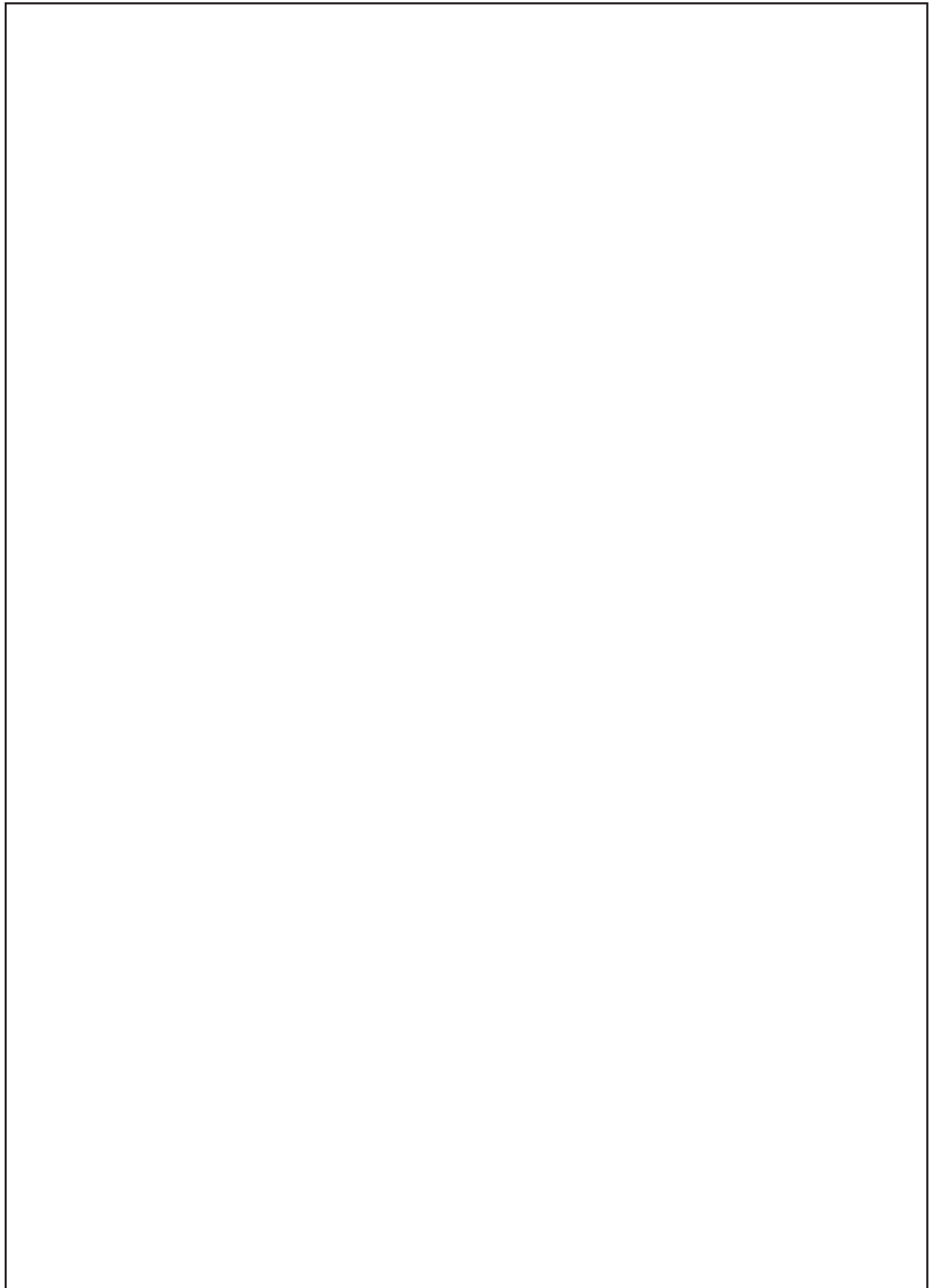
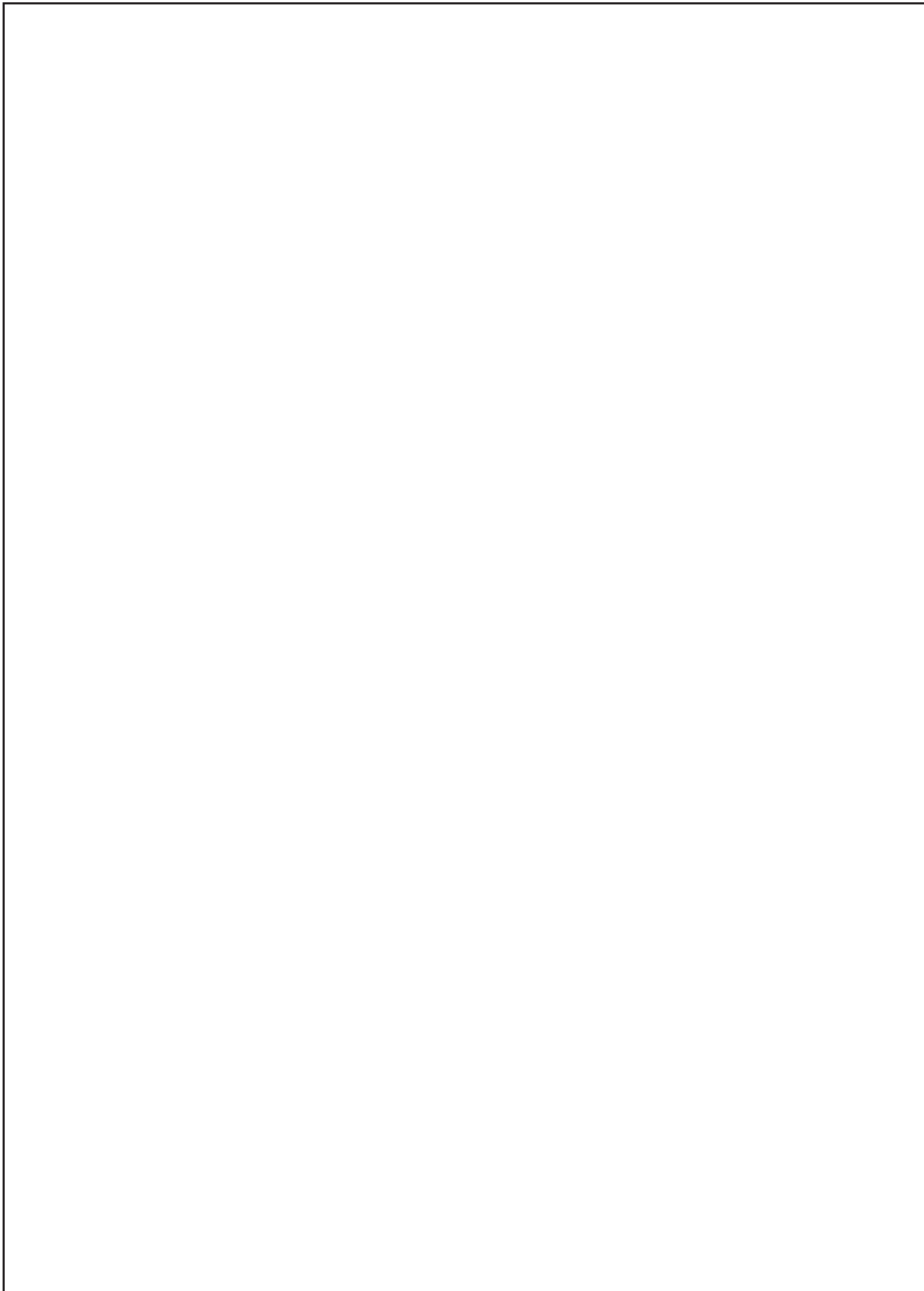
England currently have no injury worries for the game at St James' Park, with the whole squad training on Monday.

"Even though it was only the second day after a match they didn't even seem tired," Eriksson said.

Having beaten Poland 2-1 last September, goal difference would only come into play for England if they finished level on points with them after losing 2-1 to the Poles in their final qualifier at Old Trafford on October 12.

Teams level on points are separated by head-to-head results, head-to-head goal difference and head-to-head goals scored before goal difference all group games comes into play.

The Yemeni National Football Team and the Italian 1982 World Cup Winners.



Ronaldo says only "goals" will stop critics

RIO DE JANEIRO (Reuters) - Brazil striker Ronaldo, who is going through one of the most barren patches of his career, says he accepts the pressure and that scoring goals is the only way to silence his critics.

"The problems will be over when the ball starts going into the net," he told Brazilian media in Montevideo, where Brazil face Uruguay in a World Cup qualifier on Wednesday.

"It's not up to me to agree or disagree with the critics," he added.

"I do my own self-criticism, when I put my head on the pillow at night and think about what I could have done differently."

Ronaldo has hit a goal scoring drought at Real Madrid amid reports of clashes with coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo.

His international form has also suffered and he played poorly in Sunday's 1-0 World Cup win over Peru, despite laying on the winning goal for Kaka.

"The Brazilians are demanding and have become used to winning titles," Ronaldo said.

"I don't think that's going to change.

Football is one of the few things that can still bring happiness to the Brazilians. I accept the pressure."

"I didn't get where I am today by chance," he added.

"Nobody gave me anything.

I have my merits."

Ronaldo will be playing his first match at Montevideo's historic Centenario stadium, venue of the first World Cup final in 1930.

Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo Nazario retrieves a ball during a training session at the Centenario stadium in Montevideo, March 29.

Reuters

Funk Chugs Past the Ferraris

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. (Reuters) - At a tournament that rewarded patience as much as shot-making, Fred Funk could not have been a more popular or deserving winner of The Players Championship on Monday.

One of the most grueling weeks in PGA Tour history turned into a battle between the tortoise and the hares, Funk, a Ponte Vedra resident and fan favorite, crossing the finish line first after firing a final-round one-under-par 71, a stroke ahead of Americans compatriots Tom Lehman, Scott Verplank and Briton Luke Donald.

"Today was just a matter of huge patience," Funk told reporters after picking up the biggest win of his career and a winner's check of \$1.44 million. It hasn't sunk in.

"But it's an awful good feeling.

"To come at this stage in my career and against this strong a field, and all these power guys... I felt kind of like Herbie the Volkswagen, The Love Bug, because I'm out there just hitting my little pea shooters, and the bombers are going 40 by me, everybody I was playing with.

"I stayed with my game plan.

You obviously have to hit the ball well in these windy conditions. But overall it feels

Fred Funk holds the trophy after winning The Players Championship in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida on March 28.

Reuters

really good."

The oldest winner of golf's unofficial fifth major, the 48-year-old Funk admitted he is an economy model in a field packed with Ferraris.

But the veteran got good mileage on the weather-battered TPC at Sawgrass Stadium course, staying out of trouble while golf's power-hitters were often penalized when they strayed from the narrow fairways into the treacherous rough.

"You can be long and crooked, but you can't be short and crooked," said Funk. "With the rough as thick as it was here this week and even last year and the year before that, it's always been thick...it's been a premium on hitting it in the fairway here.

"That's what you needed to do to score.

I could still score on this golf course.

"It's a golf course that actually is pleasing to my eye when I stand on the hole.

There's a couple of holes I'm a little uncomfortable out here with, but most of them I feel comfortable hitting the shot, and that means a lot."

After being pounded by thunderstorms for four days,

torrential rains gave way to gusting winds on Monday placing an even greater premium on accuracy.

The difficult last-day conditions at Sawgrass resulted in 16 players ending up in the 80s for the final round and more than 20 balls being dumped in the water at the infamous par-three 17th with its treacherous island green.

Funk also faltered in the blustery winds coming home with bogeys on 14, 15 and 17 but held his nerve when it mattered most, draining a five-foot putt for par at the final hole to keep his one stroke advantage and maintain the pressure on those behind him.

"It just felt really good to make that putt," said Funk.

"I knew I hadn't had the tournament in my hand at that point yet, because someone behind me could catch me.

"But it was just pent up emotions, I think.

I really felt good, the fact that I put a good stroke on that putt.

"It's a really hard golf course that was playing extremely hard, especially today.

"I can't comprehend how big this really is for me. But they can't take it away from me.

I won this thing today and I always will cherish this win here."

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Aden beautification is coming

By Yemen Times Staff
Aden Bureau

An agreement to beautify the city of Aden, including the area between the roundabout of Textile Factory in Al-Mansoura district to the roundabout of Al-Qaherah in Sheik Othman district, was signed March 22.

A Korean company is to start the \$230,000 project in April.

The work includes a beautiful oasis of a monument, forming the flag of Yemen, surrounded by a green area on which the tree planting fitting the atmosphere will be executed. The green area is about 8,200 square meters.

The first step of the project, costing \$90,000, will last three months, while the second step costing \$140,000 will last six months.

The agreement was signed by Dr. Yahya Mohammed Al-Shuaibi, Aden Governor, on behalf of the local counsel and Mohammed Zemam, General

Manager of Harbors Cities Improvement Project representing the World Bank, the sponsor of the project, and the Manager of the Korean Company of Constructions.

This event was attended by Ahmed Al-Dhelai, Assistant Deputy Governor, and Eng. Wahi Aman, the Consultant of the project and a number of the officials in Aden.

Successful step to better education

By YASSER AL-MAYYASI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The Ministry of Education recently discussed their strategy to develop primary education at a cost of \$121 million in ten Yemeni governorates. The strategy will last for ten years with the aim of upgrading the standards of primary education across the country.

The inauguration ceremony of the strategy was held a few days ago in the presence of donors who believe that the project will be successful and that Yemen was selected from among nine countries that work hard to improve education.

The educational goals are due to be achieved by 2018, and the support offered by donors and the World Bank follows Yemen's extensive educational reforms. The percentage of children enrolled in schools has risen from 14 per cent in 1974 to 74 per cent in 2002, motivating the World Bank and other donors to continue their support for Yemen.

Donors are the main pillar for upgrading the education system. The project to develop primary education will be co-financed by the World Bank, the Government of Netherlands and the Government of United Kingdom, that offered \$65 million, \$23 million and \$25 million respectively.

The Yemeni Government contributed \$5 million while other beneficiaries paid \$2.72 million, bringing the overall cost of the project to \$121 million.

The project aims to improve girl's education and will include all Yemeni children, particularly those with special needs, and will be concentrated more on rural and remote areas. It also aims to train teachers and develop their skills, supply schools with visual aids and enhance the administrative and supervisory abilities of the Ministry of Education.

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