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Secret deal behind release of Italian hostages

By: Mohamed Bin Sallam

SANAA, Jan.7 — The five Italian tourists taken hostage by Al Zaidi tribe in the province of Mareb, 170 km east of Sana'a, were released following a secret deal with kidnappers Friday morning after seven days in captivity.

Armed men abducted these tourists to put pressure on the government to set free eight tribesmen detained by the security authorities since the final days of 2004. The government held the eight people in detention to force the tribe to hand murderers of Sheikh Abdulwali Al-Gairi who was killed by a group of armed men who the authorities say are from Beit Al-Zaidi in the capital city of Sana'a by the end of 2004.

Mediation efforts by Sheikh Jaabal Tuaiman, MP, and Sheikh Derham Al-Dhama, General Secretary of the Local Council in Serwah District, where the tourists were held captive, succeeded in securing the release of the kidnapped Italians, tribal sources told the media. The mediation efforts convinced the kidnappers to release the Italian tourists in exchange for following up procedures of the case of Al Zaidi eight tribesmen detained by the security authorities. The kidnappers demand that their fellow detainees be



Some of the released Italian tourists.

PHOTO BY MOHAMMED AL-QADHI

set free.

Security sources said the kidnappers who were arrested were transferred to the security apparatuses to be investigated, pointing out that they have been holding the Italian hostages in a house in Al-Mahjaza, a village with harsh topography, 25 km northwest of Mareb. The house belongs to an Al-

Mahjaza local under the name of Mane' Al-Ameri.

Non-official sources indicated that the Yemeni government made a secret deal with kidnappers with the aim of maintaining status of the State in return for meeting the demands of the kidnappers.

Continued on page 3

National Somali reconciliation

Saleh facilitates Somali leaders' peace agreement in Aden

By: Adel Al-Haddad

ADEN, Jan. 5 — Somali President Abdullah Yousif Ahmed and his rival speaker of the Somali Parliament speaker Sharaif Hassan Al-Sheikh signed in Aden declaration on Thursday for the Somali national reconciliation. The agreement was under sponsorship of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The declaration consists of five items, which confirm to conclude the fight in Somalia. The two Somali leaders agreed on importance of active coordination, and respecting the principles of the federal charter of Somalia.

The declaration set that the two leaders had agreed to "leave behind all the past differences that hampered the function of interim institutions" and "act together to under the agreement."

The declaration also stated that the Somalia's 275-member transitional parliament should meet within a month in the Somali areas. The declaration called international community and all over world countries to offer all forms of support for holding the first meeting of the Somali parliament in the Somalia.

The two Somali leaders asked from all Somali people to put armies aside

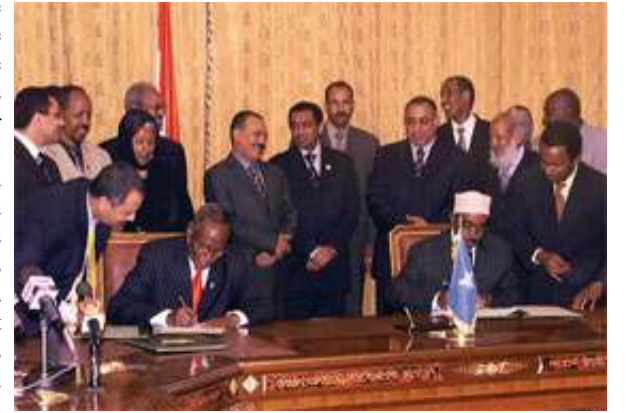
in order to make an end for the civil war and use peaceful ways for resolving their clash.

President Saleh congratulated Somalia leaders for reaching this reconciliation. The president Saleh said "It is time to rebuild new democratic Somalia with the participation of all political parties of Somalia." He also stressed on the importance of moving all state institutions of Somalia into Mogadishu. He said that the international community would help Somalia, if its leaderships unified.

President Saleh called upon the people and the weapons traders to alter their trade to building Somalia. He advised political leadership to close

the problems and claims of the past. He also called upon the Somali leadership, parliament, and governments, to move to the capital Somalia Mogadishu.

The Somali leaders expressed their gratitude and appreciation for President Ali Abdullah Saleh for his efforts in decrease disagreement between the two Somali leaders.



Agreement signing in Aden

Middle East progress amid global gains in freedom

Arab Middle East Shows Improvement, Despite Continued Repression Major Gains in Ukraine, Indonesia; Decline Noted in Philippines Notable Gains in Worldwide Freedom

NEW YORK, Jan. 5 — The people of the Arab Middle East experienced a modest but potentially significant increase in political rights and civil liberties in 2005, Freedom House announced in a major survey of global freedom released today.

The global survey, "Freedom in the World," shows that although the Middle East continues to lag behind other regions, a measurable improvement can be seen in freedom in several key Arab countries, as well as the Palestinian Authority. In another key finding, the number of countries rated by Freedom House as Not Free declined from 49 in 2004 to 45 for the year 2005, the lowest number of Not Free societies identified by the survey in over a decade. In noteworthy country developments, Ukraine and Indonesia saw their status improve from Partly Free to Free; Afghanistan moved from Not Free to Partly Free; and the Philippines saw its status decline

Map of Press Freedom 2005



Map Legend: Free (Green), Partly Free (Yellow), Not Free (Blue)

from Free to Partly Free.

According to Thomas O. Melia, acting executive director of Freedom House, "The modest but heartening advances in the Arab Middle East result from activism by citizen groups and reforms by governments in about equal measures. This emerging trend reminds us that men and women in this region share the universal desire to live in free soci-

eties."

"As we welcome the stirrings of change in the Middle East," said Mr. Melia, "it is equally important that we focus on the follow-through in other regions and appreciate the importance of the continuing consolidation of democracy in Indonesia, Ukraine, and other nations."

Continued on page 3

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Mecca Hajj hostel death toll reaches 76

MECCA, Saudi Arabia (Saba)- Four Yemenis were killed and other three injured in the accident of in the collapse of a Muslim pilgrims' hotel in Saudi Arabia on Thursday. One Yemeni is still missed. All Yemeni victims were working in store in the hotel. The bodies of the four men, Mohammed Yusuf Ali, Abdulh Saleh Hamad, Adel al-Sharabi, Abdullah Hafdallah transferred to one of Mecca's hospitals. The other three injured people, Ali Qasam Ahmed, owner of the shoes store, Mohammed Abdulh Yahya Al-Matari, Khaled Mohammed Saleh al-Alaj are now receiving healing.

Maj. Gen. Mansour Al-Turki, spokesperson of the Interior Ministry, said that 76 persons were died in the accident— 48 men and 28 women. He pointed out that the number of the injured at 62. According to a Health Ministry official, 59 people have been saved from the ruins.

He added that 62 had been wounded in the collapse of the building on Thursday in the Muslim holy city of Mecca, where more than a million pilgrims have assembled.

The tragedy occurred days before Sunday's start of the five-day Hajj, when 2.5 million Muslims cram into the mountain city.



Rubbles of the collapsed hotel in Mecca.

BBC PHOTO

The building was at least 6 stores high and about 30 years old.

The Saba official news agency said

President Ali Abdullah Saleh had spoken to the Minister of Endowment to ask about Yemenis were among the victims.

Banks banned from dealing with 323 personalities & companies

SANAA, Jan. 7- The Banks Monitoring Sector at the Central Bank of Yemen (CBY) has recently revealed that there are 323 debtors to banks working in the Republic of Yemen.

A statement distributed by the monitoring to different media and considered by the CBY as a top confidential issuance, clarified the list of debtors was prepared in dependence on data gathered from banks and results reached by field inspections carried out by Banks Monitoring Sector.

The CBY demanded banks operating in Yemen not to grant new loans to any of the people whose names mentioned in the blacklist. The circulation warned banks against violating those instructions, otherwise they would be exposed to imposition of fines or severe procedures that the CBY realizes are necessary.

Reading the names of blacklisted people, it has become apparent that they are social personalities of distinction, in addition to fifty reputable trade firms.

The blacklist also included 20 trading and service companies, tourism and travel agencies, factories, hotels, private hospitals and commercial groups.

What arouses astonishment is that the blacklist contains names of real estates and egg, plastic bags and sweets shops that must not be granted loans by any private banks operating in Yemen under a CBY ban. The CBY publication never mentioned figures on sums on debtors to repay nor did it contain details of debts against each name on the blacklist.

14,000 infected by AIDS daily

SANA'A Jan. 4 - Results of a survey by the Youth of Yemen Union revealed that Yemeni youth are disappointed about "the tarrying of involved authorities in carrying out its responsibilities to define and raise awareness of AIDS risks."

79.44 percent of survey participants confirmed that involved authorities have negative attitudes in this matter, whereas 18.89 percent of participants believed that authorities' role was positive. However, both sides demanded authorities handle this issue more effectively.

Most recent statistics estimate that internationally, 14,000 are infected by AIDS daily and 12,000 of these are between ages 15-49. In 2005, 67,000 were newly infected by HIV in the Middle East and North Africa region. Total AIDS deaths increased from 55,000 in 2003 to 58,000 in 2005, according to UNAIDS. Additionally, the region's total AIDS deaths increased almost six-fold since the early 1990s.

Yemen recorded 1,769 AIDS cases up to December 2005, discovering 20 cases by chance. WHO assessments expect this number to reach 11,227.

Women candidates trained on local elections

SANA'A, Jan. 7—The Sisters Arab Forum (SAF) concluded Thursday a training course on training women candidates for local elections. The training course aimed to introduce Yemeni legislations regarding local councils and inform on the local elections coming in September 2006. Trainees were also given some information on how to prepare for the election campaign plans such as determining aims, concerned parties, and preparing for alliances.

The training course began on Tuesday, and was attended by 32 trainees from the General People's Congress, Islah Party, Yemeni Socialist Party, Haq Party, Nasserite Unionist Organization, and Popular Forces

Union. Ms. Sumaisha Rabaha and Mr. Shawqi Al-Qadi, a member of the Parliament, were the main trainers in the course.

Meanwhile, Ms. Amel Al-Basha, director of the Sisters Arab Forum, asked the General People's Congress to give women candidates a larger opportunity in the coming local elections. She doubted the GPC's serious determination to give women candidates 15% of the seats in the local and parliamentary elections.

In the closing day of the course, the trainees managed to make a strategy for the election campaign. They also gave an overall evaluation of the course.

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Execution of Dutch murderer

SANA'A, Jan. 7- The murderer of the Dutch national, Ahmed Ali Ahmed Nawas, was executed last Wednesday in the Central prison in Sana'a.

Nawas was condemned for the murder of his 30 years old Dutch wife. A death squad carried out the execution. The Dutch wife was found dead in Dar Salm area in 2000. The husband who works as a driver in a tourist company knew the Dutch woman and married her shortly before her murder. She used to work in a Dutch development organization that supports development projects in Yemen.

This is the second execution for a convict who killed or kidnapped foreigners. Last Tuesday convict Faisal was executed for kidnapping foreign tourists in 2001. He was also convicted for robbery and killing a Yemeni national.

Demand to release accused terrorists in Mukala

SANA'A, Jan. 7 - Relatives of youth being held in Mukala political security prison demanded their release. Detainees have been held for six months for alleged terrorist acts after extradition to Yemen from other Arab countries.

More than 20 of the youth are from Hadramout, but their families are living outside Yemen. Security lets them telephone their families once a week.

A close relative of the detainees told Al-Nida newspaper last Wednesday that his follow-up efforts to release one of the detainees came to a standstill due to strict instructions from Sana'a. Authorities in Mukala say the detainees' case is outside their authority. Relatives called the Attorney General to consider the detainees' case and either refer them to judiciary or release them.

Ahmed Said Hashid, General Freedom and Human Rights parliamentary committee member, said he was prevented from visiting the prison during a visit to the governorate three months ago.

Belgian mission concludes artificial limb training

ADEN, Jan. 4 - The Belgian mission in Aden concluded training and qualifying sessions January 2 on artificial limb procedures within the past five years. Thirteen people were trained at the Center for Persons with Special Needs.

General Health and Population manager Dr. Alkidir Nasser addressed the appreciation ceremony. He praised the Belgian mission's efforts in training and qualifying Yemeni staff to help treat the disabled. They helped many overcome their disabilities. Nasser assured that Aden's health office will direct care of the disabled to these

trainees so it will continue in a good manner.

The Belgian mission's medical head for artificial limbs expressed her gratitude for cooperation during their work. She also expressed happiness for the facilities the center furnished in overcoming obstacles they met.

Certificates were awarded to distinctive students at the end of the ceremony. Laila Ba-Shomail, manager of the Center for Persons with Special Needs, and Ioub Abubakr, Work and Social Affairs general manager, also attended the ceremony.

Biometric System to be applied next February

SANAA, Jan. 7- Various media instruments published last Thursday news that the Ministry of Civil Service was finalizing arrangements for installing the Biometric System (the use of photo and fingerprint cards) and issuing occupation cards in all the units of the State's administrative system next February.

The Ministry will finish training workers on devices and equipment specialized for applying the Biometric System and distribute them to government facilities in all the Yemeni governorates, the media said.

It pointed out that the German company entrusted with implementing the project will finalize the procurement of other devices and equipment for the project at a total cost of two million

and seven thousand Euros by the end of January. The cost will be paid by a World Bank credit as part of the framework for updating the Civil Service as part of the financial and administrative reform program in the country.

Official source clarified that the Fingerprint and Photo System will include all government civil, security and military employees according to the law. A photo and fingerprint will be taken for each employee to be then granted an occupation digit in his/her administrative unit.

Then the database will be collected from governorates to the Main Database at the Ministry of Civil Service, which will have a central system for the collection of fingerprints

UNHCR urges international community to cooperate with Yemen

SANAA, Jan. 7- Abdulmalik Abboud, Foreign Relations Officer at the UN Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) confirmed in a statement to the media that the Republic Yemen could not alone afford the burdens of refugees on its territory.

He appealed to the international community to stand by Yemen and help it in the provision of additional resources and means of good support to enable it do its humane duty for the refugees in a better way.

In an interview with Al-Wahdah weekly, Abboud said, "I highly appreciate the humane role played by the Yemeni government and the support it offers for refugees despite the facilities

shortage and economic difficulties it faces."

He pointed out that the figure 78786 is the latest score of refugees and refuge seekers from the Horn of Africa until last October.

Reaching an agreement with the Yemeni government, the UNHCR carries out a statistical program to identify the number of refugees in Yemen through renewing their ID cards and inaugurating six permanent centers for refugees' registration in cooperation with the Yemeni Interior Ministry.

These centers started work in the mid of last December in the governorates of Sana'a, Aden, Taiz, Hadramout and Shabwah to help the government know

and photos.

According to the same sources, implementing the Biometric System this year aims to put an end to multi-dippers and prevent any future recurrence of the phenomenon.

The sources mentioned that multi-dippers who voluntarily resigned numbered up to 5581 and that the remaining days of January would be a deadline for multi-dippers to select one job and resign from others. If multi-dippers do not respond by the deadline, they will be eventually dismissed from the government jobs and sent to court, Ministry of Civil Service source said.

Concerning the reasons behind the latest protest staged by refugees, leaving many Somalis killed or injured, the UNHCR Foreign Relations Officer revealed that protestors listed many demands to be met, among them the right to naturalization.

He confirmed the UNHCR could not suggest a solution to those issues and the Yemeni government is the concerned party responsible for tackling them.

Continued from page 1

Secret deal behind release of Italian hostages

The same sources said that Sheikh Tuaiman convinced the kidnapers not to resist government security forces who were spread excessively in the area. They added that the Italian Embassy in Sana'a played a great role in persuading the security authorities not to use force against the kidnapers and to opt for a peaceful dialogue.

The humanitarian appeals by relatives of the hostages have had their effect on the intensification of the pressures on the kidnapers to immediately release the Italian nationals. The Italian President Ciampi and Prime Minister Berlusconi expressed their great delight at the release of the five hostages in Yemen Friday morning and thanked the Yemeni government for the efforts it paid to save lives of the kidnapped.

Ciampi said, "it is wonderful news and the daytime became more illuminated, I thank those who worked hard for the release of hostages, especially the officials in the Italian Foreign Ministry and the Embassy of Italy to Sana'a, as well as efforts of the Yemeni government."

On his part, the Italian Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini expressed his heartfelt regards to his Yemeni counterpart and said in a letter to Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi: "This will enhance the friendly and traditional relations between Italy and Yemen."

One of the kidnapped women, Maura Tonetto, narrated to the official media her experience along with other companions while being held captive: "I along with my companions stayed laying on the ground throughout the night in the day preceding our release



The Italian ambassador with some of the released Italian tourists.

PHOTO BY MOHAMMED AL-QADHI

in response to the arbitrary orders of kidnapers. In the early morning, we heard periodical shooting of fire and the drone of helicopters."

"My captive companions were optimistic that they will be released immediately, particularly after the kind treatment they received from the captors. But after days of the kidnapping, we started to experience the nervousness of the abductors and their bad style that did not last for a long time. This made us believe that we will be freed safely in a short period of time." She added, "we were laughing at the disputes that occurred

among kidnapers themselves, but towards the end we felt that the situation gets more complicated."

Tonetto described the ordeal, "when the kidnapers heard the shooting of fire, two of them started to point their guns at us and demanded us to remain motionless. Later on, we heard one of the kidnapers talking in a loud voice to his accomplice, then he returned to us and demanded his accomplice to go out. When the two went out, we found that they had thrown their guns, and at that moment the police stormed the place where we had been seized."

Readers' Voice

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

This edition's question:

Do you think that Yemen can persuade all the Somali factions to reach permanent reconciliation?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Last edition's question:

Yemeni prisons are full of hundreds of detainees without charges. Do you think that the government will reconsider the cases of these detainees through trial or release?

- No 66%
- Yes 30%
- I don't know 4%

Go to our website at: yementimes.com/#poll and have your voice heard!

Cycling across Yemen

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

It all started with a letter to the Yemen Times. To whom it may concern, it was titled and the story followed. Gillian and Wilhem Magar are a couple from Europe who have been cycling around the world. Their journey began two and half years ago from France and they have cycled through 12 countries, France, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Sicily, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia and Yemen. Today, as they are in Yemen, more specific they are right now in Mukala, Hadramout, they are both excited and disappointed; "We are two world cyclists unable to cycle in Yemen" they said. Reason being is that with the recent kidnapping and security issues of the country the tourist police did not grant our two athletes permission to cycle around the country.

Gillian said: "We really hope the kidnapping situation is resolved so that tourists can enjoy the kindness of the Yemeni people as we have experienced so far. We cannot say more about the landscapes though, as we only know Sana'a!"

It has been three weeks for Gillian and Wilhem in Yemen since their arrival on the 20th of December, and yet they have not had their share of this beautiful country. Now that it is Eid holidays there might be an opportunity to see the Yemeni people celebrating and enjoying peace and fun.

Discover the world

They started with an idea to carry out a cycling self-sponsored journey in quest to discover the world for themselves. Two and half years ago, Wilhem, the French accountant and his wife Gillian the development activist from Ireland decided they would become world citizens for the next decade of their lives. "We want to see through our own eyes, because everything we here is somebody's else's opinion. We want to learn and understand different cultures and meet different people", said Wilhem when I asked him about the purpose of their journey around the world. They are even planning to have a baby somewhere on the road. Their baby for real



In a small cafe in Dairree street.



Gillian and Wilhem cycling in Sana'a

would become an international citizen.

Coming from the north of the globe and now they are heading east. Next stop would be Oman, through Mukala in Yemen, then Pakistan and India. "We haven't decided where to go once we are in India, but at least we know we are heading there for now. We hoped to visit Iran but we were not successful in getting the suitable visa. We still want to visit Iran if we had the chance." Gillian explained.

Gillian and Wilhem chose to travel by bicycles because it is the most environment friendly way to travel. They decided to make Yemen a stopping point because of the encouraging comments they heard about the country from a Dutch couple they had met in Egypt. Gillian commented on their

three weeks in Sana'a: "We are happy that we came here, although we can only talk about Sana'a since we have not been able to go else where. But the people are very friendly and nice."

Kibda wa Kalawi Mashwiya and Qat
Upon trying Yemeni food, Gillian has decided that she likes best: Kibda wa Kalawi Mashwiya (grilled liver and kidney). "She likes Kabab too" added Wilhem teasing her. They have tried Arais (bread with minced meat), Yemeni style beans, chicken and meat. "We had Qahawa bilhail, it was very tasty. We liked the coffee" Gillian said.

Socializing with Yemenis, the couple have had their personal Qat chewing experience. "I chewed from 2 in the afternoon to 10 at night, I didn't feel high as they said I would, but I couldn't sleep for many hours after that". Wilhem said. However, Gillian had a little bit different experience: "I felt a little different, I guess it was because I danced a lot. I chewed from five to 10, it was a wonderful experience." The couple were introduced to Qat first in Ethiopia, but there the people swallow the Qat leaves not like they do in Yemen.

A world without boarder

If there were one thing you would change about Yemen, what would it be? I asked the couple. "Nothing at all" jumped Wilhem. "It wouldn't be Yemen if I changed it. If I change it that means I am putting something of my believes or my opinion and not what the country actually is." Gillian agreed but she had something more to add, "the kidnapping incidents, if they are happening because people do not have any

other way of expressing themselves more freely then I wish for Yemen more space and to be free in expressing their minds. We have been here only for a short period and we really cannot judge."

Adamant to get something from Wilhem I asked again, "then tell me, if you would change something about the whole world, what would you change?" he thought a little before he said: "A world without boarders where people can freely go from one place to another." Impressed with his answer, I had to agree.

Spare parts

During their stay in Yemen, Gillian and Wilhem came across many funny incidents. "It is enough to think of all the simple phrases the Yemeni people use everyday on casual basis." Wilhem said. Gillian added, "Cycling down the river bed and trying not to fall in a hole or get hit by a car coming from nowhere is also an amusing experience."

Perhaps one of the funny incidents they had when they ordered for spare parts for their bicycles. "We ordered the spare parts from England in Ethiopia, the spare parts were made in France and to be delivered in Yemen." Wilhem said. As if the universality of the spare parts was not enough, the parts were delivered in Aden and stayed there until they were claimed by the couple to be sent to Sana'a. "Had we not known they were in Aden, we would have never gotten them." Wilhem exclaimed. "But at least you can get things done in Yemen very easily" Gillian interrupted. "there is everything here and it is very much available."

This represents 64 percent of the world's countries-the highest number in the survey's 33-year history.

Of the four countries that registered an outright decline in status, the most significant was the Philippines. The decision to downgrade this country from Free to Partly Free was based on credible allegations of massive electoral fraud, corruption, and the government's intimidation of elements in the political opposition. The period since September 11, 2001, has witnessed steady progress in majority Muslim countries in regions beyond the Middle East.

The steady record of progress observed represents a powerful argument against the proposition that Islam is incompatible with democracy or is an impediment to the spread of freedom. Indeed, there has been a striking improvement in the level of freedom in majority Muslim countries over the past ten years. In 1995, 1 majority Muslim country was Free, 13 were Partly Free, and 32, or 70 percent, were Not Free. For 2005, the figures are 3 Free countries, 20 Partly Free, and 23 Not Free.

Regional Patterns

Democracy and freedom are the dominant trends in Western and East-Central Europe, in the Americas, and increasingly in the Asia-Pacific region. In the former Soviet Union, the picture remains mixed, while in Africa, Free societies and electoral democracies remain a minority despite recent progress. As noted above, the Middle East has experienced

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Gillian and Wilhem's diary in Sana'a

Old Town Sana'a

17th December 2005 - After a late awaking, we go out. The streets are buzzing with activity and radiant under the strong sun rays. Not a cloud in sight. This high altitude town at 2,313 metres (7589ft) is dry and dusty. Women are shopping. They are fully dressed in black, with a *dira* (long black dress), a *makrama* (black headscarf) and a *luthma* (black veil hiding their faces from strangers). Only their eyes and hands are showing. Foreign women are easy to spot...they aren't covering their hair...Spokes, out of respect for tradition covers hers. Great we think! Surrounded by this new traditional way of life. The Yemenis make us feel comfortable and welcomed, greeting us with sheer smiles and 'salaam Aleikum'. Spokes receives a few "welcome" from beneath the veils with smiley eyes.

A striking sight is the cheek of most men. One side of their mouth shows a huge swollen cheek. Once you look more attentively, you realise it is their favourite: *chat* cheeks! We first met *chat* leaves when we were in Ethiopia. In Yemen, they import them mainly from Ethiopia. *Chat* acts as a stimulant and "opens your mind". In Ethiopia, they chew it and swallow it; in Yemen, they store it under their cheek and suck the sap out of it, till the corner of their mouth turns green. In Yemen, *chat* plays a very important role into Yemeni social life. People gather most afternoon and *chat* together, drinking water and soft drinks to cut the bitterness out of the leaves. All class of society does it. Shopkeepers, policemen, drivers, consulate staff, men, women, you name it...they chew it...so did we! Some keep it for the weekend (Thursdays and Fridays) some do it all day, every day.

We manage to get some take out food - chicken and chips - and then head to an Internet point. Internet plays a strong part in our journey, as without it we wouldn't be able to keep the website updated, or write to friends and family!

Moving around in Sana'a

20th December 2005 - Using minibuses in Sana'a is very easy. You wait by the side of the road and when you spot a white and yellow van, it is a minibus. You wave; it stops. Each time you sit in a minibus, it costs you 20 Rials (0.10EUR), whatever the distance the minibus covers. For the unaware traveler, an amusing yet startling sight is the musical chair ballet that men and women perform in the minibus. As Wheel was comfortably sat, a 10 year old girl comes on the minibus followed by 2 other girls, and, with a flick from the hand, commands Wheel to shift out of the seat to let them sit. Wheel taken by surprise executes. Next stop. Two more women get on; more men shuffle, until two adjoining seats are made available for the ladies to seat next to each other, well away from the opposite gender. Women will simply not get on the bus if only a sit near a man is available. Funny side to it, you quickly adapt. From Spokes perspective, it is a refreshing and liberating change. In the western societies, people miss the positive boundaries placed upon women in some Muslim countries: respect and safety in public places.

Continued from page 1

Middle East progress amid global gains in freedom

On the whole, the state of freedom showed substantial improvement worldwide, with 27 countries and one territory registering gains and only 9 countries showing setbacks. The global picture thus suggests that the past year was one of the most successful for freedom since Freedom House began measuring world freedom in 1972.

"These global findings are encouraging," said Arch Puddington, director of research. "Among other things, the past year has been notable for terrorist violence, ethnic cleansing, civil conflict, catastrophic natural disasters, and geopolitical polarization. That freedom could thrive in this environment is impressive."

Although the countries of the Middle East lag behind other regions in areas such as adherence to democratic standards, independent media, the rights of women, and the rule of law, the past year witnessed modest positive trends. Lebanon experienced the most significant improvement; its status improved from Not Free to Partly Free due to major improvements in both political rights and civil liberties that followed the withdrawal of Syrian occupation forces. Elections exhibiting increased competition in Iraq, Egypt, and the Palestinian territories; the introduction of women's suffrage in Kuwait; and improvements in

Saudi Arabia's media environment are among other encouraging signs in the region.

According to the survey, 89 countries are Free, the same as the previous year. These countries' nearly 3 billion inhabitants (46 percent of the world's population) enjoy open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life, and independent media. Another 58 countries representing 1.2 billion people (18 percent) are considered Partly Free. Political rights and civil liberties are more limited in these countries, in which the norm may be corruption, weak rule of law, ethnic and religious strife, and a setting in which a single political party enjoys dominance. The survey finds that 45 countries are Not Free. The 2.3 billion inhabitants (35 percent) of these countries are widely and systematically denied basic civil liberties and basic political rights are absent.

Aside from the Middle East, countries in the former Soviet Union were most notable for improvements in freedom during 2005. In addition to Ukraine, improvements were noted in Kyrgyzstan, whose rating improved from Not Free to Partly Free, and Georgia. Positive change was also noted in Latvia and Lithuania, two states where democratic

freedoms had already been consolidated.

Further gains in the region will likely depend on the development of the kind of mature and credible opposition that emerged in Ukraine and Georgia prior to their nonviolent revolutions. At the same time, authoritarian leaderships in Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, and, most importantly, Russia have adopted policies that will make it more difficult for the development of a genuine civil society and will impede the development of a democratic political opposition.

In Uzbekistan, state violence against demonstrators, the repression of civil society, and an overall decline in human rights conditions during the past year was sufficiently pronounced to warrant a decline in the country's Freedom in the World score to the lowest possible rating. Only eight countries worldwide earned a similar status as the worst of the worst, and two, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, are in Central Asia. In Russia-whose freedom status Freedom House lowered from Partly Free to Not Free one year ago-the Putin leadership's anti-democratic tendencies appeared, if anything, more pronounced in 2005.

Among the study's other findings:

- The number of electoral democracies increased by three, from 119 to 122.

Among the 35 countries in the Americas, 33 are electoral democracies. In all, 24 states are rated as Free (69 percent), 9 are Partly Free (26 percent), and 2-Cuba and Haiti-are Not Free (6 percent).

In the 18 Middle Eastern countries, only one, Israel, ranks as Free (Israel is also the only electoral democracy in the region). There are 6 Partly Free states (33 percent), and 11 countries that are Not Free (61 percent).

Worst of the Worst

There are 45 states that are rated as Not Free, in which a broad range of freedoms are systematically denied. Among the Not Free countries, 8 states have been given the survey's lowest rating of 7 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties. The eight worst-rated countries represent a narrow range of systems and cultures. Cuba and North Korea are one-party Marxist-Leninist regimes. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are Central Asian countries ruled by dictators with roots in the Soviet period. Libya and Syria are Arab countries under the sway of secular dictatorships, while Sudan is under a leadership that has elements both of radical Islamism and of the traditional military junta. The remaining worst rated state is Burma, a tightly controlled military dictatorship.

There are two worst-rated territories: Tibet (under Chinese jurisdiction) and Chechnya, where an indigenous Islamic population is engaged in a brutal guerrilla war for independence from Russia.



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President of the Republic of Yemen
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Executive Director

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و السنة الميلادية الجديدة

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Israelis keep vigil after Sharon's surgery

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - Israelis kept a nationwide vigil for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Saturday after he underwent emergency surgery to staunch renewed bleeding in his brain from a massive stroke.

Doctors at the hospital where Sharon lay in critical but stable condition said it could be days before they knew how much damage he had suffered. But medical experts believe that if he survives it is extremely unlikely he will ever return to work.

The death or incapacitation of Sharon, 77, who raised peace hopes by pulling Israeli settlers and troops out of Gaza in September to end 38 years of military rule, would create a huge vacuum in Israeli politics and the Middle East peace process.

At Jerusalem synagogues where the Jewish Sabbath was being observed and at Tel Aviv beach cafes where youths carried surfboards under their arms, Israelis anxiously awaited word on the ex-general's fate after a five-hour operation on Friday.

"We're all praying for him. He is a giant of our nation," said Jonathan Eilat, 47, wearing a prayer shawl at Jerusalem's Western Wall, the holiest site of Jewish worship.

Surgeons at Hadassah hospital staunchly renewed bleeding in Sharon's brain on Friday but said they would only be able to assess the extent of damage in days ahead when he is weaned off drugs that they said were keeping him in an induced coma.

He was on a respirator after the operation, his third since being rushed to the hospital on Wednesday.

"There is always damage in cases like these. We have to wait to see how he will react when we lessen the dosage of the medications that are

keeping him sedated," neurosurgeon Felix Umansky told reporters late on Friday.

Hadassah hospital director Shlomo Mor-Yosef said Sharon's brain scan following surgery showed "significant improvement". No further medical bulletins were expected, barring major developments, until after the Sabbath ends at sundown.

Nonetheless, throughout the Jewish state, radios were tuned to on-the-hour news broadcasts for any scrap of new information.

Sharon's doctors, speaking before Friday's surgery, cautioned against undue pessimism over his condition.

"For some reason, everyone is mentioning the less pleasant things ... any assessment is irresponsible -- things can go one way or the other," Shmuel Shapira, Hadassah's deputy director, told Israel's Channel Two television.

Crucial juncture for peace process

Sharon is reviled in the Arab world but increasingly seen by the West as having opened up new prospects for peace. He suffered his stroke at his Negev Desert ranch at a crucial juncture in Israeli politics, as he was fighting for re-election on a promise to end conflict with the Palestinians.

Underlining his pivotal role, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice canceled a trip to Indonesia and Australia because of concerns over his condition and the risk of another eruption of Middle East violence.

Political analysts said Israel's March 28 election, which Sharon had been widely expected to win as head of the new centrist Kadima party, would become an open race without him.

His deputy Ehud Olmert was named

acting prime minister on Wednesday after Sharon fell ill.

Much of Sharon's popularity among Israelis stems from a belief he could take bold steps toward reconciliation with the Palestinians which others would not get away with, given his background as the archetypal hawk.

But two opinion polls published in newspapers on Friday suggested that under Olmert, Kadima would still win around 40 of parliament's 120 seats -- well ahead of Likud, the rightist party Sharon abandoned, and center-left Labour.

Sharon had been campaigning on a platform of readiness to give up some occupied land in the West Bank, but has vowed to hold on to major West Bank settlement blocs, a prospect Palestinians say would deny them a viable state.

In Washington, White House spokesman Trent Duffy said Bush continued to pray for Sharon's recovery. Rice spoke to Olmert briefly by telephone and an Israeli political source said Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak also called to wish him well.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas telephoned Olmert on Thursday to express hopes Sharon would recover, but some other Palestinians were less forgiving of the Israeli leader's harsh measures to fight a five-year-old uprising.

One preacher at Friday prayers in Gaza denounced him as "the man who wiped the smiles from the faces of children".

Even before Sharon fell ill, hopes for peacemaking were dwindling over a possible delay to January 25 Palestinian elections and growing unrest in Gaza and the West Bank.

London looks for normality six months after bombs

LONDON (Reuters) - The first thing Gary Stevens saw after a 650-meter walk down a dark, smoke-filled tunnel was a young man leaning against the wreckage of a London underground train with his left leg missing.

But even that shocking sight was nothing compared to the carnage that greeted the duty station manager inside the carriages blown apart by a suicide bomber last July 7.

"I didn't realize until then it was a bomb. He was hysterical saying 'we're all going to die, we're all going to die,'" Stevens, 42, told Reuters.

"There were a few fatalities, some very, very seriously injured people missing limbs and severely traumatized people as well."

The emergency services took 40 minutes to reach the scene deep underground at Russell Square station and Stevens, who had to step over corpses to reach the wounded, spent the next three hours helping those who had been hurt.

He was one of the many unsung heroes who helped the dazed and injured caught up in the four blasts -- the first ever suicide attacks in western Europe.

The bombings by four young British Islamists on three underground trains and a double-decker bus in central London during the morning rush hour killed 52 people and wounded more than 700 others.

It left Britons shocked and afraid, and that fear was exacerbated two weeks later when a similar plot to attack three trains and a bus only failed because detectives said the suspected bombers' devices didn't go off.

Threat still there

The threat is still there. London's police chief Sir Ian Blair said last month the security services had foiled three credible plots since July and warned that groups were planning further attacks.

But six months on, most people say life on the streets of the capital has returned to normality.

"I think the only way to prove to these people who carried out this terrible atrocity that they haven't succeeded is for life to carry on and we'll go about it in a normal way," Stevens said.

Travelers at London's King's Cross mainline station, where the July 7 bombers separated shortly before car-



The City of London coat of arms is seen as police officers stand guard in front of the closed entrance of Aldgate underground station after the bomb blasts in London, July 7. REUTERS

rying out their attacks nearby, were also philosophical about the threat.

"In the early months, we were aware of being in closed spaces, of people around you and what they were carrying. There was a certain amount of irrational fear," said project manager Des Crawford, 50.

He added the second failed attacks had really put the public on edge but people had got over that fear now.

"You suddenly realized that it's going to be an ongoing thing and you adjust to that at some level.

"You can't live your life constantly feeling you are at some great danger or risk," he said

Wrong train or wrong bus

"I was nervous the first couple of weeks," said private investigator Joseph Furneaux-Gotch, 51, adding that security measures also appeared to have eased.

"I worked in Northern Ireland and I'm a bit of a fatalist. If you are on the wrong train or the wrong bus at the wrong time, there's not much you can do."

In the aftermath of the bombings, the sound of wailing sirens from the emergency services would provoke anxious glances from passers-by fearful of another attack.

But on a cold, gray January morning, barely anyone paid the slightest attention to the sound of police cars and fire

engines racing past King's Cross.

"I think people have got on with it. It's back to how it was before the bombings, a London Underground inspector, who did not wish to give his name, told Reuters.

He said people were no longer obviously suspicious of their fellow travelers.

"The closed-off mentality that people don't notice anything is back."

Michael Reddy, founder of the Independent Counselling and Advisory Service (Icas) which provides psychological help to trauma victims worldwide, said it was usual for populations hit by terrorism to get on with their lives.

But they wouldn't forget what had happened.

"I would have thought that there will be a handful of people who will still be affected," he said.

"Many, many people will still have an emotional connection when they are close to some place that has a memory for them, or when they get on a train or even when they notice a stray packet or a strange-looking guy with a rucksack."

"There will be reminders that will still trigger a small reaction. It's not as though people have just 'forgotten.'"

Gary Stevens agrees.

"The seventh of July unfortunately will stay with me until I go to my grave," he said. "It's a day I'm never going to forget."

Suspected rebels blow up Sri Lanka patrol boat

COLOMBO (Reuters) - Suspected Tamil Tiger suicide bombers sank a naval patrol boat off Sri Lanka's east coast early on Saturday and 13 of the 15 crew were missing, the navy said, in the worst attack at sea since a 2002 truce halted civil war.

Nearby fishermen pulled two sailors alive from the water after the pre-dawn attack on the Israeli-built fast patrol boat just outside Trincomalee naval harbor, and the Navy was searching for the rest of the crew, all initially feared to have died.

One of the survivors said a Tiger boat had rammed their boat and exploded, destroying both vessels, a military source said. Harbor police said they had heard a loud explosion.

If confirmed, it would be the first suicide attack on the military since the ceasefire. A similar attack on the navy in Trincomalee harbor and killed 12 sailors led a previous ceasefire to collapse in 1995.

Officials said crews searching the Trincomalee site after daylight could not even find debris from the two vessels.

"We believe it was a Tiger suicide mission. The Dvora (fast attack craft) was completely destroyed," said Navy spokesman Commodore Jayantha Perera. "We're still looking for the 13 missing."

Military spokesman Brig. Prasad Samarasinghe said it was too early to consider the missing to be feared dead, because they could be drifting in sea currents.

In December, 39 military personnel were killed in a string of mine attacks, the deadliest month since a 2002 ceasefire that diplomats and truce monitors say is strained to breaking point.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were not immediately available for comment, but have routinely denied any hand in attacks on the military -- which analysts and the government say they cannot believe.

The rebels have threatened to resume their armed struggle unless given wide autonomy.

Suspected rebel attacks escalated after the Tigers helped sink the chances of the candidate seen as most likely to reach a peace deal by boycotting November's presidential poll, which



Sea Tiger fighting boats put on a display to mark the Tamil Tiger "Heroes' Day" off the east coast of Sri Lanka's Mullathivu in this Nov. 27. file photo. REUTERS

analysts say shows they are using the truce to regroup and rearm.

The boycott helped hard-liner President Mahinda Rajapakse win the election.

Each recent attack on the military has also come on the heels of Tiger reports of army abuses and killings. The government is probing one such incident after five Tamil youths the army said were blown up by their own grenade were found shot dead execution-style. Sporadic violence also was continuing in the northern army-held enclave of Jaffna, which is hemmed in by rebel territory, where troops conducted search and cordon operations to root out suspected Tigers.

The Tigers say they want a political solution to the conflict, which has killed more than 64,000 people and displaced hundreds of thousands more since 1983. But they also say they are ready for war unless they are given an ethnic homeland in the north and east, where they already run a de facto state.

Search for peace

New President Rajapakse's government and the rebels cannot even agree on a venue for talks, with the Tigers demanding they should be held in Europe and the government insisting on Asia or at home.

Norwegian peace envoy Erik Solheim

is due in Sri Lanka on January 23 to try to break the deadlock, and the government has put the onus on him to sort out the venue. Analysts say both sides will have to compromise or risk facing a grim scenario.

Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera, capping an official visit to Washington where he sought American help to avoid a slide back into war in the island state, said Colombo was "still willing to walk that extra mile for peace".

"This is not because of any weakness but because we are a government committed to a negotiated settlement to this problem and we do not think that war is an option," he told reporters.

"We want to bring international pressure on the LTTE to come and sit with us at the table to discuss the weaknesses of the ceasefire and find ways and means of strengthening it so these dastardly acts do not happen again," Samaraweera added.

The United States banned the LTTE in 1997 and U.S. forces have been training Sri Lankan troops, but diplomats in Colombo say there is no chance Washington would wade in militarily if the violence spirals into war.

Samaraweera called the Tigers a "brutal terror machine" and said the government feared a possible backlash if the violence continued. But he said war was not an option.

US: Fewer hunger strikers at Guantanamo

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The number of Guantanamo Bay prisoners taking part in an ongoing hunger strike has fallen by more than half after a surge in participation that began on Christmas Day, the U.S. military said on Friday.

The military last week said participation in the protest by detainees, believed to be uniformly Muslim, had more than doubled starting on the Christian holiday on December 25, with 46 joining in, bringing the total to 84 by last Thursday.

But 44 of those had since ended their participation, Army Lt. Col. Jeremy Martin, a military spokesman, said by telephone from the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, site of the U.S. prison for foreign terrorism suspects.

The Pentagon said the prison housed about 500 detainees, many of whom have been held for nearly four years, all but nine without charges. The hunger strike has been going on since August 8, with fluctuating levels of participation, Martin said.

Lawyers for detainees call the strike a protest of jail conditions and the prisoners' lack of legal rights. The military says it treats the detainees humanely, and says the strike is intended to "elicit media attention and bring pressure on the United States government to release them."

Martin said 32 of the current 40 hunger strikers were being fed through tubes inserted through the nose into the stomach.

He declined to speculate on why so many had stopped taking part in the

hunger strike.

Martin said peak participation was on September 11, the fourth anniversary of the al Qaeda attacks on America, when 131 detainees took part in the protest. Human rights lawyers, however, estimate at least 200 were involved at the peak.

Military officials define a hunger striker as a detainee who has refused nine straight meals, and often refer to the strike as a "voluntary fast" and force-feeding as "enteral feeding."

Detainees' lawyers say the strike began in early August after the men accused the military of reneging on promises to bring the prison into compliance with the Geneva Conventions. Detainees are willing to starve themselves to demand humane treatment and a fair hearing on whether they must stay, the lawyers said.

Bill Goodman, legal director for the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights, which represents many detainees, said restrictions on information from the base made it impossible to know just how many detainees were taking part.

"You can't believe them because they have an interest in trying to purvey this perspective that everything at Guantanamo is fine and everybody is wonderful. In order to do that, they have to say there aren't that many hunger strikers," he said.

Detainees' lawyers have accused the military of violently shoving tubes through the men's noses and into their stomachs without anesthesia or seda-

tives as part of the force-feeding process and then hurling religious taunts at them when they vomit up blood. The military has denied allegations of deliberately inflicting suffering in the feeding process.

Most Guantanamo detainees were captured in Afghanistan after U.S. forces invaded to overthrow the Taliban, which was harboring al Qaeda leaders.

Police: Western journalist kidnapped in Baghdad

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - A female Western journalist was kidnapped in Baghdad on Saturday and her translator killed, police said.

They said she was on her way to a meeting with a Sunni Arab leader when she was kidnapped in the Adel district near Malik bin Anas mosque in west Baghdad.

There have been a spate of kidnappings of Westerners over the past few months after a lull during most of 2005. Four Christian peacemakers -- a Briton, an American and two Canadians -- are still being held captive. A French engineer is also being held.

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Words of Wisdom



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

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

OUR
OPINIONTragedy of an
honest judge
doubled

Almost exactly one month ago, I wrote in issue number 899 about an honest Yemeni judge and his struggle to remain sincere. At that time, I did not mention his name due to this country's circumstances. Fearing for his safety, his identity remained anonymous, but his story had to be told.

On January 2, 10 angry armed men attacked the home of Judge Sahl Mohammed Hamza and threatened to kill him. "Come out so we can smash your head!" the armed men shouted, surrounding the house. Luckily, he was not alone. He was doing some paperwork with two judiciary police officers who came to his rescue.

The tragedy of this is that the attackers' identities are known. Their names were given to authorities and the judge has demanded protection. How could it have reached this far, to the point of attacking a supreme judge in broad daylight and threatening to kill him in front of others? This is only an example of the extent chaos controls this country's security. The power of tribes and armed men has exceeded the power of law. It is sad that such a good person was treated this way. Not only is he the exception, he literally could be eliminated at any minute, causing last hopes to wither away.

The only thing we can do is pray for Judge Hamza's safety and hope authorities prosecute the attackers and impose the law. We also hope this incident will not discourage him from continuing his splendid work as before. It is a difficult life; the thing Yemen now needs most is more people like Judge Hamza, not fewer.

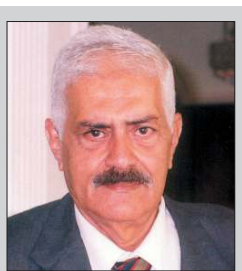
Nadia Al-Sakkaf
Editor-in-Chief

2005 frustrations & woes
transferred to 2006

The year 2005 has already collected its papers and departed us, leaving behind, as usual, a question and queries with every single individual about impact it has left on their conditions and in themselves. The end of a year and the beginning of another usually constitutes a crossroads for meditation and a review of people life and things over the gone year. If such a question forms a stationary to think about a year-long march to fathom the human experiment and examine it at the individual level, it is quite certain that events of an entire year would constitute an important stop in the life of peoples and nations where at the end of it they would stop to read their past recent, reconsider their actions and to keep a firm grip on the fact and create visions that would support them to dream and work in a different way.

It would be vitally significant to cast scrutinizing look at a year gone out of the history of our Arab region with the aim to appraise the change that took place or that which did not and the possibility of opening way for them in the future. Some might reply that one year is a short span of time to assess peoples' march which could be full of experiments, successes and failures and maybe pains and ordeals, and therefore we have to wait for a longer period. I would respond that the speedy rhythm of human history does no longer allow for waiting because it could be death or suicide. A one-year period in the twenty-one century is more rapid in rhythm compared to years of the last century and more fertile in events, a matter makes it imperative to have immediate knowing of the actual volume of inputs and outputs of those events. Later comprehen-

sion of events does not necessarily imply better and deeper assessments. Even before the beginning of the year of 2005, prospects were pointing to its being an exceptional year in the history of the region. It was then pregnant with developments ingrained in the region's womb by events of past years. Events of the past years were the result of long decades of weakness and deterioration made by disappointments created by failures and losses characterizing the whole of its situations. The year 2005 was supposed to be the opportunity for repayment of political, economic and cultural bills, payable for a long time. Those dues were the product of self-weakness and inability to encounter challenges and threats, or to keep pace with speedy changes in the world in everything. However, the painful facts and indicators denote a continuation and growing of that state. This means inflation of those payable bills entailing an increase in pressures and tensions that would impede efforts for disentanglement from inability and destroy expectations to come out the region's chronic quagmire. As the major issue begins and ends with reform, it was hoped that the year would begin with enforcing the principles stipulated in the "Document of pledge, accord and solidarity" adopted at the Arab summit in Tunis in 2004 as well as its closing statement. Those were approved by Arab leaders and expressed the resolution to maintain steps of comprehensive reform, enhancement of the spirit of citizenship and equality and expansion of democracy and the course of partnership. As a matter of fact, we are aware that there is no such a program. In addition, we do not need to seek the help



By: Prof.
Abdulaziz al-Tarb

of a fortuneteller or reports of strategic studies centers to realize there is no time framework available for the process of reform. Nevertheless, we understand that the absence of a time-framed program would result in skepticism about reality of allegations that the region can accomplish a political, economic and social reform, quick and continuous. Fixing the start point does not only mean a rupture with the past and its heritage and moving to the future. It does not also mean getting rid of the conduct of randomness. It means more important than that. We have to adjust the watch of reform in conformity to the highly-accurate timing but not to local temperamental timings.

There is assumption of guarantees that frustrations would not continue in the 2006 New Year. It may be more certain that the Arab World would be unable to achieve the hoped for expectations in reform and democracy. Some of its countries would remain standstill in their position in the hope of not falling depths of disaster. Some other countries would achieve limited gains that do not actually meet ambitions. But to come out of this closed circuit obliges the Arab regimes not to merely give flowery promises but rather to embark on sweeping offensive of irreversible reforms. The people of the region should on their part show more will and resolution and to strongly grasp the moment to cross over to a new year. Their new year should be the starting point for a reformative revolution delayed for a long time.

The New Year would witness the Palestinian elections, local and presidential elections in Yemen and changes in the Sudan and Lebanon.

Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Tarb is an economist and a professor in Political Science and an expert in administrative development. He is head of a number of professional associations, such as the Arab Group for Investment and Development.

Lebanon's political situation in 2005

Before the end of 2005, Lebanon surprised the Arab and the international world by dominating the news, especially Syrian-Lebanese affairs.

Due to Lebanon's sensitivity, they chose the glove unidentified by most of the nation. It was the glove of the misty, inevitable change that will overcome the dark area falling between the Arab Gulf and the Atlantic. Lebanon illuminated this through statements and confessions of prominent Arab politicians. The suffering Lebanese people encountered qualified them for this illumination.

Lebanon addressed the Arab nation through an Arab politician entangled in



By: Atif Awad

Lebanese affairs, telling them the following:

- All Arab regimes, including leftists, nationalists and Nasserites, have reached a deadlock.

- The occupation, oppressing human rights, is more merciful with the Arab nation than national regimes. People rebelled before, dreaming of rulers who would establish a modern state, but these regimes proved to be a nightmare by the end of the last century and the beginning of this one.

- Through Khadam, the Lebanese wanted to expose the bloody casualties and the mentality of canceling others, the methodology of Arab regimes. The result of this methodology is this tragic situation we now are experiencing. The aftermath of these regimes' elimination poli-

cies has crossed their territorial borders to their neighbors. However, these regimes always have ready excuses to justify their intervention in other small neighboring countries. Often, they allege it is to protect the independence and honor of the nation from Zionists, traitors and colonizers. At other times, it is to save its religion and creeds. This is the reason why these regimes annex smaller countries, in the name of the nation's unity.

Lebanon cries out that all of them became afraid and are looking for security and survival. They all are afraid of what they used to warn others about. It is the matter of dealing with imperialists. The problems initiated by Arab regimes are sure to diminish with them because it is the inevitability of history.

Atif Awad is an Egyptian journalist and a short-story writer residing in Yemen

Letters to the Editor

Immediate action
is needed

I wish to express my appreciation for your editorials in Yemen Times, especially when you write about the economic situation of the country. I am responsible for a German supported programme for the development of the private sector. I hate to read and hear every day that "Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world". I say to my colleagues, that South Korea and Switzerland are examples for poor countries (lack of natural resources), but not Yemen. As you as the chief editor of Yemen Times have stated repeatedly, Yemen does not lack resources, Yemen lacks political will and good governance. Strong political will and respective action are urgently needed to establish good governance, to combat qat, corruption, carelessness in the public sector, illiteracy, low level of education and skills among the mass of the people and to change those attitudes that are not conducive for economic and social development. These are only some of the areas where immediate action

is needed. Considering the high rate of population growth, the shortage of water resources and declining oil production, Yemen does not have much time to solve its problems. Immediate action is needed if peace and stability have to be maintained and conditions for a decent live for the coming generations are to be secured. Best regards and wishes for a happy and prosperous new year for the Yemen Times team and the people of Yemen.

Yousif S. Toma
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Khaddam and Syria

Syria's ruling Baath Party has expelled former Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam following an immature and dangerous statement by him that President Bashar Al-Assad had threatened Rafik al Hariri, the former Lebanese Prime Minister, who was assassinated last February. Syrian parliament has unanimously voted to put Mr Khaddam on trial for treason.

In my view, what Mr Khaddam said is, in a sense, more than treason. The West, especially the United States, is looking for excuses to take on Syria despite the fact that Damascus striving for regional peace and security. Neutral observers also believe that the efforts to implicate Syria in the assassination of Rafik Hariri is yet another attempt to build case for aggression against Syria. Under these circumstances, the statement of Mr Khaddam amounts to betrayal of his own homeland.

In fact, Khaddam enjoyed status of number two personality in Syria for a long time and therefore, his tirade against his own country is not without motive. This highly irresponsible statement could lead to a series of misfortunes for Syria.

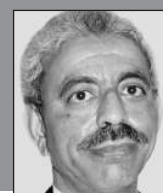
It appears that Khaddam has ultimately fallen to the West. This is yet another example of Mir Jaffars and Mir Sadiqs bringing miseries to the Ummah for the sake of petty personal gains and interests.

Barkatullah Marwat
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Kidnapping in Yemen

Yemen reputation has been severely damaged by the recent wave of kidnapping of foreign tourists. The government of Yemen have failed miserably to establish security in the country. The tourism industry will be negatively impacted by the recent kidnappings. Alas Yemen remains a lawless country where thugs and feudal tribalism essentially rule the land. The central government will never be able to establish law and security in the country as long as the tribal sheikhs remain part of the government. Tribal sheikh who hold top positions in the parliament and ministries are anti law and order, they mostly thrive on chaos and disorder. They are the first people who break the law and behave like gangsters. The government should never waiver to the demands of these murderous terrorists, but act firmly and decisively against these mobsters.

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COMMON
SENSE

By: Hassan Al-Haifi

On top of Sa'da,
now we have
kidnappings

It seems like Yemen's problems will never end, but rather become more intertwined and complex, to the point that anyone seeking to find solutions will have a cerebral hemorrhage trying to figure out where to start and when will they end. When one looks at the existing situation in the country, we have a very loose security situation, with a civil war brewing still in the suffering governorate of Sa'ada, which is getting more punitive for the poor and gentle people of Sa'ada, who have never caused problems for anyone before. The reports coming out of the governorate are not at all that encouraging and paint a terrible picture of oppression and other abuse of power by certain elements of the military and the security organs, including embezzlement, forced and illegal levies, poor schools and many other difficulties that the people of Sa'ada did nothing to really deserve.

The President of the Republic did right in replacing the Governors of the governorates where the despicable kidnappings took place and one would think that the Governors of our provinces should be able to ensure the security of all people who happen to enter their governorates or who live there. However, in Sa'ada, the people of Sa'ada have been subjected to a mind boggling messy security situation now for almost two years and it is said that the Governor there takes a lot of the responsibility for all the mayhem and even the oppression that the good folk of Sa'ada are forced to live under, yet the Governor of Sa'ada is not to be subject to any accountability for all the agony of the citizens of Sa'ada Governorate. There is a lot of blood being spilled in Sa'ada and it is precious Yemeni blood, not to mention all the misery that the people of Sa'ada have been needlessly forced to live under, as an obvious sectarian feud is allowed to engulf the entire countryside of the Governorate. The late General Abdul-Karim Al-Mansour, was once a Governor of Sa'ada and he was able to control the governorate and keep the peace there with only some forty men with him. Now we have all these forces that are hammering whole villages there, yet the war is still on and the people of Sa'ada have no one to hear their cries as the military and security forces have been given the liberty to do as they please and extort whatever they can from the people of Sa'ada. Complaints to the Governor of such abuse of power is getting nowhere and it is said that the Governor is approving of such mistreatment of generally good law abiding citizens, as the people of Sa'ada are well known for being.

But the kidnappings in Mareb and Shabwa have caused two governors to loose their jobs and they probably could not have done anything to prevent the kidnappings anyway, since tribal friction lies at the root of the problem of the kidnappings. In Sa'ada, however, the whole population of the Governorate is suffering and the Governor is not willing or ready to do anything about it. On the contrary, many people in Sa'ada are saying that he is indeed encouraging their terrible plight and has done all he could to encourage the anti-Zeidi storm that has been lately unleashed for no understandable reason whatsoever. Isn't time to look at the Governorate of Sa'ada and wonder why the Governor cannot come up with a solution to the problems he has helped so much in instigating.

Yes, the kidnappings are indeed an unwelcome development, and will surely do irreparable damage to our all but decapitated tourist industry and every effort must be made to end this bad stain on the image of Yemen. Everyday, Yemen has been making headlines all over the world and one is shocked to find that the news outside is even more detailed than what we are getting at home.

Who are the people being kidnapped? So far almost all of them have been from the friendliest countries to Yemen, both in terms of the bilateral aid they give to Yemen and the number of tourists that have come to visit our land of peace and tranquility. One wonders if these kidnappings are really more than just for settlement of tribal disputes. One would think also that much government neglect of the area could have a role in leaving people without access to health, education and other vital services that could do wonders in keeping people at ease and law abiding. Even the released kidnapped people have shown some sympathy for their captors as they have found deprivation a major concern worth noting by the government. If the people of Mareb, Al-Jouf, Shabwa and poor poor Sa'ada are being so deprived, then what progress have we really made in providing equal opportunities for all Yemenis to live in peace and to have access to the most basic of services?

Surely, it is time for Parliament to ask the Government serious questions about the state of the country. Kidnappings should be controlled and it is time that the tribal chiefs be asked to start showing some real genuine leadership by controlling their constituencies and bringing law and order to their domains. They can't just be given budget allocations and other gratuities from the government without having to produce the peace and stability Yemen badly needs if it is to ever have any hopes for development.

If the kidnappings do not cease immediately, we can never hope for a revival of our tourist traffic, let alone expect tourism to become a promising thriving sector. Moreover, for a country that once prided itself for its hospitality and friendly welcome to all its visitors, who come in peace, we now have a badly tarnished image that will take miracles to correct. Yes, kidnappers must be dealt with punitively, but then again, the people of Mareb and Shabwa and Al-Jouf must have access to basic services and jobs to keep the people busy, and let them feel obligated to abide by the law. But when they are getting nothing to start with except new governors, who probably will not be able to do any better than their predecessors unless, they start looking after their constituencies, in a more dignified manner than what we are seeing in the Governorate of Sa'ada, kidnappings will be just another indication of the inability of the government to keep the peace of the land.

Hassan Al-Haifi is a Yemeni political economist and journalist for more than 20 years.



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Yemen Press Review

By: Mohammed Khidhr



Annas weekly
2 Jan. 2006

Main headlines

- Tragic stories in the Thaphir village, search for survivals goes on
- Called for teaching citizens the freedom, Observers: Al-Yadoumi inaugurated the opposition program for peaceful struggle
- Crisis inside the Elections Commission
- GPC distributes its offices among the General Committee amidst a "democratic" dispute
- The GPC musters its media and the JMP alerts its press to fight the battle of initiatives
- Rising rate of crime in Yemen along with rise in rate of controlling it in 2005
- In Taiz, 235 illegal societies cancelled
- Teacher kills his wife in Hafash district, Mahweet governorate

Columnist Dr Hosni Al-Jawshaie devotes his article to talk about the UN role in the Iraqi legislative elections saying since the beginning of Iraqi elections on 15 December 2005 it was clear for observers that the role played by the United Nations was dubious and greatly biased to Iraq's Shiites. Since the very first beginning of elections statements were repeated by officials in the UN that the elections were progressing in a good way. On his part the chairman of the higher election commission Hussein Al-Hindawi announced the results would be broadcast in two weeks. But after three days he began to launch the first test balloons to sense reaction of other parties by announcing preliminary results of voting, showing noticeable progress of the Shiite alliance in Baghdad and Basra, even in the governorates of Sunni majority. This flagrant doctoring that occurred in the elections sponsored by the UN has placed the European Union in a dilemma because it had praised the "decent" elections, as the Europeans described from the beginning and are until now still keeping silent. But because of the popular pressure and the daily demonstrations staged by various components of the Iraq

people has forced the higher commission of elections to annul the elections in Baghdad and five other governorates and reconsideration is underway to cancel the election results in Basra and Babylon. This is evidence that the elections were rigged in all governorates of Sunni population and Shiite governorates as well.

The popular pressure of the Sunnis in Iraq who form more than 60% of the people in Iraq and Shiite leaders of Iraq with strong support by America and Iran try to describe them as minority, forced the elections higher commission to reconsider the rigged results of elections.



Manbar Al-Shoura weekly
1 Jan. 2006

Main headlines

- New government headed by Al-Salami and disputes with JMP
- Kidnapped Germans released
- Supreme Commission of elections reaches solution with political parties; Islah puts condition of law amending
- Woman police participate in rescuing victims of Thaphir victims
- Immunization campaigns changed into commercial deals

The political editor of the newspaper says in his article that Yemen is not far from world policies or what happens in the world, of conflicts and cold and hot wars. In the past months the political arena had witnessed clear indications of a cold war and made the political circles question whether declaration of the JMP initiative for the political and national political reform was the first spark of a cold war. They wondered if it was a war ahead of the presidential and local elections or just to influence the political atmospheres in the country prior to convention of the ruling GPC 7th conference. The GPC tries to prove to all, inside and outside, that it believes in democracy and what is rumored of existence of democratic failures are just exposed attempts intended by the JMP to hide behind to justify its political failure and inability.

The JMP initiative emerged cold and complains in most of its article from loss of political focus pivoted on how to

besiege the ruling party. However, the initiative mingled with a group of ideas that ungratefully deny many of the national pillars in which the people believe. If the JMP parties have figured out that this is the time for the cold war and the initiative is their weapon, the political reality has proved its failure which lacks of national tactics and ignorant of the political tactics. Thus it has taken its way to trash basket.

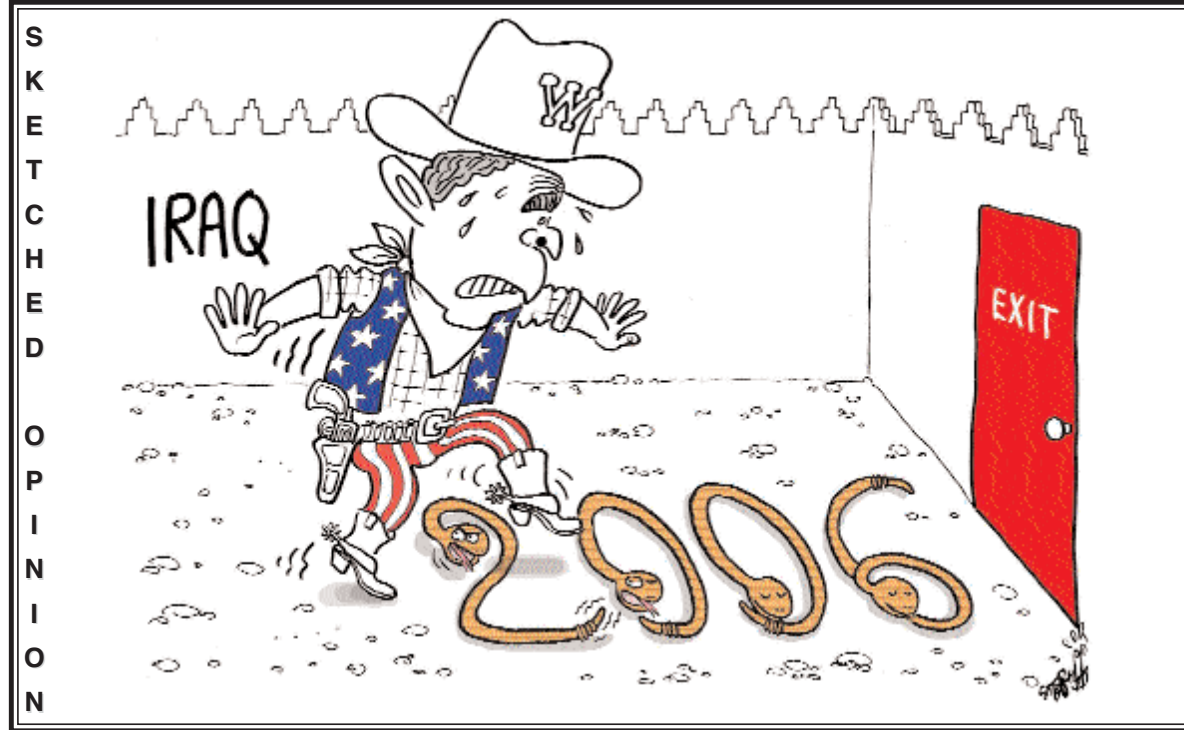


Attariq weekly
3 Jan. 2006

Main headlines

- Baaoum: YSP leadership committed mistakes for the desire to cancel the issue of the south
- Security and military forces surround the area of the Italians kidnapers
- Symposium on Yemen unity in Aden
- Baaoum rejects the JMP project
- Yemeni-Gulf meetings for qualifying Yemren for joining the GCC
- Victims of Thaphir village landslide rise to more than 70 persons
- Three villages in Amran receive American medical assistance
- Smuggled medicines seized in Hardh

Writer Abdullah Ahmed Banafie says in an article after the latest killing prices dose implemented by our government by raising fuel prices by more than double, the government has surprised us with what is called the wages structure. That structure has hit the citizens with disappointment instead of treating the disorder created by the price dose. Many journalists have written on this lame structure that derived its sickness from its makers because it has not been studied enough in order to be aware of all circumstances and developments. The wages law reflects the government's sick temperament telling people to accept what is given to them, brushing aside the democratic language of addressing others. The bad characteristics of this wages law meant to ridicule the people and want to put an end to the middle class. What we hear in the street is that the wages structure is implemented according to peculiarity of each governorate and special attention is paid to some people because they were ready to be generous



with the committees entrusted with preparing its final procedures.



Al-Balagh weekly
3 Jan. 2006

Main headlines

- Confrontations continue in areas of Nashour and Umalmaalim, Army troops advance towards AlSalem and put pressure on Waelah sheikh to confront Al-Houthi supporters
- Kidnappers of Italian tourists demand release of their relatives and reparations
- Man and two women killed in a 40-year-old vengeance case in Mareb
- armed gang attack a sewage project in Taiz

The editor in chief of the newspaper devotes his article to tackle the ongoing fighting in the governorate of Saada, mentioning he has received contacts from Saada inhabitants appealing for stopping the destructive war going on for more than 16 months. He says they felt surprised about silence towards what is going on there, requesting the parliament to an actual intervention to end the war and closing that file that does not differentiate between children, women or elderly people. In their contacts Saada citizens say the war has destroyed houses and farms and electric power has been cut from many of the villages there. The citizens wondered why the state does not

search for a peaceful solution for the war instead of the sound of bullets. They asked why the parliament does not interfere and finds a peaceful solution where the states preserves its prestige and preserve the life of the citizens and that the solution should be according to the constitution and the law with preserving the higher interest of the country and the citizens rights.

The writer maintains saying the victor in this war is vanquished whoever may be. Those who get killed are the sons of this homeland and tragedies that happen are inside Yemen not outside it.

The state is faced with great challenges, more important is the economy and the second is the political map. The internal challenges are very many and those of outside are no less. The challenges of security and stability impose themselves strongly and against them the state needs to close the file of Saada in order to be free in dealing with the other challenges. The writer concludes by calling for raising slogans of construction, peace and security and stability instead of slogans of destruction, war and that of the sound of bullets.



As-Sahwa weekly

Main headlines

- Opposition blocs in the parliament refuse the state budget, the majority approves it
- Fighting corruption needs no new

structures and establishments

- Islah party accused it with providing climates for election frauds, Elections Commission fails to report to the Court of South-West Capital Secretariat

- After Bab Al-Yemen Mosque, Army soldiers pull down another mosque's wall, shoot at citizens
- Islah condemns tourists kidnapping, Third kidnapping operation in the country in less than two months

- In a tempestuous parliament session to endorse state budget, A government tampering with billions, opposition demands for reform, majority legislating corruption

Columnist Zaid Al-Shami says in an article says we hoped that the ruling party would reconsider its address and relationship with the other political forces and considers them as partners rather than subjects or enemies. It has nonetheless maintained its disdain of others and preaching them on how to think and work. It continued using phrases of accusations and humiliations until they had become fixed terms in the GPC dictionary of addresses. What has made it worse is its intentional mixture between the GPC as a ruling party and the homeland possessed by the people of Yemen and in considering itself as the only representative of all the people. This assumption and mixing pushes the brothers in the GPC to go further in despotism and in dealing with others as second or third degree citizens. We wished to listen to criticism of that behavior not to stabilize it, for otherwise there is no meaning for pluralism approved in the constitution.

Semi-rational exuberance

By: J. Bradford DeLong

Bradford DeLong is Professor of Economics at the University of California at Berkeley and a former Assistant US Treasury Secretary.

In 1996, Yale economist Robert Shiller looked around, considered the historical record, and concluded that the American stock market was overvalued. In the past, whenever price-earnings ratios were high, future long-run stock returns were low. But now prices on the broad index of the S&P 500 stood at 29 times the average of the past decade's earnings.

On the basis of econometric regression analyses carried out by Shiller and Harvard's John Campbell, Shiller predicted in 1996 that the S&P 500 would be a bad investment over the next decade. In the decade up to January 2006, he argued, the real value of the S&P 500 would fall. Even including dividends, his estimate of the likely inflation-adjusted returns to investors holding the S&P 500 was zero – far below the roughly 6% annual real return that we have come to think of as typical for the American stock market.

Shiller's arguments were compelling. They persuaded Alan Greenspan to give his famous "irrational exuberance" speech at the American Enterprise Institute in December 1996. They certainly convinced me, too.

But Shiller was wrong. Unless the American stock market collapses before the end of January, the past decade will have seen it offer returns that are slightly higher than the historical averages – and much, much

greater than zero. Those who invested and reinvested their money in America's stock market over the past decade have nearly doubled it, even after taking account of inflation.

Why was Shiller wrong? We can point to three factors, each of which can take roughly one-third of the credit for annual real returns of 6%, rather than zero, over the past decade:

- The high-tech revolutions behind the very real "new economy," which have accelerated American companies' productivity growth.

- Shifts in the distribution of income away from labor and toward capital, which have boosted corporate profits as a share of production.

- Increasing risk tolerance on the part of stock market investors, which appears to have raised long-run price-earnings ratios by around 20%.

None of these three factors was obvious in 1996 (although there were signs of the first and inklings of the third for those smart or lucky enough to read them). In 1996, betting on Shiller's regression analyses was a reasonable and perhaps intelligent thing to do. But it was also an overwhelmingly risky thing to do, as anyone who followed the portfolio strategy implicit in Shiller's analysis learned.

This takes nothing away from the importance of the question that Shiller addressed. Just why is it that stock markets around the world are subject to fits of "irrational exuberance" and "excessive pessimism"? Why don't rational and informed investors take more steps to bet heavily on fundamentals and against the enthusiasms of the uninformed crowd?

The past decade offers us two reasons. First – if we grant that Shiller's regression analyses correctly identified long-run fundamentals a decade ago – betting on fundamentals for the long term is overwhelmingly risky. Lots of good news can happen over a decade, enough to bankrupt an even slightly leveraged bear when stock prices look high; and lots of bad news can happen, enough to bankrupt an even slightly leveraged bull when stock prices look low.

Thus, even in extreme situations – like the peak of the dot-com bubble in late 1999 and early 2000 – it is very difficult even for those who believe that they know what fundamental values are to make large long-run bets on them. It is even more difficult for those who claim to know this and who want to make large long-run contrarian bets to convince others to trust them with their money.

If it were easy to pierce the veils of time and ignorance and to assess long-run fundamental values with a high degree of confidence, it would be simple and safe to make large contrarian long-run bets on fundamentals. In that case, the smart money would smooth out the enthusiasms – positive and negative – of the uninformed crowd.

But, of course, we cannot overcome long-run uncertainty. As J.P. Morgan put it when asked to predict what stock prices would do, "They will fluctuate."

J. Bradford DeLong is a Professor of Economics at the University of California at Berkeley. He was the Assistant US Treasury Secretary during the Clinton administration.

The oligarch wars

By: Boris Berezovsky

Boris Berezovsky, a deputy head of Russia's National Security Council under Boris Yeltsin, lives in exile in London.

I am in no position to be dispassionate about President Vladimir Putin's war against Russia's "oligarchs," the class of men and women (yes, there are some, the wife of Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzkov being the most prominent) who control the country's most lucrative companies and natural-resource assets. How can I be neutral, as I am usually counted among them? But an insiders' perspective is valuable nonetheless, for only an insider knows what is really being done behind the scenes.

Having been a target of Putin's "war," I can speak of it in very concrete terms. Because I was forced to leave Russia and defend myself from the Kremlin while in exile in England, I know how the entire repressive power of a state can be brought to bear on a single man.

Such a thing could not happen in a Western democracy. Can anyone imagine the workings of the entire French state – the police, the security services, the military, and the bureaucracy – being coordinated to secure the imprisonment of a lone individual? In Russia, it is more than imaginable.

For years, the whole force of the Russian state has worked relentlessly to ensure my extradition to Russia in order to portray me as a criminal. It took me three years in a London court to prove that I was being prosecuted for purely political reasons. The British authorities ruled that I was to be given asylum – a decision that fortunately is not being challenged in Russia. At least some in the Kremlin realize that not all

courts exist merely to do the bidding of those in power.

Putin's war against the oligarchs is sometimes interpreted as a fight against separate individuals or against ill-gotten wealth. In fact, it is a war against independent people with the wherewithal to stand up and be counted. The fight began with the parliamentary elections of 2003, when independent politicians were systematically stifled. I may disagree with the liberal Grigory Yavlinsky and his Yabloko Party, or with Anatoly Chubais (who continues to serve Russia by heading the national electricity company), but both faced insurmountable obstacles to gaining seats in the State Duma (the lower house of parliament).

They were kept out of parliament because, in truth, they represent more than themselves; they stand for people who sincerely wish to defend the idea of a "liberal Russia," a country that is free and democratic. They were basically destroyed politically – scared away, fired from various jobs, or forced to leave the country.

There is more than a whiff of hypocrisy in Putin's anti-oligarch campaigns. Among the people persecuting the oligarchs, I haven't met one who isn't trying to become an oligarch himself. Indeed, Putin's treasured KGB cronies, who are supposed to be such ascetic hard men, all seem to be marrying their government jobs with lucrative posts in state-owned enterprises. The infamous Igor Sechin, the Cardinal Richelieu of Putin's Kremlin, somehow also manages to have time to be the chairman of Rosneft, the big state oil concern.

Two conditions marked Russia's oligarchs for persecution. First, they could foresee the future more clearly than others. So when everybody

thought that Russia was about to become a market economy, they had seen that the turn had already happened – and so were miles ahead of the game.

Second, having quickly established their businesses, they had the will to get involved in politics at critical moments, and ruthlessly to defend the political system that they felt was needed for capitalism to survive in Russia. Boris Yeltsin's re-election in 1996 was such a moment.

Unfortunately, at a certain moment, some oligarchs started explaining themselves. Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the jailed boss of Yukos Oil, for example, began to repent his actions publicly in order to please the Kremlin. Although I hate to be critical of a man unjustly imprisoned, his example shows that most of the oligarchs lacked the toughness to defend the political system in which they believed. They bickered among themselves and fell into a trap.

That trap was the phony belief that capital and power can be made separate. But such a wall of separation does not exist in true democracies. On the contrary, wealthy people and businesses in countries throughout the world compete with each other and with other interest groups for political access and influence.

Indeed, such political action makes for responsible wealth. For only in this way is great wealth made a healthy and organic part of the country's political and social life. So, if Putin wins his war against the oligarchs, it will be a Pyrrhic victory: wealth will be more than intimidated; it will become purely a creature and plaything of power.

Boris Berezovsky is a former director of Russia's National Security Council. He lives in exile in London.

Investment opportunities in Aden

The Yemeni government plans to single out spacious land areas in Aden for various building projects, parks and recreational facilities.

By: Mahyoub Al-Kamali

The Yemeni government intends taking resolute measures to encourage investors and offer needed facilities to activate present investment sector stagnation and attract investment capital in available opportunities, especially in Aden Free Zone.

In this regard, President Ali Abdullah Saleh directed speedy evacuation of Aden's Badr Military Camp and its land handed over to the Free Zone to build an air freight village. Presidential directives also included evacuating Tariq Camp and the Central Workshop in Khor Maksar and using the spacious sites to build the Republican Hospital authorities plan to begin soon in Aden. The modern hospital is part of a plan to offer more health services to the governorate's citizens.

Large land areas also intend to be allotted for building a number of parks and recreational facilities for city residents as part of continued renovation and development projects to give Aden

the beautiful appearance it deserves as the economic and commercial capital of Yemen.

As part of government's interest in attracting investments and offering investment opportunities, the Yemeni president also ordered granting land plots to a number of city investors according to a 99-year lease. Instructions also include offering investors vital building projects for tourist, residential, industrial and commercial purposes.

Presidential orders previously stipulated merging the state's real estate, survey department and land registry and the Ministry of Public Works and Roads' urban planning sector into one independent authority called, "The Authority of Land, Survey and Urban Planning." The measure aimed to ease investors' procedures in completing their deals and obtaining land licenses for their projects. The directive followed the Yemeni cabinet's decision to merge the Investment Authority and the Free Zone Authority into one establishment to facilitate investors' obtaining project licenses.

Investment specialists consider

these practical measures to revive stagnant investment, especially regarding land plots allocated for investment projects in Aden's Industrial Zone. The state Free Zone Authority recently announced a number of investment opportunities in Aden Free Zone, 420 km south of Sana'a, noting that they are very good opportunities, especially as investment law allows non-Yemenis to fully own projects and enjoy tax exemption up to 25 years.

Aden previously offered four large investment projects: an air freight village at Aden International Airport, a complementary project to build a container station, a storage area and developing Aden International Airport itself. A 60-hectare area was allocated around the airport for the building project.

Another available investment opportunity was a heavy industry and petrochemicals project, for which an area of 14,000 hectares was specified, in the "L" area west of Shaab township to build a heavy industrial zone and a 2,770-hectare area, "M," on the northern coast to build petrochemical industries near Aden's oil refinery.

Kidnapping's negative impact on tourism

A plenary meeting grouping high-ranking representatives of security and cultural authorities discussed enhancement of efforts to capture whoever tries to kidnap tourists to Yemen.

By: Yemen Times Staff

Authorities are making efforts to reduce the impact of the kidnapping phenomenon, recently returned to Yemeni territories, on tour group numbers and falling tourist revenues. The tourist sector contributes significant hard currency to the state budget.

At a recent plenary meeting in Sana'a, attended by Minister of Culture and Tourism Khalid Al-Ruwaishan, Minister of Interior Dr. Rashad Al-Alimi, tourist agency officials and members of the tourist promotion council, security and tourist authorities in Yemen, affirmed the need to enhance security efforts in capturing anyone who tries to kidnap tourists.

Attendees discussed Yemen's tourist activity and the negative impact from kidnapping of tourists by outlaws in Mareb and Shabwa governorates. The kidnapping incidents continued for a

limited time until security arranged for hostages' safe release without exposing them to any harm. Attendees also stressed the need to provide a convenient atmosphere for tourist activity to progress normally.

Participants also discussed ways to strengthen security efforts to control those attempting to kidnap tourists, considered Yemen's guests, and the negative results the kidnappings will have on the reputation of Yemeni people's ethics and on Islamic religious principles. They also deemed the kidnappings as deforming Yemen's image abroad and damaging the national economy by negatively influencing tourist activity and investment plans.

A previous consultative meeting of Yahya Mohammed Abdullah Saleh, chairman of the Yemeni Society for Tourism and Travel Agencies, travel group heads and agency representatives and the Yemeni Union for Hotels, demanded applying the law to fight kidnapping and highwayman incidents. They also demanded a clear-



cut action strategy for tourism in Yemen and enacting the Shoura Council's proposal to create a tourism ministry with expertise and staff able to work in that field.

Participants condemned all types of kidnapping, considering it a crime rejected by religion and norms, in addition to harming Yemen and its people and inflicting losses on the tourism sector. They recommended forces join to end acts committed by those disregarding stability and security and stressed that implementing the law to fight kidnapping is the most effective way to deter such criminals.

2005: Negative economic impact & social failure

Yemeni economists have reviewed measures to help the government uproot corruption

By: Yemen Times Staff

In 2005, Yemen accomplished economic gains and developments, especially in infrastructure construction. However, against this emerged many hot issues related to implementing a price reform package in which prices of oil products increased, thereby negatively impacting society and leading to violent acts and confrontations.

Among 2005 measures were legislative and legal amendments to many financial laws, such as customs tariff law, which created some conformity among customs work concepts and tried as much as possible to overcome some neighbor-

ing countries' practices, especially GCC states, in dealing with tariff structure and organization. Another act involved sales tax law and what results from some exemptions serving citizens. There also were financial and administrative reforms, such as a strategy to reform the financial administration, raise employee salaries and restructure many government institutions.

Economists view measures adopted by the Yemeni government to be among efforts that might help uproot corruption disseminated throughout state institutions, but they need actual implementation, which was not done in 2005, nor was there any tangible progress seen or

commitment to requirements stipulated in the United Nations agreement to fight corruption, approved by Yemen that same year. This led to Yemen's being deprived of support from the Millennium Fund and a reduction of approximately \$200 million in World Bank support.

Yemen was an increase in its foreign trade exchange the first half of 2005, wherein the volume of trade exchanged between Yemen and world nations rose to YR 755 billion. Officials expected the value of trade exchange to increase to YR 1.8 trillion, compared to YR 1.4 trillion in 2004, a 21 percent increase.

While Yemen's government officials view the increased volume of trade exchange as resulting from trade liberalization and investment openness by the Yemeni government since 1995, special-

ists in this area consider that the open trade policy did not reflect positively on the nature and structure of Yemeni exports because oil still is the main export commodity, consisting of more than 90 percent of exports and about one-third of the gross domestic product. Against this, non-oil export shares remained marginal, limited to 8 percent of total exports, less than industrial product exports.

Although Yemen managed to reduce its external debts to \$5.6 billion, equaling about 40 percent of the gross domestic product, it faces problems due to lack of a clear strategy in dealing with loans, lack of active coordination with concerned parties and weakness in monitoring and evaluating implementation of funded projects. This led to appropriating YR 19 billion in the 2005 budget to repay debts

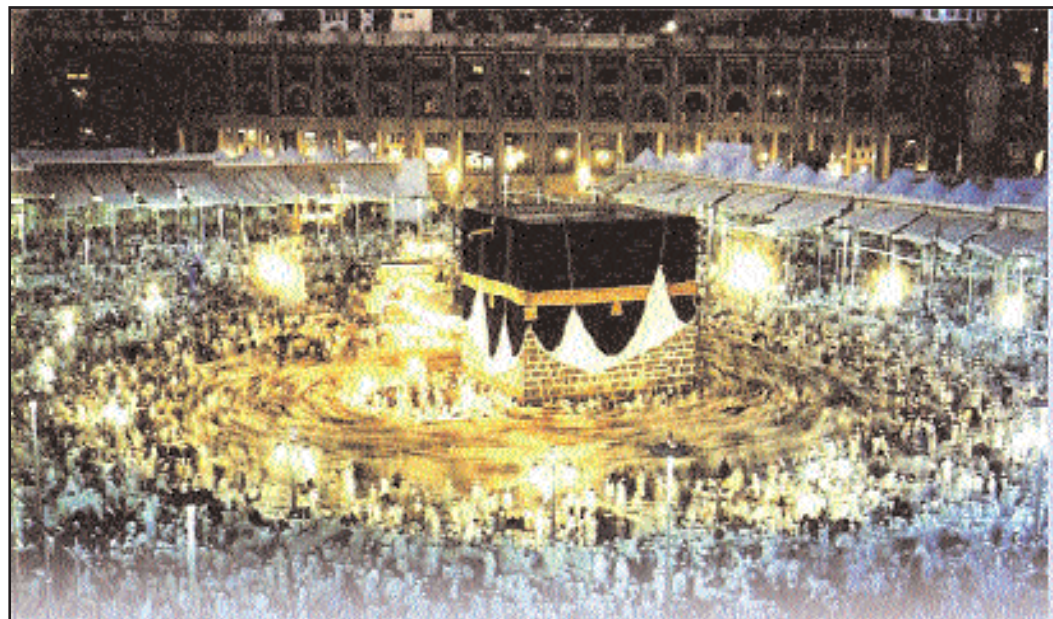
resulting from installment interest and allotting YR 29 billion for the same purpose in the 2006 budget, indicating annually increasing loan burdens.

This made financiers reconsider and reduce loans and assistance to about 34 percent. The situation increased financiers' demands on Yemen for real endeavors in structural reform, establishing a suitable environment to attract foreign investment capital and fighting corruption.

Yemeni specialists and officials expect the country will witness noticeable economic recovery in 2006, especially in tourism, investment and infrastructure and that oil prices will maintain their increase, produce a stable exchange rate, stabilize balance payments, assist government spending and provide for continued

implementing of infrastructure projects. By implementing this, Yemen will work towards partnership with GCC states in a manner reflecting positively on expatriates' circumstances in those countries and realizing economic growth, approximating GCC demands regarding economic improvement.

Specialists also expect 2006 will see a real and serious campaign against corruption, especially after the president's announcement to form a committee specialized in fighting corruption. In the wake of retreating international support for Yemen, Members of Parliament have worked toward setting up another committee to fight corruption. This may constitute a reasonable limit on corruption, considered a stumbling stone to economic development in Yemen.



Mr. David Mitchell - President & General Manager

The management team and all staff and Partners of
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Present their heartiest congratulations to

H. E. Ali Abdullah Saleh

President of the Republic of Yemen
and the Yemeni people.

On the occasion of Eid Al-Adha
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Many Happy Returns.

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و الإدارة العليا و كافة موظفي وشركاء شركة كنديان نكسن بتروليم شرق
الحجر المحدودة قطاع ٥١ بأحر التهاني القلبية إلى
فخامة الأخ

علي عبد الله صالح

رئيس الجمهورية حفظة الله

وإلى كافة أبناء الشعب اليمني

بمناسبة عيد الأضحى المبارك

و السنة الميلادية الجديدة ٢٠٠٦

وكل عام وأنتم بخير.

Temple of As-Sawda': A South Arabian pantheon

A temple in Al-Jawf province reveals the hierarchy of divinities. The discovery sheds more light on the South Arabian pantheons.

A survey was organized in March 2004, in Al-Jawf area. The main objective was to record the location and the state of destruction and looting in archaeological sites in the region. Part of the job was to bring to the attention of the Yemeni authorities and international organizations the disastrous state of archaeological sites in Al-Jawf in general and the site of As-Sawda' in particular.

It was realized that all historical sites of Al-Jawf, with the exception of Baraqish, had been in the last few years the subject of illegal excavations, which are supporting a prosperous trafficking of antiquities. Archaeologists visited historical sites of Kamna, Ma'in, As-Sawda', Shaqab Al-Manassa, and Darb As-Sabi.

An urgent salvage operation for As-Sawda temple was required. The task was undertaken by Remy Audouin, a member of the French Archaeological Mission in Yemen and an expert for the UNESCO, and Mounir Arbach, a researcher at the Sana'a-based French Institute for Archaeology and Social Sciences (CEFAS). The expedition was financed by the Social Fund for Development. In a report entitled "Temple I of As-Sawda': a South Arabian pantheon," the operation



A cultic scene with the names of the divinities, Hawar and Nakrah.

unveiled the hierarchy of divinities in ancient Al-Jawf, especially in As-Sawda' city. It also revealed the horrible pillage of archaeological sites.

Historical Background:

The city of Nashshan, the old name of As-Sawda', appeared towards the eighth c. BC as a city-state. Like other small kingdoms of Al-Jawf, such as Haram, Inabba', and Kamna, it formed a politically autonomous entity with its own pantheon. It had its own temple, the so-called "Banat 'Ad," attested in Al-Jawf alone.

Based on information from the eighth c. BC, there are several dedicatory and commemorative inscriptions left by the rulers of Nashshan. Their title is not mentioned but it is probably "king" and not "mukarrib".

At the beginning of the seventh c. BC, Nashshan suffered two military campaigns waged by the Sabaeen army. Nashshan was eventually integrated into the Sabaeen kingdom.

The site of As-Sawda' is located at approximately fifteen kilometers away from Al-Hazm, on the left side of Mathab Valley. The site consists of a hill, approximately fifteen meters high. The wall of the city runs for 1500 meters, of which only a few vestiges remain including one well-preserved gate and a few scattered ruins.

Temple I of As-Sawda':

This temple, named Temple I, is located to the north-east of the city of As-Sawda'. It is 6m in length, 4m in width at its summit, 7m in depth and 2m wide at the base. Twelve pillars were

excavated, six of which were decorated with bas-reliefs. Two of these pillars are partially fallen with the decoration face down.

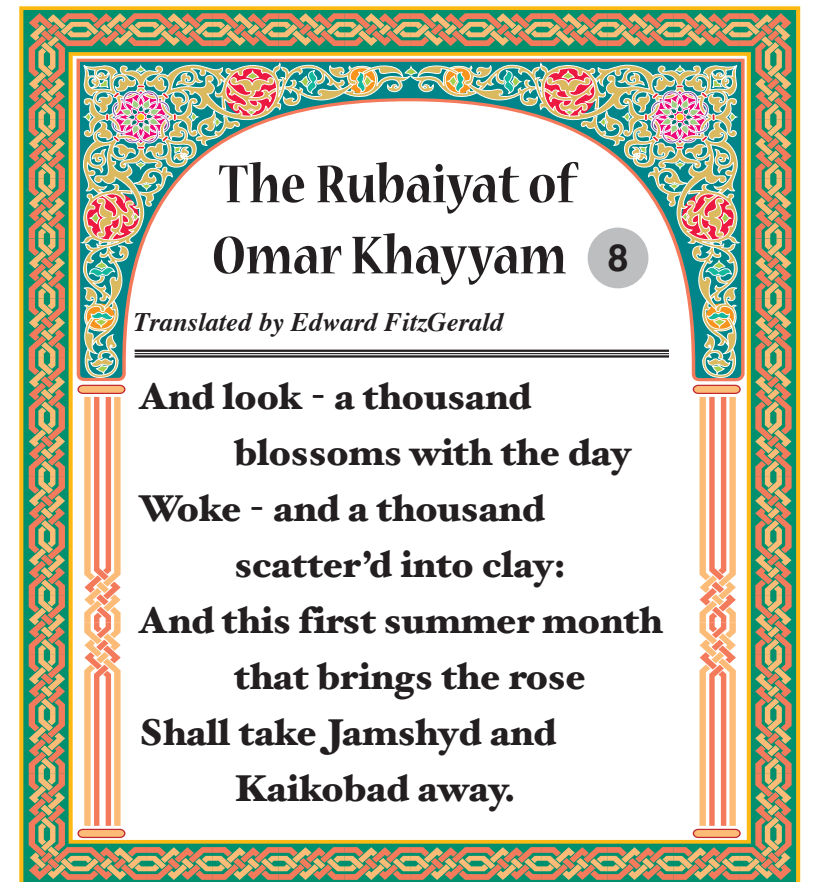
The entrance portion to the temple consists of six in situ pillars measuring more than 7m in height. Following the entrance axis at approximately 1.5m to the rear of it are two pillars. They are fallen over and broken.

Following approximately the same alignment, towards the north, are two pillars. Two other pillars located at a distance of 1.5m to 2m from the previous pillars, lie on the same axis, oriented northwards.

The pillars are covered with images and inscriptions. A reading of them reveals the hierarchy of divinities in Nashshan. The names include Aranyada and Almaqah, Yada'sum and Nab'al, Nakrah and Hawar as well as Athtar and probably Il. Athtar is one of the principal divinities of Nashshan and dominates the assembly of South Arabian pantheons.

The names of goddesses Banat'il appear at the bottom of the pillars and above the scene of the dancing girls. They are the only female divinities attested on these pillars. Their location at the bottom of the pillars suggests their rank in the hierarchy of the South Arabia pantheons in general. There are other divine heroes mentioned for the first time such as Hamat, Hawar and Yatha'an.

Almaqah, the official divinity of the kingdom of Saba', is present in the pantheon due to a strategic alliance between Saba' and Nashshan during the eighth c. BC. The alliance with Saba'



The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam 8

Translated by Edward FitzGerald

And look - a thousand
blossoms with the day
Woke - and a thousand
scatter'd into clay:
And this first summer month
that brings the rose
Shall take Jamshyd and
Kaikobad away.

ended with Sabaeen domination under the reign of Karib'il Watar.

The reading from top to bottom of the cultic scenes with names of divinities, demonstrates the hierarchy of the divine world during that epoch: At the top are 'Athtar and perhaps Il. The proper divinities of the city-states of Al-Jawf are ordered as follows: Aranyada' and Wadd (principal divinities of the kingdom of Nashshan); Almaqah (the official divinity of the kingdom of Saba') accompanied by Aranyada'; Hawar (the divinity of the kingdom of Inabba'); Nakrah (the divinity of the kingdom of Ma'in and of the city of Baraqish); Nab'al (the divinity of the kingdom of Kamna); Yada'sum (the divinity of the kingdom of Haram). Then comes the

king of Nashshan, Ilmanbat Amar. At the end is Banat'il or "Daughters of Il."

Obliteration of History:

According to the report, in 2004, the site of As-Sawda' witnessed a partial destruction of its remains by illegal excavators and looters of objects. Looters have dug holes at every other two meters, walls were destroyed, pillars were pulled down, and numerous statues were uprooted from their inscribed pedestals.

The history of Nashshan has only begun to be written. Researchers hope for large-scale excavations to begin in order to understand the missing millennium in the history of Yemen.

Short story:

The Hidden Depression (part 1 of 2)

By: Salwa Yehia Al-Eryani

Don't think people suffer depression only if the weather is gloomy. Don't think they feel depressed only if they separate from a partner; suffer from a chronic or terminal illness; fail an exam, job, project or interview or live in difficult circumstances such as war, poverty or stress. Depression has many other reasons, some concealed and wrapped in golden paper like gifts.

The First Day

My friend and I planned to go with our children the next morning to Al-Sabeen Amusement Park. Although it was the fifth day of Eid, it was still quite crowded. I suspected it was even worse in the days before. Our kids wore their caps to avoid the strong sunrays. As soon as we got inside the park, the children began asking for bubbles and rubber yoyos. We bought them and entered while the kids happily jumped up and down. In front of each especially favored game, there was a very handicapped queue, if I may call it so. We discussed why Yemenis fail to make queues and fail to respect order. We noticed three queues, which had begun as one and then suddenly scattered at the end into three branches like a fork. Also, while moving forward, a normal movement for any normal queue in any normal place, women and children violently pushed and elbowed others.

Men had separate queues and I respected that because if men and women were in the same queue, serious problems would have arisen due to the pushing. I also was astonished to see some adults push children out of the queue, making them weep and feel terrified. The mood of enjoyment and fun definitely disappears once a child weeps. For example, how can anyone enjoy driving bumper cars after reaching the steering wheel through weeping, dragging and pulling? I suggest a third queue be organized: one for men, one for women and one for children. I also suggest an employee stand beside each queue, organizing it and keeping it in line,

instead of allowing people to just grab a ticket and push their way through.

I watched my daughters from a shady place under a tree. It was like watching a very hurtful movie, but I trusted my kids. They could do it and reach their seats. They and all the other children were treated like a boxer's punching bag. They were pushed and pulled but succeeded in returning to their original point. My kids were patient, strong and brave. I was proud of them. Behind them was an 8-year-old girl. She clearly was pushing my daughter's shoulder. I examined the girl. Her features seemed to have some abnormal signs. She was furious and looked like someone ready to shoot. She didn't look like someone coming to have fun. Why do people in Yemen go out with a fighting spirit rather than a spirit of enjoyment and peacefulness?

Finally, my daughters reached their seats but as soon as the ride ended and they were coming down, this girl followed my daughter and pushed her violently for absolutely no reason. I whispered to my daughter to just ignore her because she seemed mentally unbalanced. We then went to buy ice cream. The girl followed us with her mom who also seemed abnormal. Although her face was covered and only her eyes peered through her veil, I still distinguished that she suffered some mental problem. Her daughter started making faces at my daughter, yelling "Na Na Naaaah," and sticking out her tongue. I held my daughter's wrist, as she was losing her temper. She pulled away, ran and pushed the girl, shouting, "Behave yourself!" The mother then told my daughter not to speak to her daughter because she belongs to her! My daughter answered, "I don't care who she belongs to, but if she belongs to you, then make sure she behaves herself!"

It was awkward not to be by my daughter, so I stood beside her. I hate violence, especially of the tongue. I asked the woman who she thinks she is because I noticed great pride when she mentioned her daughter belonged to her. I told her to teach her daughter to behave herself or stay home. The woman was so angry; she replied that she never stays home

because her husband beats her up. I said, "Well, go out, but don't bother others!" The woman pointed her finger in front of my nose and said, "I will get the police on you and your daughter!" She and her daughter went away and I saw her point two fingers shouting at us, "Not one, I shall bring TWO!"

My daughter started crying and I comforted her by saying we would probably just go home. She asked me seriously if they would drag us by our collars and throw us in jail. I laughed. We stood eating our ice cream when this mad woman came back with two young policemen. She pointed her finger at my daughter who was now hiding behind me. I went over to them and lost my temper. Trying to appear terrifying, the policeman said boldly, "Why are you people allowing your kids to hit other kids?" I whispered the whole story to him, how it started, that the whole family is abnormal and he shouldn't have believed them and followed them to this place in the first place. He glanced at the woman and her daughter. He agreed, nodding his head. Then they left, telling the woman that we will not disturb her anymore. I looked for my daughter. She was weeping silently behind a nearby tree trunk. I hugged her and told her things like this happen and I asked her not to exaggerate. I looked at my friend. She looked at me and we asked each other the same unspoken question, "Is this having fun during Eid in Yemen?"

The Second Day

Since the month before Ramadan, we had heard about a new clean and modern swimming pool for only women and children. We visited and were very pleased, as indeed it was very clean. The pool size was ideal, the water was a transparent blue and the decor was very colorful and beautiful. Additionally, there was a sauna, Jacuzzi, steam room, aerobics room and a small cafeteria. We entered walking while our kids happily hopped and jumped. Honestly, we were all excited. Yet, excitement and happiness don't last long.

As soon as we got in the water, we all screamed! The water was extremely cold, like melted ice. The

kids started crying and complaining, asking for their money back because the freezing water was unbearable. I took my baby with me, imagining he would have fun floating on the water inside his life buoy and splashing water at me. Instead, his lips turned purple and the poor baby screamed because he could neither stay nor wanted to leave the water. I carried him by force out of the water. His jaws were shivering and his muscles were hardening. I was praying to Allah to save my baby.

I called the girl in charge and asked her to be brave enough and go in the water. She refused, saying she is in charge and isn't allowed to swim. My kids, their lips purple, yelled, "Liar! Liar!" The price was 1,500 Riyals for adults and 1,000 Riyals for children. We were about nine altogether. I asked her why they didn't warm up the water, as that's a humane demand. Also, the steam room and the Jacuzzi weren't working. I lost my temper and told all the kids to get out of the pool right away. They did and unconsciously ran to the sauna. I didn't stop them. They needed warmth. I asked the girl in charge to give us back our money, but she smiled and said that was impossible. I shouted, "Well, so is the water! It is impossible!"

The kids started getting hungry. I sent one of my daughters to buy a plate of French fries. It cost 500 Riyals, more than the price of a kilo of potatoes, so we expected they would give a lot of French fries. My daughter returned with very little. I counted the fries; there were around 13. There also were different sandwiches on the menu. We ordered, but the cook said she had no bread so we were forced to buy French fries for the price of about 20 kilos of potatoes. After we ate, the girls in charge began looking at their watches and tidying up, although it was only 4:30. We were then asked directly to leave because they wanted to go home. We all felt depressed. We had the feeling of being cruelly fooled. No need to mention that some of the kids started vomiting in the car on the way home due to the cold in their stomachs. It was a tragic day! I will only wish a day like it upon an enemy.

Respect for children

(part 2 of 3)

By: Abdulaziz Atieq
The Cultural Center for Foreigners' Call

Under Islamic Law, Allah made breastfeeding an established right of the child, whether his mother or someone else provides it. The noble verses guaranteeing this right to the infant also guaranteed rights to all parties involved, so that none will be harmed. The breastfeeding issue has different sides to consider:

1. Rights of the child

Islam prescribed breastfeeding and commanded children do so until they attain full power and strength, as breastfeeding greatly impacts children's growth and development. Allah gave the required time period for breastfeeding. He said, "The mothers shall give suckling to their children for two whole years." (Al-Baqarah: 233)

2. Rights of the mother

If the mother is not divorced, she should breastfeed her child as a religious obligation, not because she is the natural mother. If she is divorced, then nursing is dealt with as nafaqah (financial support), as established in the Shari'ah. Nafaqah of the child is the father's responsibility. The father must give the mother compensation for her nursing. If she refuses to nurse, then it is incumbent upon the father to find and hire the child a wet-nurse. However, scholars make it mandatory upon the mother to nurse her child if the child refuses nursing by any other or if the father doesn't have sufficient funds to hire a wet-nurse.

The Qur'an satisfactorily detailed nursing rights, "The mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years, (that is) for those (parents) who desire to complete the term of suckling, but the father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother's food and clothing on a reasonable basis. No person shall have a burden laid on him greater than he can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, or father on account of his child. And on the (father's) heir is incumbent the like of that (which was incumbent on the father). If they both decide on weaning by mutual consent and after due consultation, there is no sin on them. And if you decide on a wet-nurse for your children, there is no sin on you, provided you pay what

you agreed on a reasonable basis. And fear Allah and know that Allah is All-Seer of what you do." (Al-Baqarah: 223)

Allah also said, "And if they are pregnant, then spend on them till they deliver. Then if they give suck to the children for you, give them their due payment and let each of you accept the advice of the other in a just way. But if you make difficulties for one another, then some other woman may give suck for him." (At-Talaq: 6)

3. Rights of others

The wet-nurse has rights as well, as relationships are established as a result of the child nursing from her. 'A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "The effect of nursing is like giving birth in regards to relationships such as marriage, etc." (Reported in Al-Mughni)

Another fundamental children's right under Islamic Law is giving them good names. Manmade laws do not consider this matter, almost as if it is insignificant. In contrast, Islam intervenes in naming children and encourages parents to choose good names for them. Islam recognizes that a name affects a person, since it is associated with him throughout life and after death. Additionally, his children and descendants will carry the name. It is common to see and hear numerous cases where people apply to courts to change their proper names (i.e., first names) or surnames (i.e., last names) due to inherent dissatisfaction with the name or embarrassment from association with a particular name.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told us to select good names. He reportedly said, "You'll be called on the Day of Resurrection by your names and your father's names, so choose good names for yourselves." (Reported by Abu Dawud) He also told us about some of the best names, "The dearest names to Allah are 'Abdullah and 'Abdur-Rahman." (Reported by Muslim) Abu-Musa said, "I was blessed with a son so I brought him to the Prophet and he named him Ibrahim." (Reported by Al-Bukhari)

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also changed some names to better ones. For example, he changed Harb (war) to Silm (peace) and an area called Afirah (dirty) to Khadihra' (green), among many others.

Newborn babies are forgotten

By: Joy Lawn

Each year, four million babies die in their first four weeks of life – over 10,000 deaths a day. Most of these neonatal deaths go unrecorded and remain invisible to all but their families. Virtually all (99%) occur in low- and middle-income countries, but most research and funding focuses on high-tech care for the 1% of deaths occurring in rich countries.

The greatest risk of death is at the beginning of life: three-quarters of all neonatal deaths (three million) occur within one week of birth, and at least one million babies die on their first day of life, many at home without any formal healthcare. Moreover, almost 40% of all child deaths occur in the neonatal period, with Africa and South Asia accounting for two-thirds of the total.

Unfortunately, child survival programs in the developing world have focused primarily on pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, and vaccine-preventable causes of deaths after the first month of life, while safe motherhood programs have focused primarily on the mother. Prevention of newborn deaths has thus dropped between the cracks of programs focusing on mothers and on older children.

This represents a tragedy that is as avoidable as it is immense. A recent series on neonatal issues in the British science journal *Lancet* estimated that between 41% and 72% of neonatal deaths could be prevented if simple interventions were provided effectively where they are needed most. In other words, up to three million babies needlessly die each year.

Well known, low-cost, and low-tech interventions do not reach those most in



need – for example immunization against tetanus, exclusive breastfeeding, simple care for low-weight babies, and antibiotics for infection. Such interventions are extremely cost-effective, and packaging these interventions together and linking them with other health programs reduces costs further. Saving lives requires that mothers and babies in the highest-mortality countries be reached at the time of greatest risk. Currently, only about half

of all women worldwide deliver with a skilled attendant present. In sub-Saharan Africa, less than 40% of women deliver with skilled care; in South Asia, the figure is less than 30%. Latin America and Southeast Asia have rapidly increased coverage, but at the current rate of progress in Africa, 50% of women will still deliver without skilled care in the year 2015. In Ethiopia, a quarter of pregnant women in the highest income group use skilled care at delivery, compared to 1% of the poorest women.

Low-income countries have demonstrated that rapid progress is possible. Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Peru, and Botswana all halved neonatal mortality during the 1990s. These countries' success has depended on sustained high-level political commitment to providing high-quality maternal and newborn care.

In particular, integrated planning is essential. In India, newborn health forms part of the national Reproductive and Child Health Program. In Ethiopia, newborn care is being incorporated into a new community-based healthcare program.

Of course, there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution. The numbers and causes of neonatal deaths, the capacity of the health system, and the obstacles faced differ between and within countries, as does support from policymakers and the availability of resources.

The additional cost of maintaining essential newborn health interventions at 90% coverage in the 75 countries with the highest mortality is estimated to be a mere \$4.1 billion per year. This would supplement current spending of \$2 billion, only about 30% of which is for interventions specifically aimed at newborns, while the majority is for

interventions that also benefit mothers and older children.

Even with a weak health system, it is possible to achieve measurable mortality reduction. But the world needs to act now to generate the political will and financial resources needed to save the lives of up to three million babies who die each year simply because they are born without the basic care that is their right.

Indeed, to continue to fail the world's at-risk children is to deliver a verdict of wanton inhumanity against ourselves, for we are a knowing party to an entirely preventable mass destruction of human life.

Joy Lawn is Senior Research and Policy Adviser, Saving Newborn Lives/Save the Children-USA, South Africa.

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Miswak, the natural toothbrush

Many studies have concluded that using Miswak is healthy. However, it is common that this natural material is misused.

By: Najwa Al-Harithi

The Miswak, scientific name *Salvadora persica*, is a natural tool for cleaning teeth used in many Arab and Islamic countries. It is widespread in southern Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Egypt and elsewhere. The Miswak also is obtained from other trees. For example, in Africa, it is cut from lime and orange trees, whereas in America, some are cut from the Senna tree, taken from roots and branches of particular desert trees. It differs from one region to another, but in Arabia and Asia, Miswak comes from the Arak tree.

Salvadora persica is a small upright evergreen tree or shrub, seldom more

than one foot in diameter and reaching a maximum height of three meters. Its leaves are small, oval, thick and succulent with a strong smell of cress or mustard.

Miswak's natural toothpaste is made up of a number of substances that play an important role in cleaning teeth. Many researchers have studied this element in depth and proven that the Miswak contains more than 10 different natural chemical compounds considered essential for good oral and dental hygiene. These are: fluoride, silica, tannic acid, resins, alkaloids (salvadorine), volatile oils (sinigrin), sulfur, vitamin C, sodium bicarbonate, chlorides, calcium, benzyliothiocyanate (BIT) and others, including salicylic acid, sterols,

trimethylamine, saponins and flavenoid.

Some of these components are stain removers and teeth whiteners, some protect teeth against cavities, some are bactericidal and antiseptic, some help in healing and repairing tissue, some promote remineralization (building) of tooth enamel and some give the taste and smell.

Physically, the Miswak is a natural toothbrush composed of a compact group of minute natural fibers performing exactly the same job as a normal toothbrush, except it is made of natural fibers and not plastic ones. For this reason, it is gentler on gums.

Cytotoxic (cell damaging) test results showed no cytotoxic effects from using freshly-cut Miswak. However, the same plant used 24 hours after cutting did contain harmful components. Based on these findings, researchers recommend cutting the day's used portion of the Miswak and preparing a fresh part.

Comparing it with the conventional



toothbrush, a clinical trial on Ethiopian schoolchildren found the Miswak to be as effective as the toothbrush in removing oral deposits. The study also found instruction and supervision to be important, since children in the sample

were not familiar with Miswak techniques.

Common mistakes in Miswak use: some people may misuse the Miswak and that leads to not get the whole benefits from it. For example many

people use the Miswak whose end is either too thin or too thick, or they don't cut end every day. Other may keep it in the mouth while doing other things, forgetting that teeth have five faces (inner, outer, two sides and biting/chewing faces) and only cleaning the outer faces.

The Miswak was known before Islam, but Islam added a religious aspect to using it. The prophet (peace be upon him) recommended Muslims clean their teeth using a Miswak daily, especially when waking up, performing ablution, before prayer, reciting the Qur'an, before sleeping and when the mouth smells bad. Many of the prophet's teachings speak about it. It is narrated that the prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Ten things are natural [for one to do]: Trimming the moustache, growing a beard, [using] the Miswak, sniffing up water, cutting the nails, washing hands, waxing armpits, shaving pubic hair and conserving water."

Obtaining Arab Universities Union membership

Watania University celebrates graduation of its 8th Batch



The Watania University, based in Taiz, celebrated the graduation of the 2004-2005 Batch and obtained the membership of the Arab Universities Union.

The university is considered a great scientific edifice and an ideal example in the sense of caring for leaving behind fingerprints in the procession of distinctive academic education. This edifice developed and was improved by virtue of extensive efforts exerted by the university officials to create educational opportunities in the field of applied and human sciences and scientific research. These efforts also aim at developing society and shouldering responsibility toward the country and its children, stemming from the care for effective participation and the exploration of creative energies on the part of successive generation.

Over the past few years, the Watania University has experienced remarkable improvements in its scientific programs at the practical and theoretical levels that was reflected on the quality of its outputs. Many establishments and parties that receive graduates testified in favor of the university.

Today, the university is continuing its success efficiently to provide the country with brilliant graduates having experience and competence in different majors. On an illuminating day that is Wednesday the 28th of December 2005, the Watania University celebrated the graduation of the 8th Batch and the distribution



Mohamed Al-Hayajim

Dr. Shakeeb Al-Khamiri

of honors to the talented in the Hall of Taiz Tourist Club. The 8th Batch represents a qualitative addition to fulfill needs of the country.

Mohamed Al-Hayajim, Deputy Governor of Taiz: "The Watania University is a scientific and national foundation that contributes, along with other universities to developing and enlightening our society."

Dr. Shakeeb Al-Khamiri, Watania University Rector praised the generous and kind sponsorship and limitless support of President Ali Abdullah Saleh for the higher education private foundations.

In the ceremony, opened with the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, Mohamed Al-Hayajim, Deputy Governor of Taiz gave a speech in which he expressed his happiness for attending the 8th Batch Graduation Ceremony. He congratulated graduates and wished them success and prosperity in their scientific research, expecting them to show



effective contribution to building the beloved country. Al-Hayajim pointed out the Watania University is thought of as a scientific and national establishment that contributes, along with other universities, to developing the Yemeni society. Concluding his speech, Deputy Governor of Taiz congratulated the Watania University, on behalf of Taiz Governorate Leadership, for obtaining the membership to Arab Universities Union.

For his part, Dr. Shakeeb Al-Khamiri, Watania University Rector, delivered a speech on the occasion in which he said: "Today is one of the brilliant days in the university's history; it is the day of harvest and happiness as we celebrate the graduation of a new batch of male and female students majoring in different scientific and human fields. He signaled out that 2005, which folds its final days, saw numerous achievements and diverse university activities that add credibility to the growing scientific and academic record of the Watania University.

On the top of these achievements, he said, are the university's obtaining the membership of the Arab Universities Union, the establishment of cooperative, academic and scientific relations, and signing new cooperation agreements with three universities in Egypt: Ain Shams, Halwan and Asyout universities.

Concluding his speech, Dr. Al-Khamiri confirmed that the Watania University will continue its distinctive educational and scientific performance and expend precious efforts aimed at improving its scientific programs that will be

inevitably reflected in its products. The university will keep on supplying the labor market with capable and competent outputs that meet demands of development in our country under the kind patronage and limitless support of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, the builder of Modern Yemen who always pays closer attention to private foundations of higher education. These foundations have witnessed remarkable development and their scientific and developmental role grows vitally with the passage of days.

The speech of the graduates was delivered by student Adnan Mohamed Ali who said: "Today is prevailed by love and happiness for being the day of scientific harvest." He, on behalf of himself and his classmates, expressed deep gratitude to the university's officials and teaching staff for the efforts they paid to make them well-qualified and competent.

He emphasized that graduates will remain loyal to this country through their distinctive work, contribution to the country's development and embodiment of noble meanings in real life situation.

By the end of the ceremony, Mohamed Al-Hayajim Deputy Governor of Taiz, Shakeeb Al-Khamiri Watania University Rector and Abdullah Sultan Taiz Education Office Representative awarded honors and certificates of merit to the top graduates and a number of establishments that cooperated with the university.

A number of government and sectors offi-

cial, representatives of political parties and civil community organizations, teaching staff members from the Watania University and other universities and students' parents attended the ceremony that saw a number of literary sections and recitals.

By the end of the ceremony, we conducted a questionnaire with some graduates and parents to know about their impressions on this day.

Students' parents: "We are proud of our children who gained different scientific skills at the Watania University.

Parent of Student Walid Sa'eed Ghailan who graduated from the Administrative Sciences Faculty, Department of Computer noted: "I am proud as I see my children graduate from the university along with other brilliant stars in different majors. The university is pondered upon as a vital reference for students as it established different departments and specializations that can be rarely found in other universities. The university is distinguished with the selection of top-quality professors and academics and it offers distinctive services in a continued way, which encourages parents to enroll their children in the university.

Abdulwahid Hamid Hassan, parent of top student Essam, Computer Engineering Faculty graduate exclaimed: "my child, being the top student in the department, made me take pride of myself on this achievement. For me, this day is historic and immortal commemoration whose effect remains in mind for a lifetime. We thank the university people, mainly Dr. Shakeeb Al-Khamiri, the university rector, for their fruitful efforts."

Graduates on the day of the ceremony:

Adnan Mohamed Ali, who got the second top place in the Department of Computer, Faculty of Engineering told: "I feel very happy on this day, which stands for an honorable portrait for the university officials who are always interested in our progress and distinctive performance."

Walid Mohamed Hashim, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, said: "my happiness on this day can not be described and I believe that the scene of the university officials and the teaching staff, as well as prominent education-

al personalities and parents of graduates will be printed in our minds. Undoubtedly, we will enter a new life to apply what we learned in real life situations."

Top student Hashim Mohamed Abdullah Ali, Faculty of Legitimate and Legal Sciences pointed out: "Praise be to God Who inspired me to attain this position and I congratulate my classmates on this occasion. I thank the university staff represented by its rector Dr. Shakeeb Al-Khamiri for the efforts they pursued for our sake and wish the university more success and prosperity in serving the nation and the society.

Ahmad Sifyan, Pharmacology Department graduate mentioned: "we are proud of being the Watania University graduates and we hope to be able to serve our society."

Essam Hamid Hassan, top student, Department of Computer, Faculty of Engineering, noted: "on this day, I express my gratitude to my generous family and I grant my success to it and the university that had an effective role in training us. I am also indebted to the respected teachers and Taiz locals.

Administrative and Educational personalities have something to say about the Watania University graduates:

Distinctive Initiative

Adnan Al-Qasus, General Manager of Taiz Telecommunication Corporation, confirmed the university already alleviated pressure and burden on the governmental universities, particularly after the establishment of the national unity. In addition, there is the distinctive competition in creating new scientific outputs and majors unavailable in other governmental universities.

He pointed out the Watania University has played a great role in developing economy and so he wishes it continued success and prosperity.

Pioneering University with its Outputs

Abdurrahman Al-Ramaima, emphasized the Watania University is one of the pioneering universities in the country in terms of good qualification and competence. The reason behind this is that the university pays closer attention to the practical aspects of learners, a feature playing an integral role in the development of Yemen, which is in need of efficient and top-quality outputs to address demands of the time.

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ELT Panorama

Writing: The other face

While I have no wish to quarrel with Prof. M.N.K. Bose's Freshman-oriented take on English composition, elaborated in his two letters on writing (No. 95 & 96), published in *The Yemen Times*, I feel that the broader social and cultural implications of writing need to be known by teachers and students alike in order for them to be able to take their stand as writers. They need to know, for instance, that, of the many false hands that reach out to us as writers in our troubled contemporary times, that which comes to us with a Derridean name tag is probably the most deceptive, if also the one that is most seductive.



Himansu S. Mohapatra, Professor of English, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar - 4, India

position of pre-eminence. Derrida's 'deconstructive' tactic made it possible for us to make that quantum leap from the notion of writing as something fixed to the notion of it as an endless proliferation of meaning. Writing was turned almost overnight from an object of fear into an object of desire. From here it was but a short step to the full-scale post-structuralist glorification of writing as the 'kamasutra', as in Roland Barthes, and to the postmodernist valorization of it as the inevitable technology of those mixed, hybridized and Diasporan identities called 'cyborgs', obtainable in a first world space. The apotheosis of writing was complete.

It is true that Derrida (incidentally the first anniversary of his death fell on October 10 of this year) did more than any other philosopher of the late twentieth century to keep alive the mystery and beauty of writing in a culture where it has been naturalized. The way Derrida went about celebrating writing or *écriture* was by launching his 'deconstructive' raids on a series of what he called 'binary oppositions' which have defined the essence of Western civilization and culture. The most crucial of these 'deconstructive' raids was directed at the speech-writing opposition. Derrida's coup d'état consisted in standing the opposition on its head, thereby unseating speech from its

as in Roland Barthes, and to the postmodernist valorization of it as the inevitable technology of those mixed, hybridized and Diasporan identities called 'cyborgs', obtainable in a first world space. The apotheosis of writing was complete. Just in case it makes us forget our bearings, it is important to recall that in the early era of print capitalism in the nineteenth century writing was valued precisely on the unDerridean ground of its being able to fix and arrest meaning. The development of capitalism necessitated the formulation of contractual laws which were binding on the apprentices. Writing, by giving an air of immutability to things, became a key element in the establishment of evidence. No wonder, writing came to be perceived as a straightjacket by the poor journeymen who signed on the dotted line or affixed their thumb impressions on a legal document about, say, the minimum wage, today, but had second thoughts about the deal tomorrow. They found to their horror and amazement that, once signed, sealed and deliv-

ered, their own signature took on an awesome and alien power over them.

The emerging colonial and postcolonial literature of the Third World constitutes proof that this idea of writing as regimentation is alive and kicking even today. The stuff of this literature is nothings if not the clash between the written culture and the oral tradition. In the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960), for instance, writing is shown for the dubious thing it really is. On the one hand, it is seen as having an edge over the indigenous *uli* which, unlike the western-imported technology of the ink, is short-lived. On the other hand, however, by holding someone down to what he/she had said twenty years ago, it is seen to militate against change and growth which is the very principle of existence. Caught thus in a double bind, it is left to Achebe's postcolonial to shuttle uneasily between the seemingly well-endowed space of the written culture, represented aptly in the novel by the relatively well-stocked room of the father, and the intimate but stripped down space of the oral tradition, represented equally aptly by the stark and bare mother's room.

So we see that writing which for Derrida, coming at the peak of the development of print capitalism, was a way of unfixing and unhinging meaning, was at the beginning of the same historical process only a restrictive 'ethos of letters.' Which is to say that the slippery Derridean seducer is only the beguiling face of the same rapacious actor.

The written word has been implicated in the history of money making and land

grabbing for far too long for this Derridean twist to the tail/tale to be anything more than a flash in the pan. The world is too graphocentric for the large majority of the people across the world to allow them the pleasures of mobility and deferral associated with the Derridean play of the sign. A recent story in *The New Yorker* magazine (October 27, 2003), "Love Snares" by Louis Erdrich, alerts us to this other face of writing involved in the European colonization of the land of the native Americans: "We were snared in white men's laws by then. With a flare of ink in the capital city, rights were taken and given away. Attempting to keep what was left of our land was like walking through a landscape of webs." These are webs cast by writing, so innocuous in terms of looks, but so momentous in its consequence.

How might then Derrida's 'deconstructive' take on writing work to resist this move to 'pen-lock' (the word is an English translation of the expression 'kalam-band', made famous by nineteenth-century Indian, nay, Oriya writer Fakir Mohan Senapati) not only life and land, but also, in this era of globalization, the mind? To be pen-happy and to chart one's way through the chaos of prewriting to the concrete reality of writing is not the whole story. It may be associated with the epistemologically crippling view from the top and has to be countered with writing from below.

To tell the truth, a freshman or a sophomore, knowledgeable only about the mechanics of writing, but unaware of its teleology, will probably not grow into a good writer.

A letter to the teachers of English: 102 Conversation skills (2)

Dear Fellow teachers,

I am sure you will agree with me when I say that one has to be careful while conversing with someone on the telephone, as you don't see the other person face to face. I have found conversing with my students whose English is not strong on the telephone difficult mainly because they misunderstand my expressions or the other way round. This shows that while conversing the gestures (movement of hands and head) and facial expressions also play an important role; telephone conversations often pose problems to some people because the gestures and facial expressions are missing. So, one has to be more careful, while conversing on the telephone, to make the message understood by the other person; moreover, it is also important to see that the other person doesn't misunderstand you.



Prof. M.N.K. Bose, mnk_bose@hotmail.com, Professor of English, Faculty of Arts, Ibb

Use of gestures and facial expressions are a part of a conversation; over use of them may also create problems. One has to learn the art of conversation and as a part of it one has to acquire the art of using gestures and facial expression. The nodding of head, for example, is a part of conversation. But it differs from one culture to another; the westerners nod their heads while conversing with others in one way, which may be different from the way we nod our heads while talking to someone. Most of the gestures, I think, are culture bound and we acquire them along with our mother tongue. Very rarely do we face problems in interpreting the gestures of the people from other culture, but one has to be aware that the use of gestures is a part of effective conversation. Even within a culture, there are variations in the use of gestures. I think, between the old people and the young ones.

Facial expressions do play a crucial role in conversations; you can make friends or mar your relationship by your facial expressions. Face is the index of the mind, isn't it? Some of the elders are clever in reading your face while you are talking to them. While you attend interviews, for example, your facial expressions add to your personality. You should definitely be

conscious of this factor while conversing. You cannot let your other worries overtake you while conversing with your bosses or students. It is difficult not to let the face express what is in your mind, but it is not impossible to control your facial expressions.

The purpose of introducing conversations in my letters hereafter is to help you, teachers of English, to enrich your conversation skills so that your conversations in English become healthy and meaningful. In addition, they will help you teach conversations effectively in your classrooms using the technique of role-playing. The students of English, I hope, will also find these conversations useful to them. As I have said in one of my letters, lack of conversation skills is a major obstacle for most of our students who are good at English, especially in the job market. I hope my attempt to present useful and day-to-day conversations in my letters will enable them to become more proficient in English. The idea of presenting them is to give you a start; as I said in the last letter, these are not natural conversations. After all, the classroom teaching itself is a drama where we play different roles, isn't it? Good luck.

Control your speech; it can bring good and evil.

Yours fraternally,
Dr.M.N.K.Bose.

The use of L1 in teaching literature in the TEFL context:

The teacher's handicap, the learners' advantage

The use of vernacular in the teaching of English and non-British English literatures to the EFL learners, though not discouraged by researchers, experts and practitioners, in most contexts tends to become vernacular teaching of such literatures. By a natural sliding effect over a period the teaching degenerates into a literal translation of English literature (hereafter will refer to all literatures written in any variety of English) into L1, and a poor one at that. For, the teacher once into that groove finds it difficult to retract as his learners look for more and more of this method and he also finds it easier and quicker to finish the portion.

As a teacher with thirty years of experience in teaching ESL in India and considerable experience in TEFL, I have come across in both Indian and Yemeni contexts many an English teacher getting habituated to this method and giving the impression to a passerby that some vernacular teacher is using a somewhat impressive amount of English in his lecture. This tendency will in the long run, apart from depriving the learners of achieving their goal, will render the teachers unfit for the task of guiding his learners to the target. It is a big challenge before the teachers and administrators which must be addressed, and addressed



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immediately, and addressed by none but them only. In the Yemeni context of TEFL (or ELF?), this problem is to a large extent squared up by appointing Indians as the Indians are handicapped to resort to vernacular because of their lack of knowledge of Arabic. This handicap of theirs is their strength. Handicapped by an inadequate knowledge of L1 and local culture, the non-Arab teacher of English becomes

highly innovative. Thus the non-Arab teacher of TEFL faced with a challenge--the challenge of stabilizing certain concepts that are Eurocentric, culture-specific, and unfamiliar to Yemeni students--but equipped with a cutting-edge English proficiency transforms his handicap into certain techniques the effective and imaginative use of which to a large extent help save the situation.

"To illustrate what we mean by the intangible quality of 'meaning'," Todd (1987) quotes words like 'beauty', 'goodness', 'love' and claims that it would be difficult to find two people who agree absolutely on what each of these words implies" (79). In spite of our familiarity with 'words' and using them in different contexts on innumerable occasions, it is not always easy to explain to others/learners what a word means, especially to learners of English who are culturally and

linguistically different. The vocabulary even in the case of students opting for a degree in Education with English Language Teaching as the major component is woefully low. Vocabulary being the major component of and foremost tool to enter the exotic world of a non-vernacular and unauthentic literature, it poses a great challenge. As Lyons (1981) says, "...there is clearly some kind of connection between the discovery or formation of concepts ... and learning the meaning of words" (244). It envisages that EFL learners of English literature shall be enabled to discover the concepts and correlate them to the relevant vocabulary items.

In the face of a situation like this, the non-Arab teacher of English may find his job quite frustrating if only he does not love the job, is not committed to the profession. By and large, every non-Arab teacher in the Yemeni context is highly motivated, committed and in love with his job.

Agreeing that the non-Arab teachers are committed, motivated, love their job and all that, let us now look at how they tackle the above situation that of teaching English as a foreign language (or ELF?) without recourse to L1.

I'll try to explain the case taking me as a representative of this clan of teachers. A teacher, that is, a non-Arab teacher who teaches English as a Foreign Language to Yemeni students in a Yemeni university, with knack and tact has stored up a number of arsenals in his pedagogic armoury to surmount this problem. The arsenals

include eye movements, facial expressions, bodily gestures, sketches and line drawings, board and chalk, clippings from the print media, clippings downloaded from the internet, looking for parallels and contrasts, and so on.

If the problem persists even beyond the use of these arsenals, he resorts to the intervention of some bright and smart students in the class. They are invariably there, at least one or two, sometimes even more. The teacher encourages such students to come out with vernacular/cultural equivalents to the Gordian knot that he tried but failed to cut with all his arsenals. This strategy is adopted sparingly and rarely only.

There are certain difficulties and pitfalls in adopting this strategy. Sometimes those bright and smart students may be shy and not forthcoming. The teacher has to employ a good amount of goading and cajoling to make them come out. He tells them that they may be the future teachers of English in Yemeni universities and that they should be participative in the class which will provide them with the necessary preparation to meet the professional challenges. Okay, he got them to come forth. What about the veracity of their contribution to the situation in question? Sometimes their understanding of the situation may be in the wrong.

It is normally easy to find out. If the intervention is apt, facilitating and explicatory, the whole class will beam in the thrill of having made a great discovery. Contrarily, if the intervention is misleading or wrong, the whole class will still continue to blink or there will be a sudden outburst of clashing points from other interventionist students and from the whole class as well. Though they lack the competence to comprehend by themselves the knot in question which the teacher, in spite of all his arsenals, finds not feasible to untie, they are alert enough not to be led into an altogether wrong pasture by their fellow sheep at the head of the class.

The teacher moderates the situation till the target is reached. Sometimes the target is reached by sheer labour--technically, strategically, methodically; sometimes serendipitously when the teacher or the learners clutch at an unexpected straw with the potential to cut the knot. May be, it takes a lot of time at times. There is a pedagogic hiatus testing the patience of the teacher. He may feel a vacuum

descending on him, enclosing him and engulfing him, the earth under his feet caving in. But, the method is quite rewarding to both the learners and the teacher when, at the end of all these, his learners succeed to comprehend the point. Another method is encouraging the learners to bring their English-Arabic dictionaries into the class. This will help save a lot of trouble and time. If a student is looking up his dictionary during the lecture, the teacher need not feel put out. Rather he must be professional and humane enough to understand that the learner is experiencing a difficulty and that he is full of initiative and that he is helping not only himself but others and the teacher as well. The activity of a student looking up his dictionary shall be considered as a signal to the teacher that there is a grey area in his lecture and that he must be alert enough to bring it to light. Perhaps many other students in the class have a similar problem but not initiative enough.

No teacher can afford to leave any point not well driven home however difficult and frustrating. The tenacity of the teacher and the motivation of the learners fuelled by the knot ultimately lend them some technique, some strategy, some method of cutting it. The most important pedagogic dharma that should guide the teacher in such a situation is that he should not hastily jump to the conclusion that his learners are unfit, dull, stupid, lacking in motivation, can never be made to learn and so on. Imagine the calamity with the consequent cascading damages that will drown both sides in mutual acrimony and animosity: the learners murmuring, murmuring deliberately loudly enough for the teacher to hear, that he is not competent for the job, and the teacher cursing the students as unfit even for menial jobs, all this ultimately undermining and vitiating the academic atmosphere. Such a culture should never be allowed to rear its ugly head. Whether we like it or not, English has over the years gained an enviable place in international communication and been instrumental for the vertical and horizontal spread of knowledge in every conceivable sphere of human pursuits. And it is now spoken by a large number of native and a larger number of non-native speakers. According to Trudgill and Hannah (1982), the geographic and demographic expansion of English has led to a situation in which it finds itself today "with more non-native speakers than any other language in the world, and more native speakers than any other language except Chinese" (4). And remember even Chinese have started to teach and learn English on a massive scale.

Abundant patience, devotion to the profession, conviction about his own abil-

ities and a faith in the hidden, untapped abilities of his learners help the non-Arab English language teacher enable him to untiringly chase the elusive Godot and drag him in by his mane. Truly, the handicaps (like the limited vocabulary, even more limited structures, absence of receptive and productive skills, unauthentic culturality of the literary masterpiece that he is grappling with--all these on the part of the learner, and the lack of knowledge of the learners' L1, the unfamiliar cultural context in which he is trying to get a foothold, the overriding fear of causing any religious or cultural hurt--all these on the part of the non-Arab English teacher) prove ultimately to be the stepping stones to a rewarding pedagogic experience.

A word about English teaching-learning in the Yemeni or any other context before winding up. Is it TEFL (Teaching of English as a Foreign Language) or ELF (teaching of English as a Lingua Franca)? The "goal of EFL learning is to be able to interact with native speakers of English, and whose norms are therefore those of English as a Native Language" (Jenkins 9). If the objective is TEFL, it is still a distant dream. What in my opinion weighs strong is that the focus of ELT in countries like India and Yemen should be on ELF which is often used interchangeably with English as an International Language the objective of which is facilitating interaction through a mutually intelligible, non-native variety of English. The aim of non-native speakers need not be solely facilitating the native speakers. The natives and the non-natives shall meet halfway, making sacrifices. The natives also must make a little sacrifice, as they can be proud of the whole world speaking in their tongue, in differing varieties though. This question of variety of English also poses a challenge to the non-Arab teacher of English in the Yemeni context. There are students who are avid listeners of CNN / BBC World and also interacting with tourists who are either native or non-native speakers of English -- all these being taught by Asian teachers, taught both English and Non-British Literature. The problem arising out of this situation can easily be solved by a careful selection of vocabulary items, syntactical structures and by neutralizing the accent so as to make it near native.

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4. Trudgill, Peter and Jean Hannah. International English. London: Arnold, 1982.

WONDERWORD by DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: First read the list of words, then look at the puzzle. The words are in all directions -- vertically, horizontally, diagonally, backward. Circle each letter of a word found and strike it off the list. The letters are often used more than once, so do not cross them out. It is best to find the big words first. When you find all the words listed in the clues, you'll have a number of letters left over that spell the Wonderword.

CLUES

Adjust	Disk	Label	Product	Sentence
Align	Display	Left	Properties	Spelling
Appearance	Duplicate	Length	Protect	Style
Automatic	Edit	Line	Read	Summarize
Block	Enhance	Mail	Record	Table
Bold	Enter	Margin	Reference	Tags
Boot	Error	Marker	Repeat	Text
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Bullet	Find	Merge	Return	Type
Career	Font	Move	Revise	Update
Character	Function	Notes	Right	Width
Check	Help	Office	Save	Wizard
Columns	Hide	Page	Screen	Write
Copy	Home	Paper	Script	Zoom
Count	Hyphen	Phrase	Scroll	
Cursor	Indent	Press	Search	
Data	Insert	Preview	Secretary	
Delete	Keys	Print	Select	

WORD PROCESSOR Solution: 8 letters

B	Y	P	F	E	S	Y	E	K	M	C	O	P	N	R	U	T	E	R	I
O	P	R	I	M	D	C	P	U	A	S	S	E	R	P	O	D	N	I	N
O	E	N	S	A	I	S	P	R	M	C	E	U	G	I	S	D	D		
T	C	V	D	L	C	N	H	D	K	N	E	C	E	I	T	E	S	G	E
N	C	I	P	M	M	R	R	A	E	D	V	N	L	S	R	E	N	K	N
I	D	E	T	U	A	E	E	T	R	L	A	A	U	T	I	I	C	D	T
R	R	W	L	S	P	R	N	E	E	O	S	R	C	T	L	V	U	T	C
P	O	E	E	U	E	G	F	N	B	R	A	R	L	O	P	E	H	O	
H	C	R	A	E	S	J	T	I	A	T	R	E	E	T	L	O	A	R	U
D	E	T	R	A	T	A	D	T	T	P	P	P	I	N	R	L	E		
A	R	P	H	E	C	S	R	A	X	O	S	P	C	A	A	O	C	S	T
E	C	E	Y	T	U	C	A	E	R	E	L	A	Y	C	P	N	F	C	Y
R	I	G	H	T	D	R	Z	P	F	E	T	A	T	E	A	U	H	R	H
S	T	Y	L	E	O	I	O	N	E	L	E	C	H	N	E	A	E	Y	
L	A	B	E	L	A	R	P	W	G	O	P	R	I	N	C	T	L	D	P
L	M	E	G	A	P	T	T	R	S	M	F	E	T	K	E	P	E	R	H
O	O	E	M	O	H	A	I	I	F	E	I	N	R	C	L	N	O	E	
R	T	M	M	O	E	D	B	O	T	O	R	C	C	E	O	I	B	N	
C	U	R	S	O	R	M	A	I	L	N	E	E	G	E	T	E	L	L	U
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Al-Tahadi Association for Physically Disabled Women

The current official source for disability senses in Yemen is the population censuses of 1994 as the result of the 2004 censuses results have not been made public as yet. Therefore, we use the United Nations' grounds in this context that estimates the disabled population of 10% of the total population. Hence, it is estimated that there is at least two million disabled persons in Yemen with various disabilities. Moreover, Yemen is considered one of the poorest countries in the world, with more than 40% of the population living below the food poverty line, and more than 60% living below the upper poverty line. Organized establishments dealing with disabilities started actively providing services in Yemen in the early nineties only. Today, there is only one center for the mentally disabled, four centers for visual disability one of which for women, two centers for physically handicapped for both men and women, two mixed centers for hearing disabilities and 56 handicapped associations around the republic and the only rehabilitation center affiliated to a non governmental organization is the rehabilitation center for disabled females affiliated to al-Tahadi Association.

Change and need for more change

Al-Tahadi Association throughout its field work has helped promoting change not only in the humanitarian situation of disabled females lives, through awareness activities it has also promoted cultural and social changes in the society's attitude towards disabled people, women especially.

Disabled people were isolated especially mentally and physically handicapped people. Women in particular were hidden in homes sometimes for a lifetime as they were considered source



After a long struggle the committee branched out and formed an independent association of 30 members dedicated to disabled women's issues in Yemen. The foundation period was very challenging and the association lead by Ms. Gamala al-Baidhani faced many challenges in a male dominated world. Yet, the group of young activists decided to challenge all the obstacles and fight their way through, representing themselves through al-Tahadi Association "Challenge", forming by that the very first specialized non government organization in this field. Today al-Tahadi Association includes 557 members of young women 135 of which are born with physical disabilities.

The Association is composed of the administration committee and this consists of 11 women with movement disabilities. A monitoring committee of five women with movement disabilities. A fixed advisory body of eight officially allocated personnel five of which are

sports facilities, a public library and in-house hostels and accommodation for 30 disabled females was accomplished.

Regular activities

- Management of the deaf and dumb and mentally disabled government center
- Handicraft and vocational training ongoing courses including sewing, recycling and toys and puppet creation
- Literacy classes
- Children's library and club
- Computer literacy classes
- Provision of transportation for the participants and students

Capacity Building

This includes training, building capacity of the staff and beneficiaries as well as education:

- Facilitating the employment of 15 disabled females in government offices
- Teaching 170 disabled woman read-

tion for people in the rural areas

Income generating

And this takes place through playing an intermediate role between the productive disabled females who have been trained through the Association and the market so as to enable the women to earn from their work. The Association also plays a vital role in networking and society awareness to assist acceptance of disabled women and their financial credibility.

Advocacy, awareness and networking

- Follow up of the government decree number 407 for year 1999 that allows disabled children to enroll in schools and support in their integration in schools
- Direct awareness programs in 4 hospitals, 41 schools, 11 ministries, 6 companies, 7 banks and several factories in addition to media campaigns
- Creation of an alliances support group of 30 rural associations who play an intermediate role in conveying our services to more than 3000 case of disability.

Early interventions

Through our visits to families during our awareness work we realized around 30 cases of children below one year of age who display signs of disability and which could be helped if intervention took place immediately. The Association then realized a new scope for our work and while it supported the 30 cases discovered, we launched an awareness project in order to assist further cases. Today the Association is directly responsible for the treatment of 20 more children between 1-5 years old while there is a waiting list of 40 cases of which 30 are female children.



of shame to the families. With the continuous effort of al-Tahadi's Association among other institutions families gradually started allowing their disabled family members to appear in society and participate in activities organized by the emerging specialized organizations, yet reservations still exist regarding disabled females. In addition to the social exclusion, marginalization and negative behavioral attitudes people with disabilities are subjected to by the society, there are other critical factors that highlight the significance of this issue in Yemen and confirm to the fact that there is a real problem.

- Illiteracy, as the ratio reaches as high as 97% illiterate person of the disabled population
- High cost of physical support equipment and their scarcity
- Low employment and educational opportunities
- Inconvenient infrastructure and public transportation
- Ignorance that leads to worsening mental and physical health of the disabled, and the non availability of early intervention tools
- Limited geographical disperse of facilities
- Insufficient and inefficient training and rehabilitation courses and focus on male handicapped, which leads to low skills among them
- Economic discrimination against disabled people in terms of loans, project funding and economic credibility

males and three females, this committee are government officials, parents and guardians as well as donor representatives. And finally a volunteering committee of 70 physically healthy young men and women whose interest are the well fare of the society and who are engaged in several of the Associations activities and campaigning.

Organizational capacity and administration efficiency

Al-Tahadi Association has invested in both human resources and institutionalization and structure in the same time. Results of this strategy lead to qualifying the Association's staff in management, and supervision of the Association's activities in addition to qualifying 15 vocational trainers, one nurse, two computer tutors and 3 literacy teachers. Institutional wise the construction of a children's club including

- ing and writing
- Qualifying 120 disabled females in handicrafts and various income generating skills
- Formal adult education for disabled females who know how to read and write
- Computer literacy of 80 disabled females
- Pre-school integration programs for 20 children every year
- Sports and physical therapy for students all year round

Medical and equipment support

- Provision of 1200 wheelchairs granted from various donors
- Provision of 500 clutches for disabled people
- Facilitating the provision of 2500 case of artificial limbs or disability aids
- Facilitating 13 rectification operation for children below one year of age
- Facilitating 170 mild disability opera-



The Association

Background

The Association was established in 1998 as a women's committee of an organization targeting disabled males.

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