

JMP: last attempt or bridge to a better future

An analysis of the Joint Meeting Parties experience in the past few months. One of the main achievements acknowledged for the JMP is defying the ideological differences among the member parties in order to achieve a unified stance. While political analysts think Yemen is still not ready for a peaceful transition of power.

By: Khalil Al-Khaubari

Yemeni people all around the country.

strongest, single, ruling party, the General

People Congress (GPC). However, as

repeatedly reported by many media dur-

ing the electoral campaigns, this experi-

ence, even if it attained success in the

course of the democratic process, it faced

a big challenge. The challenge was to

form a solid coordination between the

members of these parties similar to that of

their leaders. Commenting on the (JMP)

experience, Tareq Al-Shami, Head of

serve the society and this is a good expe-

"These parties agreed on issues that

However, he reiterated by casting his

"JMP strives to achieve their partisan

goals. These parties managed to over-

come all the ideological differences at the

level of leaderships, but they failed to

coordinate at the level of members in

local constituencies," he explains. "This

negatively influenced the performance of

According to Al-Dhahiri, JMP went

through a stage of exclusion created a

unifying factor for these parties despite

their different ideologies. He called on the

JMP, which in his opinion, achieved great

success and endorsed the legitimacy of

political competition, to evaluate their

experience. He advised these parties to

overcome all the ideological differences,

which may be a factor for their failure in

Mohamed Qahtan, JMP Official

Spokesman, commented on the variety in

the long term.

these parties in local council elections."

doubts on the seriousness and credibility

of the JMP to tackle national issues.

Media Department in GPC said,

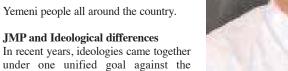
rience on its own."

An analysis of the Joint Meeting Parties experience in the past few months. One of the main achievements acknowledged for the JMP is defying the ideological differences among the member parties in order to achieve a unified stance. While political analysts think Yemen is still not ready for a peaceful transition of power.

In 1996, while Yemen was still recovering from the political conflicts of the political crises in 1994, there were many attempts to create a political coalition among the parties to ensure free and fair election in 1997. This trend developed and main opposition parties like Islah party, Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), Nasserite Unionist Popular Organization (NUPO), Popular Forces Union (PFU) and Al-Haq Party, managed to reach an agreement on a political reform project, which represented the fundamentals for these parties despite each party having its own agenda. These political parties formed the first seed of the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP).

Dr. Mohamed Al-Dhahiri, Head of Political Sciences Department at Sana'a University, says following the JMP agreement on the political reform project the opposition has moved from political weakness in the nineties, to competitive political power during the recent elections

September 20th and the real challenge The most recent elections in Yemen represented the most important and challenging experience in the JMP's political history. For the first time in Yemen's modern history there was a real and serious competition for the country's highest political post, as vividly witnessed among the



Tareq Al-Shami

the JMP's ideologies: "The talk about ideologies is merely a talk about the Cold War. When we thought about the future of Yemen and the country's current situation. we understood we have to leave behind the ideologies of the Cold War in order to make a better future for the country

"When we apply common sense, we will realise that despite our differences, we are all Yemenis, Arabs and Muslims, and these are the most important ties," Qahtan added. "The joint campaigning led by JMP in favor of its presidential candidate, Faisal Bin Shamalan, helped create a new spirit and a new language in the sense of JMP's interaction with its member parties or with people. And this will form the foundation for the JMP in the future'

The Yemeni political environment The famous political Yemeni poet

Abdullah Al-Baradoni once said: "Political parties are not aliens from

the skies. They are a product of this earth. They are the product of a dominant culture and social environment".

Right now is probably a moment to question ourselves about the level of cultural and political awareness the Yemeni people have attained. And whether Yemen is ready to accept and understand the peaceful transfer of power today. Consequently, one questions the role of the ruling party and opposition to



Mohamed Al-Dhahiri

enhance the peaceful transfer of power. Al-Dhahiri believes the most important goal of any political party is to reach power and not to remain as opposition.

"From a historic viewpoint, as Yemenis, we are not qualified enough to accept that any political party can reach power with strong political legitimacy. Via measuring public opinion, there are multiple factors that govern behaviour of the voter and change his/her attitude," he explained.

On his part, Qahtan holds the view that the elections have pushed the country toward a better future in this respect and the JMP has understood the meaning and benefit of the peaceful struggle.

In light of these differing viewpoints, it is possible for the peaceful transfer of power to be experienced in the long term if reforms are gradually implemented during the upcoming period. It will pave the way toward a new political era. These reforms may be concerned with deepening the institutional concept at the government and opposition levels. Also, they are expected to ensure fair and free elections and boost the culture of political tolerance among members of the society.

JMP between sharp political address and reactions of the public

The electoral campaigns of presidential candidates were characterized by serious competition, sharp addresses and exchange of accusations, which Yemenis



Mohamed Qahtan

nationwide hadn't seen before. At this point, a question arises about whether the sharp political address influenced behaviour of voters when they cast their ballots.

There is no remarkable difference between programs of the GPC and JMP candidates. It is the sharp political address that influenced the behaviour of the voter and this influence is limited to educated people who live in urban areas and main cities. However, the simple citizen, who lives in a rural area, doesn't pay attention to the political address like he/she does to living standards, according to Al-Dhahiri.

Al-Shami, pointed out the political address, particularly during electoral campaigns of JMP candidate, focused on exaggeration and cast doubt on achievements the country has witnessed, left negative influence on voters who believed such an address is unreal and inauthentic. Muneer Al-Omari, one of the Yemeni citizens reflecting on the ballots in the elections, mentioned that sourness of the political address generated fear among voters as well as a desire to maintain the current situation even if they want improvements.

	Ali A. Saleh	Bin Shamlan					
Positive	8%	10%					
Neutral	84%	87%					
Negative	8%	3%					
Tone of coverage as manipulated by							
independent newspapers.							

Whereas, Qahtan believes the acute political address is one of the most important achievements attained by JMP because these parties proved the presidential post belongs to the people and the post is subject to competition. The sharp political address put a stop to the impermissible and it's a victory for democracy.

JMP and Media

Since many political parties run their own newspapers a lot of campaigning took place in the media. However, independent media also contributed to the promotion of the presidential competition. A report released by European Union Election Observation Mission on the role of media in these elections, showed the JMP's candidate received on average around 22% in media coverage, while 67% was dedicated to the GPC candidate. This report studied the distribution of media space, and tone of coverage between the most two prominent presidential candidates as manipulated by independent newspapers.

The same report indicated the trends of approaching the presidential candidates in terms of positive, neutral or negative coverage. Surprisingly, Saleh received more negative media coverage than Bin Shamlan by 5 percent.

Nevertheless, the agreement in Yemen's political sphere is that although the JMP failed to dominate the scene, it least it has passed the test of survival. "People were betting on our failure as a collation. They thought our ideological differences would break us down. But they were wrong and we are still a strong political coalition. And we are sure that in the coming elections we will play a stronger role." Concluded Qahtan.

	Ali A. Saleh	Bin Shamlan				
Akhbar Al-Youm	91%	5%				
Al-Ayyam	51%	30%				
Al-Wasat	60%	34%				
Al-Nass	73%	26%				
Yemen Observer	67%	14%				
Yemen Times	61%	27%				
Distribution of space between the						

Distribution of space between the most two prominent candidates.

Eid Al-Fitr: Delight or plight?

During Eid Al-Fitr, in Yemen the poor are thinking of providing basic food for their families, while the rich are thinking of majestic hotels and attractive places to spend their Eid holidays.

By: Mohammed Al-Jabri "I shall never feel happy as I can't buy Eid clothes for my children," says Hamzah Kamel, who is a father to 4 children, "Alas for the poor! We want to do anything to make our children happy on Eid occasions.

Like other Arab and Muslim countries,

lies whose main concern lies mainly in how to provide basic food for their family.

"As the Eid approaches, I grow worried as to how I can buy new clothes for my children. What is worst for me is when they ask me to do so at a time of being totally broke," says Mohammed Al-Harazi, who supports seven family mem-





Yemen is celebrating Eid al-Fitr - the breaking of the fast. In this part of the world, the poor can't enjoy this occasion the same way the rich can: there are obstacles that muddy their days of joy and happiness.

"Things have changed remarkably. We had unforgettable days when people used to celebrate Eid with real happiness, at a time when they cared for no price hikes or other worries," says 70-year-old Alya Hamoud. "That was then, this is now."

Worries about Eid expenses

Days before Eid Al-Fitr arrives, people get prepared with the Eid accessories, from buying new clothes, to preparing sweets. But this is not the case with a lot of fami-

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bers.

For Al-Harazi, Eid is an occasion for double worries about "the possible way to make children enjoy the possible extent of pleasure."

Even some parents go beyond this and resort to begging in mosques or streets or going from one house to another asking for a second hand dress for a girl or a shirt for a boy whose clothes have worn thin. Nasser Al-Hamami says that during Ramadan, mosques see a large number of beggars who "need to purchase clothes for their children."

"Everywhere whether in streets, mosques, and even bus stations the poor with their palms of the hand or shawls laid on ground await five riyals," Al-Hamami explains. The closer Eid draws, the more the poor grow worrier, he concluded.

The sufferings don't stop here. When visiting female relatives, societal habits necessitate they have to give some money.

"This is more of a worry for a man who can't afford to give his female relatives four or five hundred rivals each upon visiting them on Eid," says al-Hamami. Some prefer to stay at home rather than

visit any relative, however precious the occasion.

"Sometimes I prefer to stay home when I don't have money enough to distribute among my female relatives in Eid," Al-Harazi pointed out.

Noisy Eid?

On the eve of Eid Al-Fitr, boys set off firecrackers everywhere.

"A few days before Eid, I make ready large quantities of firecrackers and weapon-like toys. These are the favorites of every boy. What else can I sell?" asks shopkeeper Ahmed Ma'moun.

For many people the firecracker create

Closed shops and deserted streets are a common scene in the main cities on Eid days.

very noise sounds, especially when they are set off during night. It is very common to hear firecrackers in the first ten days of Eid and this habit is more common in the countryside.

Boys also have historically set fire to tires on the eve of Eid.

"People receive Ramadan by setting fire to tires and setting off firecracker; so they end it the same way," Saif Mahdi explains. "Firing bullets is common in some villages as well."

But over the past two years the government exerted much effort to help prevent the exercise of such practices, namely in main cities.

"We always hear firecrackers although selling them is not allowed. What is the role of security authorities then?" Mahdi wonders.

Some locals say the problem continues as some state's officials are firecrackers traders. While children enjoy playing with firecrackers, parents worry about the hazards they cause. It is no wonder to see a child give a cry upon setting off firecrackers. Firecrackers cause harm to the eyes in most cases if misused.

"Last year, I brought my 12-year-old child to hospital as his eyes were injured by firecrackers," says Al-Harazi.

Here boys find it a good chance to enjoy every minute of it: they divided into groups and begin what seems to them as a war

"I happened to pass by a neighborhood in the capital city. There were boys on roofs, behind cars and walls, on windows. They were throwing firecrackers at one another," Al-Hamami says.

Manipulation of services

Eid is the season of earning as much money as possible for some people. Qat is sold at high prices, taxis put up their prices, entertainment tickets become expensive - and it all makes things more difficult for people.

"I have to give a taxi driver YR 800 for a short errand, while on other days I give him just quarter the amount," said Khalid al-Wadei.

Many other people complain of qat sellers who raise prices on Eid days.

"I don't know why we have to buy qat at high prices in Eid. Is it because it has irritable taste nowadays?" Al-Harazi asked.

Very few restaurants or bakeries open in Eid making it difficult for those families that depend on their services.

Increasing incidents

Traveling to the countryside or attractive places is common during Eid days. Car accidents occur very frequently as a consequence. Hospitals very often receive hundreds of casualties as victims of car accidents.



Report



By: Nisreen Shadad

wish I felt secure and safe towards my Folklore House without locks and alarms that this House may one day be replaced to a shop rather than an association," says Arwa Othman, the director of the

Folklore House. Folklore House is a cultural, nonprofit NGO. It is also a small-scale museum that conducts research and studies, collect documents of Yemen's spiritual heritage.

The Folklore House

Since the establishment of the Folklore House, in April 10, 2004, Othman has gone full steam ahead with her plan to document Yemeni traditional heritage



Arwa in her Folkloric library.

especially the verbal one that includes songs, fables, adages, jokes, riddles, fairy,

tales and myths. Nevertheless she finds herself in a tight spot. She was the only worker there, she was conducting research, traveling to collect more stories and cleaning the Folklore House after the visitors left. The real obstacle, however, that put a spoke in her wheel was the absence of the finance and working group to help her. "I invited some of the movers and shakers to this House, not to give me money, but to endow me a building. They all promise, but no one fulfills," she said. Before several months, Mr.Yahya Al-Shoa'ibi, the governor of Sana'a, cooperated with our center and got the responsibility of giving salary to my new workers; a secretary and a guard." She noted.

The Folklore House is divided into four sections: a. an administration, b.Folkloric library, c. documentation and recording unit, and d. a Mini Museum. The administration's tasks rang from enacting the cultural and research activities of the House to contacting Cultural centers and organizations. Folkloric library is a first step towards establishing a grand and comprehensive library for folklore. It contains a hundreds of books and periodicals that are completely or partly dedicated to national, Arab and foreign folklores, along with audio, photo and TV archives. In Documentation and Recording unit verbal heritage is recorded and archived through conversations with old people, Othman visited several areas in Yemen to record the stories and tales. The last section is the Mini Museum which contains a number of collections. It is divided into; the traditional kitchen, traditional costumes (men's, women's and children's).

Expectations Othman working for Othman was born in 1965 in Taiz. She has received her Bachelor degree in fac-



Qaraqeesh, a cover the single woman put over her head.

ulty of Art, Philosophy department, Sana'a University. In her childhood, she was eager to keep material heritage like silver jewelries and ornaments." When I was a child, I used to collect my pocket money which is actually fifty rails to buy silver nickels. I lost two dearest partners, the first was my grandma and the second was her irreplaceable priceless fables and tales that will never come back. Therefore, I give Yemeni verbal heritage my best shot so as to not to die as my grandma did. In a cultural competition of short stories in UEA, she participated with "Happening in Tanka, the country of misquotes" and as a result, she got the first prize in 2001. This short story talked about Tanka, a country where all its visitors disappeared.



Women rubbed Al-Eqal plant around their eyes to prevent sun burning.

Last year, Othman conducted a distinc-

tive cultural project called Al- Madraha,

or the swing celebration that took place

and aimed to revive one of the most

important local and traditional custom

that vanish and gradually become extinct

without documenting. Al- Madraha is

important in preparation for the pilgrim-

age. When someone declared his/her

intention to perform Hajj, his/ her family,

friends and neighbors would build the

swing. In the swing would be set up in a

public area called (Al-Aqma). It is made

usually from the wood of solid trees like

acacia and its pillars are tied firmly by

special ropes called (As-Salb) which are

considered the strongest. These ropes

were sometimes made of leather and

braided; the pillars should be tightly fixed

to prevent rupture- an ominous sign for the pilgrimage

Despite the several obstacles Othman has faced, she has stars in her eyes to go on and think of her future expectations. Soon enough, she said, the first edition of Al-Thakera(Memory) magazine will be published. It's a cultural, anthropologic and folkloric magazine. Besides, it will introduce, for the first time, a special subject about Al-Dawshina; particular group of people exist in different region of the country interested much in Yemeni traditional heritage. Add to that, she dreams of publishing an encyclopedia that involves all traditional fables and tales and the Reading on Yemeni traditional narrating book that introduces 70 stories is considered an introduction of encyclopedia.

Reflecting on traditional fashion: Yemen as a creative country

By: Yemen Times Staff

Yemeni kitchenware.

emeni women nowadays wear clothes that are universal somehow. In Eid, they wear skirts, semiskirts, trousers; blouses and dresses. These come from catalogues preferred by women presenting fashion designs from around the world. Therefore, the worldly designs dominate and rarely do we find a woman wearing a traditional fashion design in her daily life, unless they are from the older generations.

The gap between modern and traditional fashion designs has its own historical roots. Jahaf said, "With the Yemeni



revolution of 1962 against the Imamate rule took place, people began to establish a new society. The circle of isolation was broken and as a result to poverty, ignorance, injustice and a series of deadly diseases that prevailed in the country, Yemenis were ready to overthrow everything that related to the Imam in order to change their lives. Even those traditional and heritage conscientious people, considered the remains of the Imam's influence should be ignored and forgotten.

Many materials were imported and consequently home-grown handcrafters became jobless. These immigrated to various Gulf countries to find other jobs hoping to improve their outcomes. At the beginning of nineties, Yemenis and several neighboring countries were interested in the re-flourishing of heritage; however, I don't know the real reason beyond this. Even the companies of more worldly acclaimed fashion designing were inspired in their modern designs with those of eras past. Even though this spoke of a flowering trend, wearing these old designs only emerged upon occasion." Yemeni women have historically received a new dress yearly for those special occasions or ceremonies such as Eid and wedding parties. The art of constructing clothes from patterns goes back much further. The old design patterns which predominated for centuries, however, are a far cry from the newer ones. The older designs depended on geographical environment of a given city and the raw materials available in each region. Now most of the fashion designs have a non-Yemeni identity where most have been imported. "In the past all the whole process of producing clothes; from harvesting and cleaning the fiber or wool to designing, cutting and sewing the cloth into clothes, took place in Yemen. And that clearly reflected the economic condition of Yemen", says

Amat Al-Razzaq Jahaf, the head of the Woman Development Center for Traditional Heritage.

The traditional design pattern

Materials: Cotton, flax, wool and silk, are the natural raw materials that are commonly used.

Features: The natural environment in its diversity of plains, mountains, hills and deserts make for variations on how people wear clothing and the quality of the woven fabric and the patterns of the embroidery.

In Heights

- 1. The quality and the fineness of the woven fabric are vital.
- 2. Textiles mostly used are cotton, flex, and wool; silks and other textiles are imported from India.
- b. Women's clothes cover all parts of the body with a neckline that can be fastened with buttons. The sleeves are wide as well as long reaching, in many cases, the knees. The sleeves

terns and embroidery. They are smartly stylish as well as modest. Threads commonly used in sewing the cloth are of gold, silver, silk or cotton. The embroidery patterns are inspired from nature, shaped as plants or geometrical motifs.

Types of clothes:

Women normally wore two pieces of clothes; *Qamees* -a loose robe was worn over a dress. *Qamees* were usually worn when leaving the house, while the dress was worn for special occasions such as 'Eid, or in their daily lives.

1. Qamees

In Sana'a, the Qamees was usually made of *Jerz* or black velvet with a narrow neckline with the top of the sleeve that is wide until its lower segment that reaches the women's knees.

In Taiz, the Oamees is tight at the top: similar to older French designs. The sleeve is cut narrow from the top and widens until it reaches its lower part in a bell-bottoms design. Normally, we can easily see stitches in both sides against the fabric, but usually stitches in the front turned triangular shape. In Sa'da, the most popular Qamees is called Ageeda that is similar to Sana'ani version in terms of its design, but Aqeeda is stitched as a whole with the embroidery containing old coins, shells and buttons. The sleeve's lower end has a triangular shape. Such Qamees existed also in Al-Jawf and Marib.



Sana'ani Kamis



end with cuffs that can be fastened with links.

The Plains

- 1. Softness and lightness of the woven fabric is important.
- 2. Textiles mostly used are cotton and flax.
- 3. The women's dress has a wide neckline, usually in a rectangular or fourfold shape.

The Hills

- . Textiles used are silk, cotton and imported velvets.
- 2. *Kodma* and *Thail* (Front and Tail) is a style where the dress is short in the front and long in the back.

Artistic Features

Yemeni dresses are unique in their pat-

2. Dress

In Shabwa, Hadhramout and Al-Mahara women wore a popular dress called *Thail and Kodma* (Tail and Front) where the tail back end is longer than the front. The length and shortness of the dress depended on custom. For example in Shabwa, the length of the tail was longer (10 cm) than the front. In Hadhramout, the length of the tail is longer (1 meter) than the front; and in Al-Mahara the tail

Embroidery of Jahaf's bag inspired from Sana'ni pants.

is even longer (2 or 3 meters) than the front. In Shabwa the front is above the heels, in Hadhramout and Al-Mahara, the front is under the knees exactly. The tail, for the woman in Al-Mahara, is firmly secured to her waist with a silver belt.

Jahaf has stated the designs of such



Sana'ani dress

Women nowadays wear modern clothes.

Thail and kodma dress

dresses are too old. One of the past's poets, Imro'o Al-Qais, one of the most famous poets on the Arabian Peninsula, mentions this kind of dress in one of his poems. (A Yemeni from Hadhramout, he was born in Najd in 105 CE)."One of the reason for making the tails long was due to traditions; another was to hide a woman's footprints," Jahaf added.

In Tihma, one of the hotter cities, women wore a brassiere like shirt and a skirt made of light fabrics. Jahaf had to say about such designs, "This particular type of design is extremely different from others and rarely found anywhere else in Yemen. According to my studies and investigations, such designs have an Indian influence, similar to the Sari that consists of a blouse and petticoat."

Arabian styled dresses are the most popular dress form in Sana'a. "Though it was worn only in Sana'a and several locations, I don't know why they call it Arabian", Jahaf commented. It's designed in two pieces cut in semi circles, then stitched midway from the sleeve to the waist. This piece is then joined with the skirt piece through pleats.

Report

Journalists in war zones: A deadly grey area

With military conflicts growing increasingly complex, the safety of journalists in battle zones and troubled areas is becoming a major issue. More and more, journalists and media workers are moving in a deadly grey area.

By: Petra Tabeling

TIMES

clear.

t was a dark day for the media and for freedom of the press when relatives of slain journalists gathered last week in the French city of Bayeux to dedicate Europe's first memorial for journalists, commemorating more than 2000 media workers who have lost their lives worldwide since 1944.

On this very weekend the news was dominated by the murders of three journalists: two German employees of the Deutsche Welle were killed in Afghanistan, while Russian journalist Anna Politowskaya was murdered in her Moscow apartment. As globalization progresses, creating ambiguous interests, actors and hostilities, the issue of journalists' safety is becoming more urgent than ever before.

No Certainties

The conflicts in the Middle East have shown that journalists are not immune to the anarchy and violence they report on. The situation in Iraq, where more than 100 media workers have died since the war began in 2003, makes this especially

Media workers are caught in the crossfire - from Western armies as well as guerilla groups. "Embedded" journalists, i.e. those who work within the ranks of the army, can be certain neither of their physical safety nor of their journalistic independence. On top of everything, kidnappings have become a serious threat.

The killings of French journalists and the kidnappings of French correspondents such as Florence Aubenas and Christian Chesnot were major factors in the French Parliament's decision to propose a law strengthening the status of journalists in military conflicts on the international level.

For example, it calls for an expansion of the Geneva Conventions, which define journalists in battle as civilians who, as such, must be protected; the UN Security Council must guarantee the right to gather information without any restrictions. In addition, NATO should adapt the socalled "Green Book" used by the British Army, which was the first to recognize the independence of journalists in battle zones early this year.

In addition, the law would make it pos-

Shares of the poor wholesaled by zone chiefs

By: Fuad Al-Hasri ost of the poor learn nothing about functions and activities of charitable societies scattered throughout the country. Some of these societies sleep throughout the year and wake up in Ramadan to collect donations for the poor while others double their activities during the holy month, as this month is considered a chance for giving charities to the poor and the needy. This article sheds light on activities of charitable societies during Ramadan, as well as on whether these societies exercise any activities in any other months of the year.

Briefing us on the activities of his society, Wasim Al-Qubati, Manager of Public Relations and Media at Al-Hekma Al-

sible for crimes against journalists to be brought to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, and suggests that a financial fund for journalists in crisis situations would be helpful.

Robert Menard, Chair of Reporters without Borders, who played a crucial role in drafting the law, praised the politicians' commitment: "If the French government adopts the proposal, we hope for corresponding adaptations by German and other European governments, reaching all the way to the United Nations Security Council."

Supporting independent media workers on location

At this year's conference for war journalists in Bayeux, Middle East correspondents discussed the parliamentary report, not without criticism:

"The Taliban, Al Qaeda and the Hamas won't read a text like that, you can never feel safe. Nowadays it's virtually impossible in Iraq or Afghanistan. The larger problem is the situation of the independent journalists and Arab employees on location: often they don't even have insurance and get no financial support from their clients," says Emmanuel Razavi of the Kabul-based Hamsa Agency. "We give our native employees monthly wages and insurance. That's our philosophy, but few do the same. An Iraqi employee isn't worth less than a Western journalist!"

This is also criticized by Robert

Yamania Charitable Society, said: "the society implements many charitable projects that target the poor and the needy. It construct mosques, drill wells, sponsor orphans, in addition to implementing other projects such as the sacrifice and faster feeding projects."

Ramadan's charity seeds

Ramadan's charity seeds is reflected by the lavish support offered by the will-todo people during the holy month. Receiving support from philanthropists, the society held open tables to mosques and hospitals. In addition, the society deliver foodstuffs to poor families to their homes such as rice, sugar, flour and dates, meanwhile the poor families that benefited from this project numbered up to 77,125 in Taiz last year.

Menard: "For example, just two New York Times journalists have over 80 Iraqis working for them, from drivers and translators to informants. I doubt that enough financial resources are available for them. Yet they're the ones with the greatest risk."

A drop in the bucket

Now, though, there are initiatives to finance the necessary security training for journalists and media workers on location, who often lack the financial or organizational resources to pay for such training. The International News Safety Institute (INSI), founded four years ago to address media workers' security concerns, offers on-location security training sessions funded by donations from Western media companies such as the BBC.

"It's a drop in the bucket," says Sarah de Jong of INSI, "but still, it's important for the international community to understand that the killing of a journalist is always an attack on the truth. And we need lots of journalists, especially in war zones such as Iraq, to find out the truth. We are supporting people's human right to information when politicians, governments, the military and other actors have absolute respect for journalists."

How difficult it has been to accept this is shown by the American military's bombardment of the Hotel Palestine in Baghdad in 2003 and of the offices of the Arab TV stations Al Jazeera and Abu

Not only in Ramadan

There are other projects held in Ramadan, as well as in other months, like the successful project launched last year, represented by the distribution of foodstuffs and other consumptive commodities to the poor and the needy. 302 food baskets, worth 7,000 Yemeni Riyals per basket, were delivered to poor families last year.

As part of its projects, Al-Hekma Al-Yamania Charitable Society delivered foods to 15 mosques, but this year it distributed meals to more than five mosques, in addition the criminal investigation bureau for prisoners, according to Salim Al-Qubati.

Eid Wears Project

Al-Qubati mentioned that the society provides the poor and low-income fami-



France unveiled on 7 October a memorial to journalists killed while doing their job, with monuments bearing hundreds of names in the northwestern town of Bayeux.

Dhabi TV, in which several journalists died. James Miller, a British documentary filmmaker was killed in the Gaza Strip, targeted by an Israeli soldier despite being clearly identifiable as a journalist.

The memorial to slain media workers in Bayeux displays an especially large number of names of journalists from the Middle East, including the French-Lebanese journalist Samir Kassir. The columnist from the daily "An-Nahar" was killed in Beirut in 2005 when his car was bombed. He had repeatedly pilloried the "Lebanese police state". At the dedication Robert Menard,

lies with Al-Eid wears. Also, it provides orphans with monthly aides and helps them get an access to education and healthcare.

To verify that charitable societies give aids to marginalized people, we asked some of those marginalized about the fact. One of the marginalized people said that they only receive the iftar meal occasionally and not daily as some societies claims.

Distributing meals in mosques causes chaos

"Charitable societies exercise good deeds in Ramadan, however distributing meals to people in mosques causes chaos due to the huge crowds," Haj Abdu Ismail said. "those societies are supposed to plan how to distribute meals in an organized way in order to avoid chaos by the poor, who Chair of Reporters without Borders, described the memorial as a message and a defiant symbol of those who, despite all the risks, try to find out the truth.

The little park features a marble stone with a quote from the French philosopher and journalist Simone de Beauvoir stating that one can only enjoy freedom when others are free. Now three new names must be carved into the white marble stones. The question of security remains.

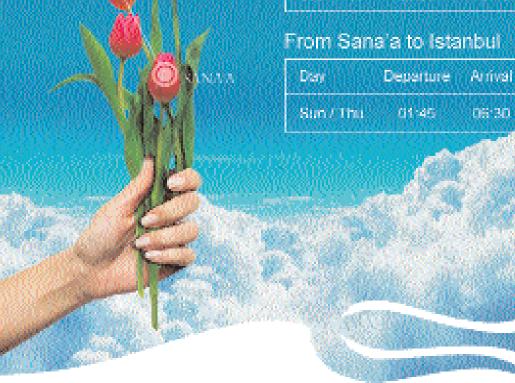
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constitute huge masses and crush with one another.

"The one who hears that charitable societies support us during Ramadan may believe that people nationwide live in good conditions. Two years ago, we learned that the zone chief took all the foodstuffs, given by charitable societies to the poor, to sell most of them in the wholesale market. He gave the poor only what remained," Fahmi Abdullah, one of the marginalized people complained.

Another marginalized guy, under the name of Wafi Abdullah, who lives behind Al-Thawrah Hospital, said they receive no aides from charitable societies. He added: "we go to philanthropists to have Iftar. Sometimes, we go to the nearby mosque to have Iftar there. We eat, but never receive foodstuffs to be cooked at home."

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26 October, 2006

Opinion

Gender Jihad: Enhancing female access in politics

emen's 2006 election was not only a barometer of pluralism in the Arab world, but also, a barometer of hope within Yemen. The September 2006 election results in Yemen mark the first time in modern Arab history that a president was seriously contested by an opponent with substan-

tial popular support.

The election outcomes – for both the ruling party and the opposition are tangible evidence that positive leadership and pluralism are indeed capable of flourishing in Yemen.

Glans

Since the first experiment with presidential elections in 1999, there has been keen interest in Yemen's political life. I vividly recall that first presidential election; President Saleh won with 96.2 percent of the popular vote and his only challenger was a former member of the ruling party running as an independent. In 2006, President Saleh of the General People's Congress was again the victor. but with only 77.2 percent of the vote; his opponent, Faisal Bin Shamlan of the Joint Meeting Parties (an opposition coalition) won 21.8 percent of the vote. This garnering of voter support by opposition parties not only demonstrates the influence of alternative voices in Yemen but somewhat paradoxically reinforces the legitimacy of the ruling party's leadership.

Of course, not everyone is happy with the extent of pluralism in the Yemen. Women in Yemen strive to be represented in political life. Women whole heartedly participated in the 2006 election as voters, but were disappointed with their participation as candidates. The male – female split of candidates running for elected office was heavily weighted in favour of men: 18,760 male candidates compared to 137 female candidates. There were no female presidential candidates and only 149 women ran for local councils compared to more than 20,000 male candidates.

According to electoral experts, women's candidacy in Yemen is backsliding, and fingers are pointing to the political parties. Nearly half of the female candidates in the September election were running as independents. Over the last year, there had been a lot of engagement with women's groups in Yemen to explore how to enhance female candidacy. Early this year, there

was pressure for a 15 percent quota for women in local elections. A protest march to the presidential palace was launched in early September to express growing frustration with the nomination of women candidates by both the ruling and opposition parties. Clearly, By: Donna Kennedysome women in Yemen did not only wish to be

voters, they also wanted to political leaders. Gender jihad has been launched in politics!

From my vantage point in Canada, the unfolding of egalitarianism in Yemen is insightful. Yemen's experiences give Westerners another chance to consider what equality of opportunity for men and women can look like, and to consider our own evolution of female political leadership.Women only won the right to vote gradually in Canada and remain underrepresented in our federal Parliament as well as in provincial legislatures. The first federal election in which women were able to vote and run as candidates in Canada was 1921. In that election, four women ran for office and one woman, Agnes MacPhail. Campbell made history as the first woman elected to the Canadian House of Commons. Between 1921 and 2006, 3402 women candidates stood in the 39 general elections and won on 426 occasions.

At the close of nominations for the 2006 election in Canada, there were 380 women and 1,254 men among the 1,634 candidates confirmed by Elections Canada. While the absolute number of women candidates fell from 2004, the percentage of candidates who are women remained steady at 23.2%. There were 64 women elected in the 2006 election campaign (20.8% of all those elected), with only 14 women elected from the ruling Conservative party.

Canada has a Ministerial portfolio responsible for Canadian Heritage and Status of Women. Notwithstanding the obvious under-representation of women in elected political positions in Canada, there are vigorous deliberations about the role of this Ministry. Some even recommend an end of funding to women's organizations that do lobbying, advocacy or general research on rights issues, and encourage instead support to skills training and mentoring programs for women. Opposition is outraged with the assumption that activism is no longer necessary to sup-

port gender equality in Canada: "Your judgement, guided by your conservative ideology, is that systemic discrimination doesn't exist. In other words: fend for yourselves."

There is no legal obstacle preventing women from participating as candidates in elections - in Canada or in Yemen. But, the statistics are not encouraging in either country. Female voter registration is strong, but the number of women nominated to run for office in both countries is stagnating, even declining.

What can be done to really improve female participation in political life? What is the impact of gender advocacy? What is the outcome of training and mentoring of females? In Canada and in Yemen those who value equality continue to assess the options, and to implement policies and implementation strategies that have impact.Perhaps we first need to dispel some myths that cloud our thinking:

Myth #1: Women politicians are power-hungry

Some believe that women politicians are power-hungry; only seeking public office as a means to access influence. For many female and male leaders, political life is not about an exercise of power, bur rather, an exercise of stewardship. We need only to identify as role-models female political leaders who exercise their decision-making in a compassionate and gender balanced way. In Yemen, there are many such female political leaders - including Amat de Souswa, the former Minister of Human Rights and now a Yemeni representative at the United Nations. More recently elected female political leaders in Yemen include a principal of the Arwa All Girls' school in Taiz, Amat Al-Rahman Jahaf. I had the pleasure of working with Amat this spring on a project involving young girls in Canada and young girls in Yemen. As a community leader in Taiz, and now as an elected leader on a national level, Amat's gentleness, sincerity and transparency will certainly inspire other women to elected positions. Rather than "giving up" on her femininity, Amat brings feminine virtues to this role and is trusted by her constituency to represent their interests.

Myth #2: Women lack political experience

In Canada and in Yemen, some argue that women lack the training and experience for political life. This is a bit of a circular argument that will never end

while women stand on the political sidelines. In order to address this myth, the Yemeni Women's Federation (YWF) coordinated with political parties to train 200 women candidates from various political parties. In Canada, the Famous 5 Foundation was launched in 1996 as a not-for-profit charity to honour early Canadian women in politics, our female pioneers. As well, the Foundation commits to support a future where all Canadians will recognize their potential to contribute in positive ways to the generation in which they are living, and honour the leadership of women and men who have been our nation builders. Women may lack direct political experience, but they do not lack leadership

Myth #3: Female constituencies are not influential

Political leaders represent their constituents, and in both Yemen and in Canada, voter blocks often include women and youth. Election results in Yemen indicate that a majority of women and youth voted for the ruling party. The GPC party will need to ensure that those responsible for making political decisions understand the implications of their decisions, not only on a state level and an economic level. but impacts must be understood across the social fabric of local communities and within families. State decisionmaking cannot afford an obscured female perspective. Women are encouraged to better understand their influence, as voters, as elected politicians, and as constituents.

Women in Yemen and in Canada have been granted rights as equal citizens the right to primary, secondary and post-secondary education, the right to vote and to hold political office, the right of non-discriminatory access to work and to justice. We must work diligently and honestly to be societies where limiting beliefs about equality are truthfully evaluated and addressed, at a national policy level, at a values threshold within communities and families, and within the hearts and minds of individuals. We have much to learn from each country's experiences with gender jihad.

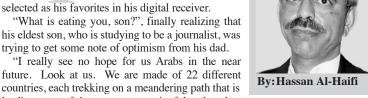
Donna Kennedy-Glans, LLB. is the founder and executive director of Bridges Social Development, a Canadian registered charity providing capacity building in Yemen for women in healthcare, law, education, journalism and politics. www.canadabridges.com

COMMON SENSE

From reverse gear to first gear forward

say there is really no hope for us Arabs in the near future!" said 667 Mujahid to his father, while the father is going through the hundred or so favorite satellite stations he has selected as his favorites in his digital receiver.

"What is eating you, son?", finally realizing that his eldest son, who is studying to be a journalist, was trying to get some note of optimism from his dad. "I really see no hope for us Arabs in the near



leading none of them to any meaningful end or destiny. We as a nation are still moving in reverse gear. In fact, helplessly watching as the days go by and the months streak through, while the passing years eat up our fated ages with a life that shows no pleasantry or even sense of dignified existence." The son was trying to give a comprehensive picture of what has dominated his mind.

"What about the victory achieved by Hezbollah against Israel?", says the mother, as she brought some snacks for the other two members of the family trio, continuing, "The victory of the Lebanese resistance has shattered the past gloomy aura of hopelessness that I once had over our nation's prospect. For the first time in my life, I can proudly say that I belong to a nation that deserves to relish in pride. The unbelievable victory of Hezbollah against a doggedly mean and pitiless enemy, who had been mesmerized in his own chauvinist claim to superiority, truly made me agian believe that, indeed it is the destiny of the Arabs to lead this world to proper moral and chivalrous grounds. Moreover, the Hezbollah victory confirmed to me that when God decides to give grace to the will of the weak and the oppressed. He does it in the most unthinkable of ways. Just look at the Israelis trying to find a way out of their absolute defeat! They can't discern just what happened to their illusions of unchallenged power. But alas, the Power of the Lord, turns such illusions into nightmares of despair and fright of an uncertain future. Just like any thief, who has lost the ability to stir up fear among his victims, the Israelis are now truly beginning to feel that their future is vulnerable to doom, since they know that their whole existence is based on illusions and petty theft!

The father was caught by surprise: "My dear, just where did you get this masterful eloquence? I have never heard you speak so eloquently and philosophically.' The son wanted to point out his explanation for the mother's newly developed skills: "After hearing a few of Sayyid Hassan Nasr-Allah's speeches, one is bound to catch on to the superb forms of expression the Arabic language can take."

"Not only that; one also gets a feel of true leadership, refined by articulate management of resources and genuine courage spiced by the most honorable displays of chivalry and sound Islamic conduct. That is what Hassan Nasr-Allah reflected. Just look at the streets. Did you notice that all the thousands and thousands of pictures that were spread out during the election campaigns have mostly vanished from the homes, edifices and automobiles throughout the country. But Hassan Nasr-Allah's pictures still remain in their original place where the owners put them. From Mauritania to the Gulf states, Hezbollah has reenergized our feeling of national momentum and no matter what polls one looks at, you will see that the victory in Lebanon erased all those fictitious borders that our leaders insist on safeguarding (to legitimize their tight hold of the reins around our necks) and all Arabs are now united by a hope that soon they will also be liberated from these plastic leaderships, and the aura will be there in which there will be a thousand and one Hezbollah to steer this nation to its rightful place among the nations of the world." The mother put the mood of the masses throughout entire Arab World to bare for all to savor in.

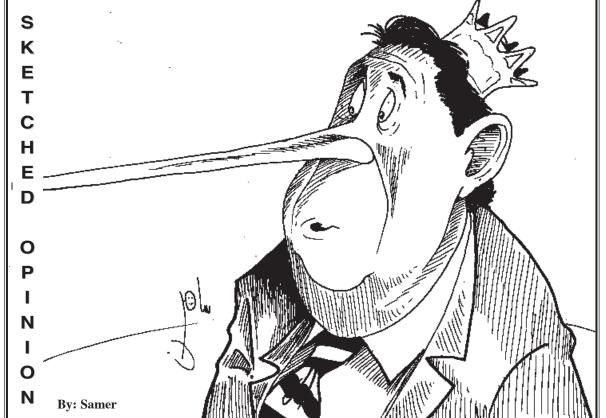
The father said: "Son, I guess that takes care of your feelings of despair and hopelessness, doesn't it?"

"Yes, father, but she has only pointed out the beginning – albeit a meritorious one. The road is still hard and winding. But now after hearing what mom said, I am more inclined to optimism. With my mother now being able to talk like that, I know now that there is hope!"

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

Letters to the Editor

Our environment nces of tech As early as the late 16th century some instances of fish being killed when



nological progress and industrial revolution has been the release of a large number of chemicals into environment. Although considerable research efforts have been made into a variety of alternative pest control methods in recent years. Use of chemical pesticides is still the mainstay in modern agriculture and public health programmers. At the same time anxiety over chemical pollution has made the study of hazardous effects of pesticides as one of the principle areas of research. In particular organochlorine insecticides have been extensively investigated and today several of them have been suspended from general application in the USA and other countries. Neverthless, its felt for the time being that pesticides are necessary evil and in absence of any feasible substitute, their use will continue to combat the vast range of vectors of diseases. With the slow development of civilization, so man has gradually realized the extent to which pests harm his crops, annoy him and transmit diseases to both human and domestic animals. The use of chemical to kill pests is not a new concept.

the Chinese used arsenic sulphide as an insecticide. The use of arsenical compounds has continued, and during the early part of the 20th century, large quantities of such compounds as lead arsenate were used to control insect pests. Another arsenical compound Paris green (Copper Aceto-arsenite) was extensively applied to pool the standing water in the tropics, in attempts to control malaria-transmitting mosquitoes. It was not realized at the time how persistent arsenical pesticides were, although it is now known that they can persist in soil for 40 years, and many orchard soils still contain large amount of these chemicals. For instance, in a recent survey of arsenic residues in arable soils in Canada, residues of arsenic ranging from 11-121 ppm were reported.

Although it was known that organochlorine were very persistent, up till the early 1950s there was little anxiety as to possible long-term ecological hazards caused by their use. There was some evidence that large residues in soil could be pytotoxic, small quantities of some were reported from plant and animal tissues and in cows' milk and there were

sprayed in other pest campaigns, but unavoidable hazards and of little concern. As pesticides pass in most cases directly or indirectly into the foodstuffs.

For many pesticides legal limits (tolerance doses) are imposed regarding the residues that may be left in the food stuffs. By tolerance dose is meant the quantity of a substance that may be absorbed by one person from his daily diet in the course of a lifetime without coming to any harm as far as can be judged from present scientific knowledge. The level at which a pesticide dose not make damage to the biological system is expressed as milligrams per kilogram of body weight. In ordinary circumstances, one hundredth part of this dose is then prescribed as the safe limit for human being. In coming issues in the wishes of ALLAH (a.w.) we'll discuss this matter in details for its importance for the health of the society.

Dr. Mohammed Alhifi alhifi@yahoo.com Environmental Sciences, University of Sana'a, Education Faculty of Arhab.

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Report / Op - Ed



The Heinous Israeli Carnage: Another Act in the Mizrahi-Palestinian Tragedy

Abarjel, co-founder of the Black Panthers, and Lavie, a Mizrahi Feminist activist, discuss the reasons for Mizrahi (Arab Jewish) compliance with the present atrocities inflicted on Lebanon and and Palestine by the Ashkenazi-**Zionist regime**

Operations "Summer Rains" and "Adequate Pay": Another Act in the Mizrahi-Palestinian Tragedy.

By: Reuven Abarjel & Smadar Lavie

n January 25, 2006, Hammas won a landslide victory in the democratic Palestinian legislative elections. The elections were conducted under tight U.S. supervision. Immediately thereafter, Israel's general attorney, Menny Mazouz, started exploring the legal procedures to jail the movement's leadership. Soon the IDF started executing the Gazan leadership of the movement by air strikes. Several dozen innocent Palestinian civilians were casualties in the process. On June 24 the IDF land forces entered the Gaza strip and kidnapped two Hammas men. As a response, on June 25 Hammas captured Gilad Shalit, an IDF soldier. The IDF immediately launched "Operation Summer Rains," to inflict large-scale destruction and to press for Shalit's release. On 12 July, Hizbollah captured two more Israeli soldiers--Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser--in the Lebanese border zone. From then on, IDF's "Operation Adequate Pay" has been inflicting heinous carnage and destruction all over Lebanon.

And now here we are, in front of the Israeli TV screen, bombarded by the discourse of experts. The channels are broadcasting live from studios and battlefields. Commercial interludes are part of the show. By default the majority of experts are Ashkenazi (European Jewish) males. They are flanked by a handful of Mizrahi men (Oriental Jews who immigrated to Israel mainly from the Arab World). These men climbed the public service ladder within the nationalist hegemonic confines. Together, they are Israel's knowledge mercenaries. Through the tube - Israel's tribal campfire -- they dictate the national agenda. The viewers are convinced it must be humanistic, because it is calmly narrated by handsome necktied men. They use professional lingo and have the standardized, de-Semitized Hebrew accent. These talking heads say this war is not only for our own good, but is also for the civic betterment of Palestinians and Lebanese. Their sober discourse facilitates public compliance with IDF's shift of tactics--from warplane "surgical killings" to a combination of marine,

dants of those brought here from the Arab World and other non-European countries during the previous century. They are the local hosts for those fleeing the New European anti-Semitism. Mizrahim provide the demographic majority on whose civic docility the Eurocentric Israeli regime rests. Mizrahim have been the Jewish labor turning the cogs of the European-Zionist colonial project ever since its inception, with the Yemeni-Jewish labor migration of 1882. Mizrahim freed Zionism from its total dependency on indigenous Palestinian labor. Mizrahim were the "natural laborers," Zionists' employed in near-slavery conditions. In order for Mizrahim to work with efficacy, the Zionist hegemonic patriarchy ruptured Mizrahi extended families. For themselves, they used the appellation "ideological laborers," and went on to found Israel's socialist-liberal Left. It is this very Left that is now fighting yet another self-righteous Israeli war. The Zionist movement's leadership has always conducted itself, in front of the Mizrahim, the Palestinians, and the citizens of the Arab World, through the tools of occupation, oppression and humiliation. Yet Mizrahi communities keep silent. Along the way, the US-European minority has co-opted the Mizrahi moral, economic and cultural power to resist.

Israel has always compartmentalized its occupation into different categories, as if Gaza, the West Bank, the Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the Palestinian Diaspora were not all consequences of the 1948 Nakba and 1967 Naqsa. Yet even such a divisive strategy has failed to diminish the legitimacy of the Palestinian struggle for a homeland. Despite the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, this strategy has nevertheless resulted in an almost across-theboard refusal of the Arab body of citizenry to normalize Israel into the region. The Ashkenazi leadership has repeatedly evoked the image that Israel is a European villa, planted in the midst of the regional jungle, from Bible times to the present day. Mizrahi communities are intricately positioned along the Israel/Palestine divide as a result of the hegemonic sophistication of the Ashkenazim. Historically, under Menachem Begin, it was the Right who offered the Mizrahim a political



A demonstration in Haifa.

the Zionist patriarchy. Mizrahi men's feminism is epitomized in their struggle to mimic handsomely crested Sabra masculinity, hoping it might provide them with equal opportunities. Even with the arrival of South Asian maids in the 1990s, Mizrahi women continue to occupy the lowest-paying scale of the Israeli job market. Having lost their production line and house cleaning jobs to Filipinas, they work as lower level secretaries and service providers, and they constitute the majority of the unemployed.

Most of the Palestinian suicide attacks have occurred in the public spaces of the economically deprived and legally disenfranchised Mizrahi communities: bus rides taken by people who can't afford to have a private car, markets frequented by those who can't afford to shop in air conditioned malls and supermarkets, and 'hoods too poor to afford to purchase the patrol services of private security companies, and where the police avoid entering except during drug raids. The majority of the dead and wounded have been Mizrahim, destitute immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and foreign guest workers.

Those who present

themselves as

seekers of peace --

Shimon Peres and

Yossi Beilin -- are

actually supporting

the present

destruction of civil

Gaza.

The majority IDF casualties of the al-Aqsa intifada since October 2000 have been Mizrahim, Russian Druze, immigrants, and Ethiopians - the marginal groups that comprise the majority of Israel's dized houses in the settlements. These were built by the housing ministry on the pristine West Bank hills and virgin Gaza beaches. They made the Israeli dream of a single-family dwelling come true. The superior public school system was an additional benefit. The Judaization of the Galilee project was designed for Ashkenazim who could not afford single-family dwellings in central Israel - gated communities with strict admission committees, whose majestic mansions overlook Palestinian villages situated within the 1949 Rhodes armistice agreement.

In the mid 1980s, when the welfare state disappeared from Mizrahi communities' lives (if it had ever been there), ultra-orthodox Sephardic Judaism entered the scene in the form of the SHAS party. At its height, during the 1999 elections, SHAS won 17 seats in the Knesset. Four of them were ministers of influential government offices, and four were deputy ministers. SHAS offered an apparatus of education and food to rehab Mizrahi honor, either by preaching the return to the forefathers' pious morality or by

exposing the racism in the disenfranchisement and poverty. Eventually, such an intrusion was destructive. In fact, the ultraorthodox Mizrahi new sages adopted the old Ashkenazi method of discipline: a controlled dispensation of charity so that the

Territories, have integrated women into all spheres of their public activism but fighting.

We do not wish here to judge Arab society. Yet to the best of our understanding, the impact of Islamist movements in the Arab public sphere has been diametrically opposite to that of SHAS in the Mizrahi ghettos. With a middle class professional core, the Islamists presented the Arab world with a new agenda. All

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while, the the Mizrahi ultra-orthodoxy imposed the forefathers' morality as yet another strategy for intethe grating Mizrahim into the bosom of the Zionist lived reality. But how could they not? SHAS sensed it had no other option. Its middle class emerged from the rank and file of party apparatchiks. The Question of

Palestine was one of the unifying themes of the Islamist movements. During the 1980s, Sabra and Shatila reverberated into the First Intifada. Palestinian nationalism gathered constituencies in the West. Hoping to counter Palestine's secular nationalism, the worried Israeli regime nurtured the Islamist movements in Lebanon and the Occupied Territories. Assuming that these movements would be nothing but SHAS-style charities, the Israeli regime hoped they might also serve as its tools to deny yet again the Question of Palestine. As the PLO welfare apparatus relocated from Lebanon to Tunis, the Islamist movements patched the cracks and flowered forth. The 2006 democratic elections in the Palestinian authority ended in a sweeping Hammas victory, which of course disappointed Israel's expectations. This time around, the Zionist regime preferred the necktied and conventionally handsome Mahmoud Abu Ma'azan over hennaed and long-bearded Muhammad abu-Tir. Henceforth Israel, backed by the US, sweepingly refused to recognize and negotiate with the legitimate government of the Palestinian people. These days the Mizrahim are the ones who pay the high price required to join Israel's "family of blood," a key concept in the Zionist discourse of national honor. They fall like ripe fruit into Ashkenazi-Zionist militant adventurism. The Western pro-Israeli lobby, with its Israeli branches, does not pay the price. On the contrary, it shares the profits with the G-8 superpowers. This axis of evil will come to an end only if Mizrahi communities are able to conjoin the memories of their Arab past with a vision for a future that will be shared with the people of this region-not just the Palestinians, but the rest of the Arab World as well.

As long as the Arab World's public discourse does not differentiate between Yahud (Jews), Sahyoniyin (Zionists), and Yahud-Arab (Arab Jews), and as long as all Israelis are considered Yahud-wa-bas (just Jews), such a process is impossible. As long as the Western peace discourse does not designate separate categories for Mizrahi Jewry, the majority of Israel's Jewry, for the Ashkenazi peace movements, and for Zionism, Mizrahi communities' processual reworking into the region will lack the transnational aura necessary to render it possible. As long as the Arab leadership, not to mention the Palestinians, prefers talking peace with the ruling Ashkenazi minority -- be it Zionists, post-Zionists, even anti-Zionists -Mizrahi communities will continue to view the peace discourse as part of the repertoire of exotic antics that the Ashkenazi cosmopolitan elite perform for the West. At the same time, they will contin-

> ue to conceive of the Arabs, particularly Palestinians, only as lethal enemies. Those who present

> themselves as seekers of peace -- Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin -- are actually supporting the present destruction of civil society in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza. They are the spokesmen explaining the necessity for the atrocious measures

taken by the Israeli government. Mizrahim remember them mainly as those who started the move to privatize and outsource labor from their community into the globalized economic wonderland that the peace dons termed "the New Middle East." For Mizrahi communities, unemployment and debt were the most immediate results of the Oslo agreement's peace festival. These days the peace dons also brandish a Moroccan defense minister, Amir Peretz, to execute their policies, even though they are the ones who publicly dissed him and failed him along his political career. No wonder this discourse of peace is so alien to Mizrahi communities. The experts on TV tell us that the purpose of the present destruction is to secure the release of the "kidnapped" soldiers. If this were indeed the purpose of operations "Summer Rains" and "Adequate Pay," the release of all Palestinian and Lebanese political prisoners from Israeli jails would be far more cost effective, whether in blood or money. But, alas, when the canons stop roaring, when we finish counting our dead and cleaning up our ruins, we are likely to return to point zero--1882. The Mizrahim, Palestinians and foreign guest workers will resurrect Lebanon, Palestine and Israel from under the rubble, at near-slavery wages and with no social benefits. The US will provide the funding. As long as Mizrahi communities fail to understand that these wars commemorate their disenfranchised poverty, as long as there is no insistence on organized, popular Mizrahi resistance, no just peace will be achieved in our region.

air and land forces, to destroy the Hizbollah using the massive weaponry that the U.S. allocates to the IDF.

The three Israeli TV channels bombard us with metaphors like "crushing Hizbollah, "the return of Israeli deter-

rence," and "the rehabilitation of the Israeli soldier's fighter image." Such imagery enables us to peer into the blood, smoke and devastation the IDF sows. Veiled by the fuss over Lebanon, Israel concurrently continues to plan and execute the sociocide of both public and intimate spheres of the West Bank and Gaza. The present results: reaping the temporary unity of the Jewish victimturned-warrior nation-state.

When the cannons roar, the Mizrahi communities fall silent. Like servants before the master, the Mizrahim habitually comply. They are the generations flowing from the Jews who were in Palestine from time immemorial, as well as descen-

home of sorts by not forcing them to sec-These talking heads ularize in imitation of the Labor party say this war is not regime. Mizrahim only for our own are situated between good, but is also for the rock of economic-cultural oppresthe civic betterment sion caused by the of Palestinians and US-European capi-Lebanese. talist Israeli rule,

> and the hard place of Palestine's war of independence. Zionism was superimposed on Mizrahi communities, yet they welcomed it with open arms. Many still believe in its deceitful vision of an integrationalist inter-racial utopia, even though they are systematically excluded from the centers of power due to Zionism's intra-Jewish racism. Those few who succeeded in securing high-ranking positions in the Ashkenazi regime have long since erased their own past, as they adopted their masters' worldview. Rebuilding the ruptured Mizrahi families was difficult, because they were denied access to the financial and cultural resources necessary to facilitate an equal participation in

social fabric. Since the 1982 Lebanon war, frontline military service is out of fashion among

the Ashkenazi elite, who no longer find it necessary for upward mobility. Due to the historical conjunction of ethnicity and poverty typical of Mizrahi communities, young Mizrahi men are excluded from avenues of upward mobility that would require a major capital investment. Alas, combat zone service is one of the few routes for socio-economic mobility -- an integrationist phantom of sorts.

Sderot, a borderzone Mizrahi town often bombarded by Qassam missiles, has a high percentage of Ethiopian and Russian immigrants, and high unemployment rates. It is the Israeli town closest to Gaza. The same demography is true of the development towns and agricultural co-ops on the Lebanese border, and even of some of the Haifa 'hoods hit by the Hizbollah Katiushas.

Mizrahi communities were pushed into the West Bank and Gaza post-1967 settlements through the back door. Both the Right and Left wing Israeli governments prevented any reasonably priced housing solutions for residents of Mizrahi slums. The mass Soviet immigration of the 1990s transformed Israel's center, the source of most decently paying jobs, into a real estate bubble. This prohibited Mizrahi families from leaving the ghettos, unless for subsi-

very act of dispensing society in Lebanon, becomes a shock the West Bank and absorber against any possible social upheaval. Since

> SHAS's entry into the public sphere, even the feeble resistance of Mizrahi ghettos has ceased to exist.

The centrist walls of the Arab nation-state cracked during the Infitah with Anwar Saadat's Opening-to-the-West policy. Multinational cultural and market globalization forces entered the Arab World's civic sphere. Forming alternative societal institutions, the Islamist movements started substituting for the state. Like SHAS. these institutions were constructed on the premise of injecting pious morality into the civic sphere. The communalist power of both SHAS and the Islamist movements rested in part on a reformulation of strict religious familial patriarchy as a liberating feminist praxis. Concurrently, the Islamist movements, as in the cases of Egypt and the Occupied

The Coalition of Women for Peace

The Coalition of Women for Peace has become one of the leading voices in Israel advocating for a just and viable peace between Israel and Palestine ever since its founding in November 2000, just six weeks after the current Intifada began.

The Coalition brings together independent women and nine women's peace organizations, some newly formed and others promoting coexistence since the founding of the state of Israel. We are a mix of Jewish and Palestinian women (all citizens of Israel), and we take action to amplify the voices of women calling for peace and justice for all inhabitants of the region.

Reuven Abarjel, co-founder of the Israeli Black Panthers, *reuven_4@bezeqint.net* Smadar Lavie, Professor of Anthropology and Mizrahi Feminist Activist, sinaia5@netvision.net.il Source: coalitionofwomen.org

Business

6 26 October, 2006

Muwasaat: A forgotten chapter of welfare

By: Dr. Qazi Shaikh Abbas Borhany

means uwasaat sharing with needy and extending material support to them and it has a great value in Islam because it plays a vital role in the betterment of depressed class and builds love amongst community at large. It is considered as an investment of Barakaat. Imam Jafar Assadiq explained: "Seek Qurbat to Allah through helping your (Muslim) brothers. Rasulullah in one of his testaments to Amir al Mumeneen, Ali Ibn Abi Talib said: "The most commendable are three deeds: First is being just to the people even against yourself. Secondly, Muwasaat and material help to (Muslim) brothers. Thirdly, Zikar of Allah in all circumstances. Ali explained: Muwasaat is the cause to increases in Rizaq. Al Waqidi, the famous historian narrates: "I had two very close friends, one of whom was a Hashimi. Truly speaking, we were similar like one spirit in three bodies. Once, on the occasion of Eid, I faced poverty. My wife advised me that we could face together all the hardships boldly, but her heart was burning for the children. They were looking at other children's new dresses and making jubilant preparation for Eid; whereas they have worn and torn clothes. She asked me, if possible, to arrange some money for dresses for them I thought again and again but could not find any source of obtaining money. At last, I wrote a letter to my Hashimi friend for help. My friend sent me a sealed packet containing one thousand Darahim. Before I could open the packet, a message came from my second friend with a request of help; I sent him the same packet intact and went to the Masjid, with broken heart. I passed the whole night in the

face my wife. When I went home next morning, to my great surprise, my wife welcomed me with a smiling face and expressed her unbounded pleasure for the help I had rendered to my friend. Then my Hashimi friend came to me and asked me what I had done with the money he had sent me the day before. I narrated to him the whole matter. He bent his head for a moment, then told me that on receipt of my message, he had sent me whatever he had, but then to meet his own requirements he wrote to the third friend for help. The third friend sent him the same sealed packet. My first friend was extremely puzzled by this mystery, till I solved it".

Al Waqidi further adds: "Then we divided that amount equally amongst us at the rate of three hundred Darahim each, and the remaining one hundred Darahim was the share of my wife. This generous attitude describes the feeling of a few Muslims, who had learnt lesson of Muwasaat from the Quraan. See how the spirit of Muwasaat and fraternity had enlivened lives of Muslims in past as a result of practice on the Talim of Islam.

The early history of Islam is full of such events which clearly show the spirit of Muwasaat which governed the whole life of the Muslims. In the Gazwah Uhud, which was one of the most difficult and dangerous battles of Islam, the Muslims set high examples of self sacrifice and many of them were killed, fighting bravely. Many of them fell in the battlefield half-alive amongst them were seven stalwarts, fatally injured, every breath seemed the last breath. All of them were feeling the pangs of thirst. Someone came to them with a small quantity of water, hardly sufficient for a single person. The Water-bearer offered glass of water to drink to one of them, but he directed him towards the next, lying

him to the third one who directed him to the fourth; and so it went on till he reached the seventh soldier. When the seventh soldier was approached, he told him that since the first soldier was very thirsty, he should be given water first. The Water-bearer then returned to the first soldier and found that he had expired. Then he went to the second and third who also had departed. This happened with each of them, till approaching the last soldier; he found that in the meanwhile he also had died. All of them died thirsty setting excellent practical example of Muwasaat. This is a lesson from the school of Rasulullah (S) which was followed by his true followers in every walk of life, even under the most difficult circumstances. It is an irony of fate that we have abandoned such Talim and golden principles and drifting with selfishness which is undoubtedly the gift of non Muslim societies.

Rasulullah (S) said: "One who starts his day without caring about the affairs of the Muslims, is not a Muslim". Imam Jafar Assadiq explained: The best amongst you are those who are generous and the worst are the misers. A man approached Rasulullah (S) and complained of hunger. He sent someone to the houses of his families but, unfortunately, none of the families had any food. Rasulullah (S) then turned to those who were in his presence and asked, "Who can host him for tonight?" Ali ibn Abi Talib offered his services, took his hand and left for his house. Then he asked his wife. Fatemah, "What food do we have?" She replied, "A small quantity of food, enough for children only." Ali told her, "The guest must be considered first before us and the children." Fatemah had to make a great effort to put her children to sleep since they were hungry. Ali offered the guest whatever he had, and, pretending to set the lamp

Masjid as I was not in a position to by his side. This second soldier sent light, put it out; he invited the guest to to the Imam. The Imam asked, "What the food in the darkness of the room and himself sat there pretending he was also eating, though, in fact, he did not take a single morsel. Ali, Fatemah and their children fed the guest for the Qurbat of Allah and remained hungry themselves. Quraan praises their Taqwa in these words:

> "And they give (others) preference over themselves, even though poverty be their own lot".

Of course, such glorious examples of self-denial are not possible for anyone; and only a man like Ali could perform such deeds. Islam, therefore, does not compel its followers to do similar deeds. What actually Islam has made compulsory is Muwasaat, which means that a Muslim must help another Muslim if he is in trouble. A part of his resources should be reserved for the benefit of needy persons. He must visit non-healthy persons and sympathize with them, should be like a father/mother to orphans, and should participate with all possible manners in general welfare, and should be helpful to those in distress. A Greek remained with Ali for a considerable period, making inquiries about Islam. Once he was convinced of the truth of Islam, he embraced Islam at the hands of Ali. Then, Ali informed him about his duties as a Muslim. During that discourse, he said: I direct you to help your brothers & sisters(in faith) who are the followers of Mohammad (S) and mine, assist them from the wealth which Allah has given you, fulfill their needs, redress their troubles and behave with them, with friendship and love.

Safwan al Jammal narrates: "While I was sitting with Imam Jafar Assadiq , a native of Makkah arrived and told him that he had no money to return to his home. The Imam directed me to help that person. After great efforts, I arranged the fare for him and returned

did you do about your brother?" By the Rahmat of Allah his need was fulfilled, I replied. The Imam said, Know that helping a Muslim is more liked by me than doing Tawaf of the Baitullah for seven times. The Imam then added: "A man approached Imam Hasan with the request of help. The Imam at once put on his shoes and went with him. They passed on the way a place where Imam Husain was engaged in Ibadat. Imam Hasan asked the person, "Why did you not approach Husain to ease your troubles? He replied, O grandson of Rasulullah (S), I wanted to go to him; but I was informed that he was in Eitekaaf, therefore, I did not approach him. The Imam replied, Had he got the opportunity to help you it would have been far better for him than one month's Eitekaaf. Whenever a Muslim fulfills the needs of another Muslim, Allah says:

"Your reward is upon me, and I will not be happy with less than Jannat for vou."

A native of Kufa (Iraq) Abul-Ala left for Madinah. The devotees of Imam Jafar Assadiq handed him their problems in writing and requested him to bring the replies from the Imam. Also they asked him to request the Imam to explain the rights which a Muslim has upon other Muslim. Abul-Ala says that when he reached the Imam, he replied to all the questions but did not say anything about the rights of Muslims upon each other. He went to the Imam several times, but still there was silence. At the end of his stay he went to take permission of departure from the Imam and requested that particular question of that day was still unanswered. The Imam said: "I deliberately avoided this

issue."Abul-Ala asked, "Why?" The Imam said: "Because I am afraid that if I tell you the same and you do not follow it faithfully, you will go against

the religion of Allah." Then the Imam explained: "Verily, the most difficult of the things which Allah has obliged his servants to do, are three things.

"First, doing Adal between himself and other; it means that he should do to others as he wants for himself."

"Second, he should help Muslim by Muwasaat with his wealth."

"Third, he should always remember Allah. And when I say should remember Allah, I do not mean that he should always recite Subhan-Allah and al-Hamdulillah. But I mean that if he intends to do an unlawful deed, he must remember Allah and return from that sin.

These Talim had such an influence on the lives of the followers of Islam that their noble behaviour could not be compared with any other nation: history is full of events of Muwasaat. Centuries have passed since the Dawn of Islam and the world has achieved what is called technical and scientific development; but these human virtues are conspicuous by their absence in those so-called advanced countries. One of the intellectuals writes about mutual relationship of the Europeans: "Relationship between the people is cold and devoid of deep-rooted affection. Sincere and heart-felt love, which is one of the noble emotions and brightens the life, appears to be lost in the present day's world. In the end, it should be remembered that all Muslims are duty-bound to propagate the Talim of Islam in their pristine purity. Especially, they must acquaint their vouths with this divine Talim, so that the spirit of Muwasaat becomes stronger and stronger; and under the protection of the Muwasaat and cooperation we march forward to prosperity and happiness.

Dr. Qazi Shaikh Abbas Borhany Attorney at Law & Religious Scholar from Pakistan.

Bank for the poor

By: Shaidul Alam

t was 1988. The flood waters had reached Dhaka, and I needed a boat to get to the head office of the Grameen (Rural) Bank. A soft spoken unassuming gentleman, casually clad, sat at a plain wooden table. There was no air¬conditioning and the fresh breeze flowed freely through the open windows. My posh camera seemed quite out of place here.



She did not have the money to buy the bamboo, so she had to borrow from the trader. He paid a price for the finished stool which was barely the price of the raw materials. She ended up

with a penny a day! With the help of a student Emnath, Yunus made up a list of 42 people who worked under similar conditions. He paid out their total capital requirement of Taka 826 (less than a pound per head) from his own pocket. It was a

loan, but it was interest free. Aware that this was not the real solution to the problem, Yunus approached his local bank manager. The man laughed. The idea of giving money to the poor, and that too without collateral, was to him hilarious. Undeterred. Yunus approached the assistant general manager of Janata Bank:, Chittagong. The manager was encouraging,, but felt that in the absence of collateral, a guarantee by influential people in the village would be necessary. Yunus realised that this would eventually lead to some sort of a slave trade. The bank was adamant, and eventually he talked them into accepting him as the guarantor. The manager was reluctant in the beginning, but felt he could take the risk, the sum being so small. The system worked, all the loans were repaid and more people were offered loans. Yunus suggested that it was time the bank took over the responsibility themselves and lent out money directly to the villagers."So I tried to establish that this could be done as a business proposition. I became vocal against the banking institutions, arguing that they were making the rich people richer and keeping the

poor people poor through something called collateral. Only a few people could have access to funds. The bankers were not convinced

Finally they challenged me to do it over a whole district, not just a few villages. They said if I could do it over a whole district, and still come back with a good recovery, then they would reconsider. I accepted their challenge. They asked me to go far away, to where people would not recognise me as a teacher but would instead think I



women, many of whom have become successful entrepreneurs. However both the Grameen Bank and microcredit have had critics. The high rate of interest is seen to be exploitative by many. There have been accusations that the methods of recovery, often by overzealous bank officials, have led to extreme hardship. The skyscraper that now houses the bank, many feel, distance it from the poor it represents. The close links with Clinton and Turner, and the uncritical position taken by Yunus in his public interactions with them, has also been viewed with suspicion. Yunus makes light of these observations. Regarding the criticism of his model, he has a simple answer. "I make no claims to having a perfect system. The problem has to be solved. Should someone come up with a better solution, I would happily adopt it." Bangladesh has largely been known for floods famine and other disasters. Yunus has provided Bangladesh with a pride it badly needs. Many had hoped that he would enter politics, providing an alternative to power hungry politicians that people have lost trust in. While he has steered away from mainstream politics, Yunus was an adviser to the caretaker government. That this popular teacher turned banker should be the Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2006 is a source of great joy to Bangladeshis, but an honour they feel was long overdue.

Dr. Muhammed Yunus shook my hands warmly and words flowed easily from the man who had created one of the most remarkable organisations in banking history.

The Grameen Bank gave money only to the poor. Loans to the landless were interest free. None of the debtors had collateral. 75% of the bankwas owned by the landless who could purchase shares of Take 100 (about two pounds; each in 1988. Only one share was allowed per person). The bank boasted 346 branches and 3,000,000 members, 64% of whom were women. Incredibly, about 98% of the loans were returned! It was rapidly expanding and by the following year, Yunus



The bank now has nearly six and a half million members, 96% of whom are women.

Dr. Muhammed Yunus (PHOTO BY SHAIDUL ALAM).

hoped to have 500 branches.

An economics graduate from Vanderbilt University, Yunus had been teaching at Tennessee State University when war broke out in Bangladesh in 1971. He got actively involved in the liberation movement and returned to the newly created nation in 1972 and took up teaching at Chittagong University.

The famine in '74 touched him deeply. The sight of the dying in the streets made him question the validity of the economic theories that he espoused. During this soul searching he mixed intimately with the villagers and learnt of their habits, their values and their problems. One of them was a woman who made Moras (bamboo stools). She was skilled and conscientious and worked long hours. He was appalled when he discovered that she earned only eight annas (about one pence) for her daily labour! Angered and dismayed, he sought out the reasons for this shamefully unfair setup.

It had long been claimed that laziness, lack. of skill, and extreme conservativeness was the root cause of poverty in Bangladesh. Here was a woman who was skilled, worked extremely hard and had taken the initiative of setting up a business for herself and was still being cruelly exploited.

was a banker. So I went to a far flung district in 1978, and started working there."

It worked beautifully. They had almost a 100% recovery. The small loans made a big difference to the people, but the banks still dragged their feet. Yunus realised that if he went back to the University, the project would die. He suggested the formation of a new bank. One owned by the people themselves. The banks were skeptical, but he got a lot of public support, and eventuually in October '83, an independent bank called the Grameen Bank was formed.

Dr. Yunus is modest about his own contribution. Asked if the bank would survive without him, he smiled "Look at what we have achieved, could it ever have been possible without dedication at all levels ?"

There is a more important reason for the bank's survival. Contrary to most other viable commercial banks, this one is truly designed to serve the people.

Always quick to accept innovations, Professor Yunus was the first person to order an email account when we setup



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small loans made a big The difference to the people.

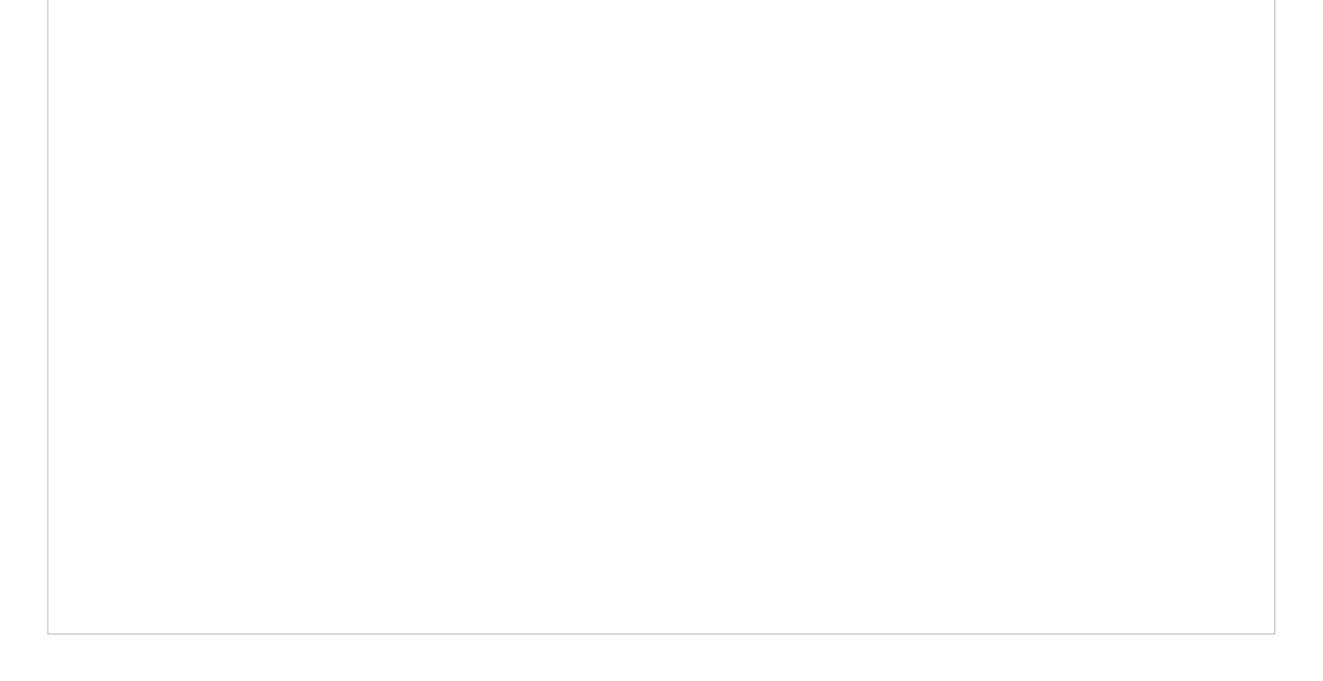
(PHOTO BY SHAIDUL ALAM)

Bangladesh's first email service in the early nineties. He was user number six, the first five accounts being Drik's internal numbers. Later he ordered the entire Grameen office to be networked and had generic email addresses issued to key personnel.

The bank now has nearly six and a half million members, 96% of whom are women. The \$ 5.3 billion given out as loans and the \$4.7 billion recovered are figures any commercial banker would be proud of. Since then other Grameen entities under the more recently formed Grameen Foundation have been born. Grameen Phone, a highly successful telecommunications company has provided phones to rural

Shaidul Alam is a prominent Journalist, Photographer and activist from Bangladesh, samples of his work can be found at http://shahidul.wordpress.com

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Road to taiz: Yemen's green belt

By: Moiz Ali mastermoizali786@yahoo.com

y visit to the lush green Taiz valley was a breath taking experience. After a drive of almost two hours from Sana'a, there is a place named Hammam Ali, near the city of Dhamar. The specialty of this small town is natural hot water springs collected in caves. Occasional bath in these is a cure of many skin diseases. On the road to Taiz is the city of Ibb.

Regular heavy rains throughout the year have turned this city in the heaven



The author.



Hand written script of Holy Quran.



Tasbeeh of Queen Arwa.

on Earth. A beautifully developed hill top 'Jabal-e-Rabbi' gives a picturesque view of the lush green valley. Jiblah, famous for its historical heritage is twenty minutes drive from Ibb. The thousand year old mosque and the palace of Queen Arwa are its centre of attraction.

The mosque still has the

original wooden roof scripted with Quranic Verses. The hand written scripts of the Holy Quran by the Queen and her Sandal Wood Tasbeeh of thousand beads (needing four people to hold) are well preserved.

The ruins of the palace having 360 rooms can be seen from the mosque. The lush green mountains

of Udain at half an hour drive from Ibb are a treat for nature lovers. Good quality honey is available throughout the route fresh from the farms.

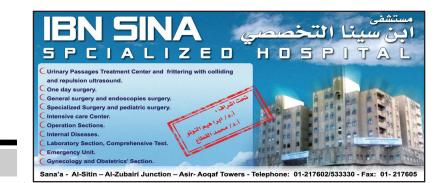
If you continue on the road to Taiz just before the main city is the mosque of Hazrat Ali (A.S). It has two Qiblas, one built by Hazrat Maaz bin Jable (R.A) and the other one was later on built by Hazrat Ali (A.S). The center of the open space still has a Sun clock. It is said that Queen Arwa built a chan-

Queen Arwa built a channel from her palace to this Mosque for continuous supply of water.

At fifteen minutes drive from the mosque is the valley of Taiz. The natural landscaping has been well developed. The main tourist spot is 'Jabal-us-Sabr.' On this hill is the palace of Sheikh Zaid bin Sultan. It is now converted into a grand hotel with the view of the whole city in the background.



The tomb of Queen Arwa



Shirts repel mosquitoes, if you have the scratch

By Daniela Desantis

ASUNCION, Paraguay (Reuters) — Young entrepreneurs in Paraguay say they have a new weapon against pesky, and potentially dangerous, mosquitos — cotton shirts soaked in lemon-scented citronella oil.

The woven, collared shirts typical of this landlocked South American nation were launched this week by the surferinspired Pombero brand. Citronella oil comes from a perfumed grass and acts as an insect repellent.

"This is a product aimed at people who enjoy being in the fresh air and in contact with nature, but who want to maintain a sophisticated style," said company owner Rodrigo Jacks. He added the shirts can be washed up to 40 times before losing their power to repel mosquitoes and other critters, like fleas. Insect repellent apparel sold in the United States is coated in permethrin, a manmade derivative of the chrysanthemum plant.

But in Paraguay, the shirts are a novelty. Government scientists are interested in finding out whether they could provide extra protection from ailments like malaria or dengue, an infectious disease transmitted by mosquitoes.

"We want to give people information about whether this is really effective," said Blanca Cousino, an entomologist at Paraguay's National Service for Malaria Eradication.

Even if they do work, at about \$50 apiece the garments would cost a small fortune for many in this country, where nearly 4 in every 10 people are poor.

"I'd have to be crazy to buy one of these shirts because they are beyond my budget. I prefer to buy to repellent and call it quits," said Jose Martinez, a 30-year-old public employee.

Rush to marry ends in tragedy

KARACHI (Reuters) — A Pakistani man has committed suicide outside his fiancée's home after he thought he accidentally killed her while trying to persuade her to get married early, police said Saturday.

The man, Ahmed Ashraf, was shooting a gun in the air outside his fiancée's home in the southern city of Karachi on Friday as part of his efforts to persuade her to get married two months early when a stray bullet accidently hit her, police said.

"He was so eager to get married he stood in front of his fiancée's house and started firing shots in the air to catch her attention," said investigating officer Ghulam Hussain. The young woman was coming downstairs when a bullet ricocheted off a wall and hit her. She fell down screaming "I have been shot," Hussain said.

"He thought he had killed her and within seconds shot himself. The girl is fine," Hussain said.

"It is a tragic accident. They were engaged to be married with their parents' consent on December 25. He was insisting they get married earlier."

Ashraf had told his fiancee, Naureen, he would do something drastic if she didn't agree to get married straight away. The woman insisted the marriage date had already been set and there was no need to hurry, Hussain said.



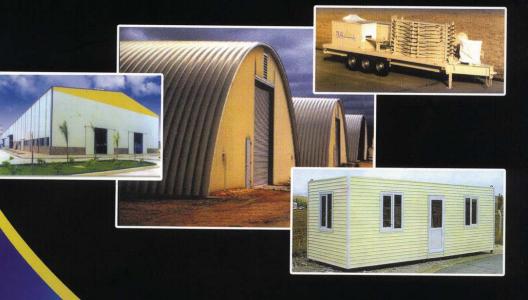


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