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Iron traffic flow strips deflate car tires – and more



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Educating Texas 'Aggies' about Yemen



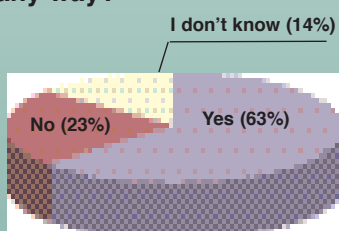
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Avian influenza national plan: Needs and challenges

Readers' Voice

Last edition's question:

Do you think that the opposition's remarks on the government's agenda are constructive or helpful in any way?



This edition's question:

Do you think that the investment conference will spark confidence for investments in Yemen?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

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

Investment Opportunities Exploration Conference: Towards business partnership and mutual development

By: Moneer Al-Omari

SANA'A, April 22 — Under the theme, "Toward Permanent and Joint Interests," the Yemeni government, in collaboration with the Gulf Cooperation Council's General Secretariat, on Sunday launched the two-day Investment Opportunities Exploration Conference within the framework of developing Yemen's economy for complete integration with Gulf economies.

Attended by representatives of more than 650 Yemeni, Arab and international companies together with 69 ministers and officials from neighboring and foreign countries, the conference seeks to shed light on the opportunities and attributes of investing in Yemen and the distinguished guarantees and facilities provided by Yemeni investment law in a way that enhances the flow of foreign and Arab capital into Yemen.

More than 100 opportunities in various sectors will be presented during the conference, amounting to \$8 billion, including the energy sector [electricity, oil, gas and minerals], tourism [islands, mountainous and coastal areas], establishing industrial zones [small and medium-sized industry] and infrastructure [airports, seaports, roads, railways, real

estate and housing], together with investments in agriculture and fish wealth.

Further, participants will discuss various working papers related to Gulf investments in Yemen, developing Yemen's investment environment, economic reforms, joint ventures between Yemen and Gulf countries, etc.

In his welcome letter, President Ali Abdullah Saleh assured that Yemen's investment gate has been opened wide before investors, especially those from Gulf countries, and stressed that the conference is being held to enhance partnership between Yemen and the Gulf.

"We realize that today's world is one of economic blocs, a world marked by heated competitiveness and rapid transformation in all economic aspects wherein there's no place for those who still think traditionally," Saleh stated.

He further noted, "Yemen is witnessing a significant transformation marked by will and determination to create a prosperous future full of welfare and peace," adding that Yemen has a strong and true wish to develop and reinforce partnership and economic integration with its brothers in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Continued on page 3



The Yemeni government is very keen on ensuring the success of the conference, with over one year of preparations, hopes are high that investment opportunities will lure investments from the gulf region, and will result in employment and economic development in Yemen

Yemeni army reinforced in Sa'ada, fighting continues

By: Mohammed bin Sallam

SA'ADA, April 22 — Confrontations between the Yemeni army and Houthi loyalists in Sa'ada governorate continue, with no indication that the war will end soon. Further, more than 60,000 soldiers are amassed for a decisive battle, supported by fighter planes, tanks and other lethal weaponry, according to observers.

A tribal source mentioned, "The Yemeni army continues reinforcing its forces and equipment according to the extent of the clashes between both sides, which thus far has encompassed all of Sa'ada's 15 districts."

The source added that while there were no more than 2,000 Houthis during the first and second Sa'ada wars, they have tripled and there's the possibility of their numbers increasing due to the expansion of the clashes. The fighters also now have more developed weapons and better training.

Al-Ayyam daily newspaper reported in its Sunday issue that a military unit comprising thousands of soldiers and dozens of military vehicles entered Al-Dhuliah area in Shadha district, located in the northernmost part of the Tihama plain. The forces crossed Hodeidah governorate and upon arriving in Al-Dhuliah, waged a violent attack against Houthi elements positioned on Bisbasah Mountain located between Razih and Ghamer districts near the Yemeni-Saudi

border.

Sources further noted that clashes are continuing in Razih district's Al-Qal'ah area, where Houthis are besieging the district's administration buildings, adding that helicopters have been bombarding the area for many days, destroying two schools accommodating Houthi loyalists.

Eyewitnesses claim that Houthis are centered in most government buildings in the capital of Qataber district after seizing it last week and dispelling all employees from other districts. Qataber is witnessing relative calm, as there are no soldiers there and the Yemeni army remains unable to reach the district because all roads are blocked.

Several military units last Friday penetrated into the northern areas of Baqem district and the northern parts of Magz district and took up positions in the southwestern parts. Fierce clashes occurred between both sides that night, but losses weren't reported.

Upon the arrival of these units to the area, Houthi followers blocked all routes between Magz and Baqem, which stretches to the north of Magz district and has lived under siege since these latest clashes erupted January 27.

Sources also mentioned that Yemeni army forces waged a fierce five-hour attack using mortars and tanks on Houthis centered on Gharabah Mountain in Al-Talh's Al-Abqur area

northwest of Sa'ada city.

Military sources revealed that military forces from Al-'Amaliqah Brigade arrived in Shadha district last Wednesday under the framework of new reinforcements, including those from other military and security units.

Further, Central Security units were brought from other governorates to participate in the war against Houthis. According to the Yemeni Armed Forces-affiliated 26 September newspaper, amassing such units aims to secure roads and districts from which Houthis were expelled. Thus, the Defense Ministry confessed Al-'Amaliqah Brigade's participation in the war, although it denies such news reported by Aleshteraki.net.

Media sources point out that confrontations are ongoing in Dhahian as army forces waged fierce offensives using tanks on some city homes last Saturday. During their attack, soldiers discovered the bodies of children under age 13 in one destroyed home.

The first Sa'ada war erupted June 2004 on Maran Mountain and was led by Hussein Badraddin Al-Houthi prior to his death in September of that same year. The second Sa'ada war broke out in February 2005 in Al-Ruzzamat area and was led by Badraddin Al-Houthi. Those two wars left hundreds killed or injured on both sides.

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In brief

HODEIDA

Court tries MP for torturing citizen

April 22 — Chaired by Judge Jalal Al-Maqtari, Beit Al-Fasheq Court held on Saturday a sitting to discuss the case of Shu'eib Al-Fasheq, an MP who is charged with torturing a simple citizen. At the sitting, prosecution asked the court to oblige the suspect to compensate the victim Hamdan Darsi, who suffered psychological and physical harms after being subjected to attacks and beatings. The defense-advocate, who defends Al-Fasheq, accused certain parties of staining the MP's image in newspapers and magazines.

TAIZ

Happy Family Club's First Festival

April 21 — Under the slogan "Together toward a stable family" and on the occasion of the first anniversary of the establishment of the Happy Family Club, activities of the Happy Family Club's festival were carried out on Thursday. At the event, Amal Taher, from the club's work team and Wafa Al-Salahi, manager of the club, delivered speeches in which they stressed the necessity of establishing the club for the sake of family welfare and for helping family members lead a happy life.

AFSC inaugurates tenth festival

Last Saturday, Al-Sa'eed Foundation for Science and Culture inaugurated the activities of the Tenth Cultural Festival, which is due to last until May 7. At the inaugural ceremony, Shawqi Ahmad Hayel gave a speech, praising the prominent role played by the foundation. Through the festival, the foundation aims to pay closer attention to science and scientists, thinkers, artists and writers, as well as to spread the culture between various social groups in Yemen.

ABYAN

Cement factory agreement signed

April 22 — The concerned authorities and a Chinese international company signed on Sunday an agreement on constructing and equipping a cement factory in Abyan governorate. Yemeni and Saudi investors are due to take part in the project, which aims to create investment opportunities in Yemen, as a part of the Investment Opportunity Exploration Conference, which is being currently held in Sana'a with the participation of various international investors and companies.

SANA'A

Radio Museum to be established

April 22 — The Yemeni Corporation for Radio and Television along with the Military Works Department co-signed an agreement on establishing the Radio Museum. Funded by the YCRT in cooperation with UNESCO. The project aims to restore and rehabilitate the Radio Museum Building. The agreement was signed in the presence of Abbas Al-Dailami, Head of the Radio Sector, Mohammed Abdulbari Al-Qadasi, Secretary-General of UNESCO, and Brig. Mohammed Ali Sa'eed, General Director of Military Works Department.

ADEN

European tourists appreciate Aden

April 22 — More than 700 European tourists praised the security stability in Aden. Also, they commended the attractive tourist sceneries and marvellous beaches while touring the city. Further, the tourists, who arrived in Aden last Friday aboard an Italian ship, expressed their happiness about the historic sights in the southern Yemeni city and the hospitality of Yemeni people, an official source at the Universal Company for Travel and Tourism said. He quoted the tourists as saying that Aden is a tourist city with various attractive and marvellous views.

LAHJ

Villagers living in isolation

April 22 — In an event, the first of its kind, Ramzia Al-Eryani, Chairwoman of Yemeni Women Union, and a group of her colleagues, discovered villages that have never been visited nor reached by the state. The women team found a village mostly inhabited by blind and mad people, who is found to live in starvation, eat no food for many days, and sleep in the ground. The team added that nobody knows about those villagers' condition.

Opposition parliamentary blocs refused voting for the new cabinet

SANA'A, April 22 — In its session held last Thursday and attended by 225 Members of the Parliament, the opposition parliamentary blocs and the independent MPs declined to vote for the new cabinet chaired over by Dr. Ali Mohammed Mujawar.

However, the new government gained the trust of the General People Congress MPs who shape the majority in the Parliament (196 MPs) and who voted for it while 25 voted against it and four refrained from voting.

After a lengthy debate, the new government gained the trust of the Parliament and committed itself to the recommendations and notices raised by MPs including the allocation of more resources to be spent on human

capital through health and education.

In their statement, Yemeni Socialist Party bloc denounced the violations that took place during the session, maintaining the Parliament Presidency Board committed a lot of mistakes and violations during the voting such as the non-declaration of the ministers' financial liabilities.

Similarly, Islah and Nasserite parties' blocs declared that the new government program does not include any pointers for poverty alleviation and eradicating unemployment or improving educational and health services. In addition, the program does not address improving the situation of military and security personnel, with a noticed set back as to the freedom of

syndicates' work.

They also hinted at the continuous price hikes especially basic commodities since the formation of the new government, assuring figures does reveal that government moves back wise.

Likewise, several civil society organizations demanded the government to withdraw the article included in the program which dictates uniting all organizations under one umbrella.

In response to MPs comments, Prime Minister Mujawar promised to commit to abide by their notes in line with his Cabinet capabilities, which is something considered by some MPs to be disavowing of his responsibility.

Mujawar: Education is a key to development

SANA'A, April 22 — Addressing participants at the Association of Arab Universities, which concluded its 40th meeting Monday in Sana'a, Yemeni Prime Minister Ali Mujawar stated that, "Education is the only key that brings about economic and social development and through it, we can attain a high level of social development."

Approximately 150 participants from Arab universities and both regional and international organizations attended the two-day meeting organized by the private University of Science and Technology in Sana'a.

Inaugurating the meeting, the prime minister said his government was interested in the meeting, as well as the scientific meetings that will follow.

Mujawar, who was appointed prime minister in late March, confirmed that his government has decided to renovate several colleges to meet scientific and educational requirements, indicating that, "The

education budget, in all its varying levels, has risen more than 20 percent."

With more than 15 universities in Yemen teaching approximately 200,000 students, in addition to more than six million students attending schools, Mujawar said such numbers necessitate the government to encourage establishing technical and vocational education institutions "that will meet the requirements of the labor market.

"Higher education institutions must focus more and more on specialization in extensive development fields," he added.

For his part, meeting Chairman and Algeria University President Taher Al-Najjar briefed participants on the association's achievements during the past 10 years regarding incorporating reforms and modern scientific means into higher education.

Participants discussed several reports, including minutes from last year's 39th meeting in Algeria, in addition to the extent that meeting's



Prime Minister Ali Mujawar

recommendations were implemented.

The Association of Arab Universities is an independent body based in Amman, Jordan. It was approved by the Arab League in 1964 with the aim of tackling higher education problems in the Arab world. The association's General Secretariat was established a year later and its first meeting was held in 1969 in Egypt, with the participation of 23 Arab universities.

Government gives top priority to expatriates' issues

SANA'A, April 22 — Minister of Expatriates Saleh Same'e insisted on hard work to suggest possible solutions to numerous problems faced by Yemeni expatriates abroad, as well as to set strategic plans and programs to handle such a vital issue.

"I would like to confirm that expatriates' issue is due to see a new era in terms of identifying the problems and setting plans as well as programs to contribute to resolving this issue," Same'e said. "Up until now, immigration is a personal affair as natives migrate from their homeland to other countries in search of work opportunities without any institutional support."

He called on Yemeni expatriates in other countries and those concerned in the country to help his ministry in its hard work to enhance attention toward migration and expatriation. Also, he stated that his ministry needs to

rearrange multiple priorities, which he described as urgent, through cooperation with the concerned organizations.

According to the Minister of Expatriates, top priority should be given to expatriates' relations with embassies and the need for making available an executive bylaw concerned with expatriates welfare in order to better rearrange situations of Yemeni communities abroad.

At the first meeting, held by the new cabinet, Same'e clarified that the government has taken a consensus decision, considering the issue of expatriates as a personal one, necessitating officials to work hard for its sake.

Regarding the situation of expatriates in the Arabian Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, and the problems and difficulties posed upon them, the official elaborated as saying "We think that it is possible for us to reach

partial success by discussing expatriates' issues with our brothers in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Over the past few days, I met many officials of the Yemeni communities in Saudi Arabia and discussed with them various problems in order to make these problems an urgent file and forwarded it to the Yemeni government headed by the political leadership for discussion."

The Minister of Expatriates welcomed the strategy, which was announced by Sheikh Mohammed Bin Al Maktoum, with regard to UAE development and the situation of workforce in his country. "We prefer to consult our brothers in such cases, but we have multiple responsibilities such as studying the workforce markets of the Gulf countries and the demands in order for the immigrants not to cause a crisis in other countries.

Saleh visits US to discuss aid and security issues

SANA'A, April 22 — Preparations are continuing for the coming visit of President Ali Abdullah Saleh to the USA in May 2007. The visit is a response to an invitation by US President, George W Bush, which aims to discuss Yemeni- American cooperation in different fields.

Diplomatic sources reported that the two parties will discuss security cooperation between Yemen and the U.S., and in particular Yemen's role as a principal partner in the coalition against terrorism. They will also discuss methods of boosting developmental steps and investment in Yemen.

The sources pointed out that this visit will be an important point in the path of bilateral relations between the U.S. and Yemen. The meeting is especially poignant as it comes after Washington's decision of re-including Yemen in the Millennium Challenge Account. The account enables Yemen to obtain aid and annual support which contributes to a number of developmental projects in the country.

The two sides will focus on topics of mutual interest and concern, such as the recent developments in Palestine, Iraq, Somalia, and Darfur. Also, they will concentrate on the outcomes and recommendations of The Arab Summit, which convened in Riyadh on March 28 2007, and aimed to activate



Saleh with Bush (archive photo).

an Arab peace initiative with Israel

In the last visit of H.E. President Ali Abdullah Saleh, during November 2005, many issues were discussed, including Yemen's efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In his visit, President Saleh affirmed the importance of enhancing human rights and supporting efforts to reduce poverty rates, unemployment, and corruption.

Political and diplomatic relations between Yemen and the United States date back to 1946. Those relations were reinforced in 1959 with the establishment of the first U.S. Resident Mission in the city of Taiz.

Yemen loses YR 6 billion to crime in 2006

SANA'A, April 18 — The total amount of material losses due to crimes and traffic incidents in Yemen during 2006 was more than YR 6 billion, a Ministry of Defense web site reported Wednesday.

26September.net news web site quoted sources as saying that the volume of crimes and criminal incidents registered during 2006 resulted in losses of nearly YR 3.39 billion, while losses due to traffic accidents stood at nearly YR 1.16 billion.

The site's sources added that non-criminal incidents caused losses estimated at YR 509.41 million.

The Ministry of Interior registered 35,024 crimes during 2006, of which 15,645 were major crimes and 19,379 small crimes, with 1,387 people reported dead and another 11,379 injured as a result of such crimes. Non-criminal

crimes were estimated at 3,024, causing 1,281 deaths and 1,397 injuries

Traffic incidents reached 13,342, with 2,816 deaths and 17,147 injuries.

An official report for 2005 revealed that 936 crimes were committed, ranging from murder to car theft to forgery.

Traffic accidents in 2005 amounted to 12,869 nationwide, compared to 12,267 accidents in 2004. Accidents in 2005 claimed 2,510 lives and critically wounded 7,030 others, compared to 2,249 deaths and 5,443 major injuries during 2004.

According to the General Traffic Department, traffic accidents in 2005 caused 7,318 minor injuries, compared to 8,174 during 2004. Additionally, more than 135,000 traffic accidents, killing 26,000 and injuring 152,000 others, have been registered during the past 15 years.

Botanists call for establishing society of aromatic & medicinal plants in Yemen



Attendees in the conference.

SANA'A, April 22 — Over the period April 16 – 18, Sana'a University conducted the regional conference on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants and their effects on environment and people's health.

Over 50 researchers and botanists from Sana'a, Yemeni, Arab, and foreign universities as well as research centers stressed the importance of organizing such a conference every two years in order to enable research and scientists to exchange information and research papers.

In the sessions, the attendees discussed many papers dealing with the importance of plants for environment and society. They also discussed the means by which people can exploit the traditional medicine in primary health

care, protecting liver by radish seeds, as well as studying the effect of some Yemeni plants on cancer.

The participants called for establishing an Arab society for medicinal and aromatic plants in Yemen. Further, they called for printing the research papers presented during the conference. Additionally, they demanded hastening the registration of Yemeni medicinal property rights, especially inhabitant plants as well as activating the partnership with private sector for exploiting medicinal, toxic, and aromatic plants in Yemen.

It is worth mentioning that a guide on Yemeni plants will be issued and information about the use of medicinal plants will be documented for future verification.

Higher directives for arresting military leader

SANA'A, April 22 — High directives ordered arresting Brig. Saleh Al-Dhanin and his sons together with other 40 armed followers over the clashes that took place last Monday in Asr where Al-Dhanin's sons attacked a plot of land belonging to an Emirate investor and caused the death of three soldiers affiliated with the military police.

The incident was met with a wide public rage which led to the removal of Brig. Saleh Al-Dhanin from his post as a leader of Khalid bin Al-Waleed military battalion, a post he assumed for over 25 years. The directives imposed the arresting of Al-Dhanin along with his two sons and referring them to a military judiciary.

Murad tribe, whose son was among those killed in the incident, called its

sons for a demonstration in Al-Sabeen Square where over than 400 people gathered, asking President Saleh to arrest Al-Dhanin, his sons, and the armed men affiliated with them.

According to a tribal source, President Saleh delegated the leader of the Military Police to address the demonstrators, showing them copies of Saleh's orders dictating the arrest of the perpetrators and the removal Al-Dhanin from his military post as well as considering those killed as martyrs.

Brig. Al-Dhanin, who is very close to President Saleh, is still hiding in his Sana'a house after Brig. Jubran Al-Hashidi was appointed in his place. Meanwhile, high ranking military leaders are showing sympathy with him since last Tuesday.

Delay in arresting Al-Dhanin and

implementing Saleh's directives made victims kinsmen cast doubts on the non-seriousness of the Ministry of Interior to arrest them. Further, they fear reconciliation which is the case with a lot of similar issues that took place in the past particularly when high ranking officials are involved in.

Observers considered the incident to be a test for Saleh's seriousness to put an end for land lootings by military leaders and those close to decision-making circles, as well as to provide a safe environment for investors.

The incident has just came few months after land corruption file in Aden was closed under presidential directives and after several high ranking military officials were pointed to be involved in such corruption cases.

Bahah: Oil Mafia is no more

SANA'A, 21 April — Minister of Oil, Gas and Mineral resources Khalid Bahah has stated that his ministry has reached new heights in terms of transparency and fighting corruption, he indicated that the measures implemented for the last eighteen months have exposed several tactics, which are the fuel and breed of what he labeled as the 'Oil Corruption', adding that each and every oil-related contract or agreement has to fulfill strict criteria ensuring transparency and maximizing the benefit for the country.

His Excellency pointed out that the adopted criteria compels companies and subcontractors, who want to take part in oil exploration and production activities, to go through a transparent bidding process in which the contracts are given to the most competitive bids. Also, he emphasized that the previous practice of giving such awards behind closed doors is no-more, adding that several measures have been taken against parties who have been involved in such practices.

In addition, he called on Oil Companies, which receive any memos and letters from the ministry or other affiliated agencies requesting favors and concessions, to contact his office and report such incidents. In the meantime, he asks for the cooperation of Oil companies so as to maintain high level

of transparency in their dealings with the government.

Furthermore, he pointed out that Yemen has committed itself to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), and his ministry is currently working towards the full implementation of the Initiative within the Oil Industry in Yemen, he said: "Transparency is important to us, as the oil is the 'possession' of the Yemeni people, who should know how much they are getting and how the money is spent.. We want to join the EITI initiative to show the Yemeni people and the international community how Yemen earns and spends its oil revenue".

He also added: "we fought hard within the cabinet and against influential persons in order to make sure that Yemen will ultimately join the initiative, it is the right of the people to know everything about their oil, starting from bringing-in the Oil companies and ending to how the money is spent. We are now constructing a website in order to display this information in a great detail for everyone who wants to know".

Minister Bahah made these statements while visiting Canadian Nexen Petroleum Yemen last Thursday, during which he also discussed a number of topics with senior management and staff of the company



Bahah while visiting Canadian Nexen last Thursday

Yemeni politicians praise Mauritanian experience

By: Moneer Al-Omari

SANA'A, April 21 — Political Development Forum organized a symposium last Thursday on the Mauritanian Experience: Responsibility and Will at Sana'a-based Taj Saba Hotel. The symposium was attended by Charge D'affairs Mohammed Hassan Ould Abdul Hai together with opposition parties' leaderships and those interested.

The symposium was chaired over by Political Development Forum chairman Ali Saif Hassan who highly praised the Mauritanian military leaders for peacefully handing over power to civilians, considering this step as the first of its type in the Arab world. "We are here today to celebrate a hope coming from the farthest part of the Arab world, from the Arab Maghrib," said Hassan.

Head of Information Department at the Yemeni Socialist Party Ali Al-Sarari gave a review of the Mauritanian experience and declared that it is the first time in which military leaders turn against the regime and then willingly transfer power peacefully to civilians, maintaining that people and parties are responsible for protecting the democratic change.

Al-Sarari criticized the attitude of Arab leaders toward the Military Council for Justice and Democracy headed by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall during the 19th Arab Summit launched in Riyadh in late March as all of them ignored him. However, he is viewed by Arab people to be the only Arab giant and the one who deserves respect and appreciation.

He added that Vall is the only Arab military leader who kept his promises as he pledged following his coup against former President of Mauritania Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya to hand over power to civilians and not to nominate himself for presidency and so did he.



The Mauritanian new president.

"Vall's movement made Mauritania, which stands last in the list of the Arab countries under the Arab League economically, assumes the first place politically. Also, the role of armed forces changed from standing against people and protecting the dictators to standing by people," noted Al-Sarari.

He asserted that Arab leaders adopt two mechanisms to keep the chairs as long as possible by confining high ranking military posts to those close to them, together with monopolizing public job and suppressing those with different opinions.

Researcher Ahmed Saleh Al-Faqih indicated that regimes left behind colonizers failed to build modern state and failed to make a democratic change. They also worked on establishing state within the state which works from under the tables, preempting the constitutional apparatuses from their roles. He added that those regimes proved a great failure in their wars and waived nations' rights and interests, declaring Vall's stance is precedence in the history of Arab military leaders.

Head of Media Department at the General People Congress Tariq Al-Shami clarified that his ruling party does not fail heckled by the Mauritanian experience, assuring such a step was made in Yemen during the Presidential last elections conducted on September 2006.

Emirate Al-Bayan correspondent Mohammed Al-Ghubari doubted the democratic change made in Mauritania, asserting ruling mechanism is still held by the Republican Party, the party of the former President. Further, the new officials were among Taya's ministers.

Al-Ghubari voiced his fear that the Military Council will continue running things from behind the curtains. He also declared that Yemeni people are waiting for the day in which the General People Congress abandons power even for a single round. The same opinion is shared by Fuad Al-Sallahi from Sana'a University as he believes that we should not give evaluation of the Mauritanian experience right now.

Mohammed Qahtan from the Supreme Authority of Islah Party stated the Mauritanian experience is worth contemplation and called on Arab armies to stand by people and not to be means in the hands of regimes.

Secretary General of Yemeni Socialist Party and head of the Joint Meeting Parties' Supreme Council Yassin Sa'eed Noman indicated that the Mauritanian experience deserves admiration; however, Noman asked political parties and elites not to wait for savor form inside the regime but to continue their public struggle.



Interim President, Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Val.



Ousted President, Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya.

Agreement to construct Batais Cement Factory signed

SANA'A, April 22 - Saudi Cement Company (Al-Malik) represented by Sheikh Hamid Al-Ahmer signed an agreement with Chinese Sinoma International represented by deputy chairman of board of directors to build and equip Batais Cement Factory in Abyan.

Celebrating the occasion, Sheikh Al-Ahmer considered the signing to be an important event and partnership between two parties for the sake of boosting the bilateral relations.

Al-Ahmer added that Yemeni cement sector is a vital one and the country is in urgent need for it in order to bridge the gap resulting from the quickened development process, indicating that the signing came after one and a half year of serious negotiation. It is worth mentioning that the company signed a similar contract for establishing a factory in Al-Mukalla with another commercial group.

He also indicated that the increase of cement-producing companies is attributed to the increase demand of cement. Further, he wishes that the factory can be an addition to the cement sector in Yemen and can help



Sheikh Hamid Al-Ahmar shaking hands with Deputy Chairman of Sinoma International After signing the agreement

the country achieve self-sufficiency of this important material. Meanwhile, he indicated that the surplus could be exported to the neighboring countries. According to the agreement, the total capacity of the factory mounts to 5000 ton/day, about 1,600,000 ton/year. Additionally, it contains a production

line with a complete set of administration, maintenance, and service buildings with a total cost of US \$250 million. The project will be implemented over 25 months and the factory is due to contain 550 direct employees and over 3,000 indirect employees.

Advertisement

Continued from page 1

Towards business partnership and mutual development

The president also praised the GCC General Secretariat's initiative aimed at upgrading brotherly relations between Yemen and Gulf nations, particularly in economic aspects, and increasing prospects for integration and cooperation.

Moreover, Saleh asserted that Yemen will give a special care to Gulf investments, as this will enhance and develop the joint interests of both sides. He went on to say that Yemen has adopted measures aimed at encouraging and attracting investment by developing legislation and strategic plans.

For his part, GCC Secretary-General Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah declared that Yemen really has become an investment-qualified nation because it possesses the required components in this respect. He further indicated that Gulf nations are hopeful to achieve the goals behind organizing the investment conference, noting that such an occasion would firm up relations between Yemen and GCC countries.

Minister of Trade and Industry and head of the conference, Yahya Al-Mutawakel, pointed out that the conference is investors' compass, as it will make them aware of the existing opportunities and sectors in Yemen meant for investment.

General Investment Authority Chairman Salal Al-Attar observed that non-Yemeni investors have equal rights and duties with their Yemeni counterparts, noting that Yemeni law allows foreign investors full ownership of land and property belonging to their project.

Al-Attar further added that Yemeni investment law provides facilities and guarantees, in addition to tax and customs exemptions. It also imposes no tax on profits and investors are free to move their capital in and out of Yemen in foreign currency.

He also indicated that his authority will provide investors the required facilities and further ease registration procedures for investment projects, pointing out that the investment authority is now the only party responsible for following up investors and investment issues, after previously being distributed among three different parties.

Chamber of Commerce Union Chairman Mohammed Al-Maytami highlighted the importance of the investment conference and noted that partnership between Yemen's private sector and its Gulf counterparts is a landmark in the conference's success, pointing out that 80 percent of participating firms are from Gulf countries.

Observers believe that the participation of more than 650 local, Arab and foreign companies is an early success for the conference and an important step in empowering Yemen's economy

to keep pace with Gulf economies.

Yemeni army reinforced in Sa'ada, fighting continues

Moreover, the ongoing Sa'ada war has caused huge military and human losses among both warring sides in a country that's suffering a shortage of economic resources against a rapidly increasing population.

The Yemeni government accuses Houthis of attempting to reinstate Imamate reign, which ended with the eruption of the September 26 Revolution. It also charges them with racism because they claim that such rule should be confined to Hashemites and not other Yemenis.

In related news, media sources also observe that the United Nations has warned the Yemeni government and Houthis about recruiting underage children in the Sa'ada war, as well as using anti-personnel mines. The warning came after recording numerous injuries on both sides resulting from exploding mines.

It remains unknown who is responsible for planting mines causing many injuries among soldiers and Houthis; however, events indicate that the Yemeni army is planting them at some military sites before evacuating in order to trap Houthis. Media reports have mentioned dozens of deaths and handicapping cases among Houthis and army affiliates due to mines.

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Bombs kill 17 people in Baghdad

By: Dean Yates
and Ibon Villeda

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - Two suicide car bombers rammed their vehicles into a Baghdad police station on Sunday, killing 12 people in one of the worst attacks aimed at Iraq's security forces since a security crackdown was launched in the city.

The bombings in the mostly Shi'ite al-Bayaa neighbourhood in southwestern Baghdad wounded 95, police said.

Most of the dead were civilians, police said, reversing earlier statements that mainly police had been killed. The blasts damaged the police station and also largely destroyed a garage next door, collapsing rubble onto a dozen cars.

"Look at the situation Iraqis are living in. You see blasts whenever you try to go out to earn a living," said one witness.

In a separate attack, a car bomb in a Shi'ite enclave in the mostly Sunni neighbourhood of Saidiya in southern Baghdad killed up to five civilians and wounded 25 people, police said.

A source at Yarmouk hospital said the hospital had received seven bodies after the blast. A policeman who arrived in the area shortly after the attack was killed when his vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb, police said.

U.S. and Iraqi forces have poured thousands of extra troops into Baghdad over the past two months in an attempt to halt Iraq's slide into all-out civil war between majority Shi'ites and minority Sunni Arabs who were dominant under Saddam Hussein.

While the boost in troop levels has reduced killings by sectarian death squads, car bomb attacks still plague the city. A wave of car bombs killed nearly 200 people last Wednesday.

The U.S. commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus, said in remarks published on Sunday the troop build-up had yielded modest progress but a rise in suicide bombings made the ultimate success of the crackdown uncertain.

Petraeus and other senior U.S. officers in Iraq told The Washington Post the increase in U.S. and Iraqi troops had improved security in Baghdad and



A woman stands at the scene of suicide car bomb attacks in Baghdad April 22.

restive western Anbar province but that attacks had risen sharply in other regions.

"We have certainly pulled neighbourhoods back from the brink," Petraeus was quoted as saying.

But the commanders said the increase in suicide bomb attacks was troubling because of the danger of reigniting sectarian revenge killings and undermining the government of Shi'ite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

"I don't think you're ever going to get rid of all the car bombs," Petraeus said. "Iraq is going to have to learn — as did, say, Northern Ireland — to live with some degree of sensational attacks."

Concrete walls

The U.S. military said on Sunday it was putting up concrete walls to protect five neighbourhoods in Baghdad. Some residents said the move would isolate them and sharpen sectarian tensions.

"We are not sealing off neighbourhoods, we are controlling access to them. It's a tactic, it's not a change in strategy to divide Baghdad along sectarian lines," said military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Scott Bleichwehl.

The announcement that more "gated communities" are being built came after the U.S. military said last week it was putting a 5-km (3-mile) cement wall around a Sunni enclave in the city.

Concrete barriers up to 12 feet (3.5 metres) tall are being built around Adhamiya, a mainly Sunni Arab area that is surrounded on three sides by Shi'ite communities. Traffic control points manned by Iraqi soldiers would be the only way in and out of Adhamiya once the wall was finished.

Um Othman, 45, a teacher, said residents in Adhamiya regarded the concrete barriers as an "isolating wall".

"It will be like Palestine. The people of Adhamiya and neighbouring districts have mutual historical relations, like religious festivals and marriage," she said.

Baghdad is already largely divided along sectarian lines, with Sunnis mainly living on the west side of the Tigris River and Shi'ites on the east.

"The barriers can be modified or removed at any time ... the purpose of these barriers is to provide security," Lieutenant-General Abboud Qanbar, the Iraqi commander of the security crackdown, told Iraqiya state television.

French flock to vote in election

By: Swaha Pattanaik

PARIS (Reuters) — French voters flocked to choose a new president on Sunday in an election dominated by right-wing front-runner Nicolas Sarkozy and Socialist Segolene Royal, who hopes to be the first woman elected head of state. Sarkozy, a tough-talking former interior minister, led Royal and the other 10 candidates in opinion polls throughout the long campaign. But neither was on course to obtain an absolute majority, making a run-off between them likely on May 6. The campaign was characterised by calls for change after 12 years of conservative rule by President Jacques Chirac which have left one of the world's wealthiest nations divided and in need of economic reform, job creation and a dose of self belief. "The French people know the importance of this vote, its seriousness, and I share their sentiment of living through a very important day," Royal told reporters after casting her vote in the western Poitou-Charentes region where she is leader. Royal, 53, has pledged to reunite the country and build a "fairer and stronger" France where all citizens would be equal. The ruling UMP party's Sarkozy, 52, has promised a break with the past, and a crackdown on crime and illegal immigration. Voter turnout was more than 31 percent at

1000 GMT, the Interior Ministry said, the highest rate at this stage since 1981 and about 10 percentage points higher than at the same time in the last presidential election in 2002. The brisk voting in sunny weather followed a big rise in voter registration before the election and reflected widespread concern that voter apathy could lead to another shock after far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, reached the second-round run-off in 2002. Final opinion polls suggested a third of the 44.5 million voters were not sure of their choice at the last minute, giving hope to third-placed centrist Francois Bayrou and Le Pen, who was lying fourth in most surveys.

"I want it to be a Sarkozy-Segolene run off," Laurence Rouquette, a 40-year-old antiques dealer, said after voting in a wealthy Paris suburb. "Usually I vote for the smaller candidates but this time I voted for one of the main ones." Sarkozy smiled as he voted with his wife Cecilia, a joint appearance that seemed intended to hit back at rivals' insinuations that their marriage is in trouble. "What is very important is that the French come to vote in large numbers," he told reporters in Neuilly, a suburb of Paris. The run-up to the election was largely calm, but two bombs exploded overnight in the Corsican port town of Bastia, injuring one passer-by. The explosions followed clashes

at a separatist demonstration on the island in which five police were wounded.

Personalities versus policies

The campaign has focused as much on personality as policy although the more than 8 percent unemployment rate and disappointing economic growth have been major issues, just two years after riots erupted in deprived housing estates. Royal has vowed to raise the monthly minimum wage and pensions and to create 500,000 jobs for young people, but says she will not raise overall taxes. Rivals say she is incompetent. Sarkozy, the son of a Hungarian immigrant, has taken a tough line on crime and is viewed as the most business-friendly candidate by financial markets. He is widely considered closer to the United States than the other candidates, but is portrayed as authoritarian by his rivals. "I will vote for the first time this year, against Nicolas Sarkozy," said Ilhyes Ayadi, 28, a market trader in Venissieux, a poor suburb of Lyon. "He wants too much severity. He tars everyone with the same brush. I reacted against Nicolas Sarkozy because he scares me." Bayrou, 55, hopes voters disillusioned with the traditional right-left split in French politics will turn to him in the hope of securing a real break with the past.

Bangladesh leader vows to return

Al-Jazeera — Sheikh Hasina Wajed, Bangladesh's opposition leader, has vowed to return to the country despite a government ban and a murder charge, an aide has said.

Meanwhile, Khaleda Zia, Hasina's rival and Bangladesh's last prime minister, faces exile in Saudi Arabia.

Hasina will attempt to board a Dhaka-bound flight at Heathrow on Sunday, Abdus Sobhan Golap, her private secretary, told AFP by telephone from London on Saturday.

It was not known if British Airways staff would allow her to board the aircraft.

Exile order

Bangladesh's new military-backed interim government on Wednesday told all airlines operating flights to Bangladesh to take the necessary measures to prevent Hasina from returning.

Golap said: "She is aware of the bar on her return. It's a confirmed flight. There is no question of staying back."

Hasina has been charged with murder and extortion in her absence and could face arrest if she returns.

Zia meanwhile is reported to be preparing to leave for Saudi Arabia.

A private television channel reported that her departure was imminent. Zia met her son Tareque Rahman, who is being held on corruption charges, at Dhaka central jail.

The attempt to exile the two women, known as the "batling begums" for their

longstanding mutual animosity, is part of the government's campaign to clean up Bangladeshi politics before holding fresh elections before the end of 2008.

Zia, who has been under virtual house arrest since April 10, is reported to have agreed to go abroad in return for leniency for her two sons. Her younger son Arafat Rahaman was briefly arrested on corruption allegations last week.

Crackdown

Scores of prominent figures including former ministers - with links to both parties - have also been detained.

Both Zia and Hasina stand accused of misrule that led to a political crisis earlier this year.

The crisis followed a political impasse that climaxed in January amid spiralling violence, in which the Hasina's Awami League accused the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) led by Zia of seeking to rig elections.

As a result, Iajuddin Ahmed, then-president of an interim government tasked with holding fair elections resigned, imposed emergency rule and cancelled the polls.



Hasina has been charged with murder and extortion and barred from the country.

The new interim government took over power and has won popular support for its anti-corruption campaign.

Ruling dynasties

Zia and Hasina have ruled the country alternately since democracy was reinstated in 1991.

The two represent rival political dynasties that have dominated the political landscape since the country won independence in 1971.

Zia is the widow of Ziaur Rahman, a former president, who was assassinated in an attempted military coup in 1981.

Hasina is the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the nation's independence leader and first premier and president. He was murdered along with most of his family in a military coup in 1975.

Shells rock Mogadishu, corpses rot in street

By: Sahal Abdulle

MOGADISHU, April 22 (Reuters) - Rotting corpses lay in the open and explosions shook Mogadishu on Sunday for a fifth day of battles between insurgents and allied Somali-Ethiopian troops that have killed more than 200 people, residents said.

Illustrating regional divisions many say are fomenting the escalating war, Eritrea pulled out of the east African group IGAD after a rift with Ethiopia over Somalia. The feuding neighbours each accuse the other of stirring the conflict.

In an ever-growing exodus some say is nearing half a million people, hundreds more Somalis trudged out of Mogadishu on Sunday, dragging and carrying belongings on their head.

"I have lost all hope," one woman said, walking at the head of 11 relatives, mainly children.

A Reuters correspondent in central Mogadishu was repeatedly woken through the night by the sound of mortars, mainly from the north of the city where the worst fighting has been.

Insurgents are barricaded behind makeshift sandbanks and race through streets on pickups turned into battle-wagons, while Ethiopian and Somali troops fire heavy artillery and make for-

ays into their strongholds with armoured cars.

With an insurgency simmering since the ouster of militant Islamist rulers from Mogadishu over the New Year, this week's violence has been one of the worst sustained flare-ups since then. A previous four-day spike in battles at the end of March killed at least 1,000 people, mainly civilians.

Bodies lay on the streets on Sunday, some mutilated and decapitated by incessant shelling that has pulverised residential neighbourhoods considered Islamist strongholds.

Makeshift graves

With Somalis keen to bury their dead quickly in accord with Muslim custom, some were digging makeshift graves by the road.

The Islamists ruled most of south Somalia for the second half of 2006, before being defeated by the interim government and its Ethiopian military backers in a war over the New Year.

But Islamist fighters — backed by some disgruntled Hawiye clan elements and foreign jihadists — have regrouped to rise up against President Abdullahi Yusuf's administration and his Ethiopian backers whom they regard as hated foreign invaders.

Ethiopia accuses Eritrea of sending

arms and men to support the Islamists, while Asmara says Addis Ababa is occupying Somalia illegally at the behest of the United States.

Eritrea's exit from the seven-member Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was a blow to diplomatic efforts to unite foreign opinion on pacifying Somalia.

"The Government of Eritrea was compelled to take the move due to the fact that a number of repeated and irresponsible resolutions that undermine regional peace and security have been adopted in the guise of IGAD," said a statement on the government Web site, shabait.com.

A meeting of IGAD foreign ministers two weeks ago in Kenya became a forum for the festering feud between Ethiopia and Eritrea, still bitter over their 1998-2000 border war and now locked in what many analysts see as a proxy war in Somalia.

Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea are the countries who make up the east African bloc.

The United Nations says more than 321,000 residents have fled Mogadishu since February, but locals put the figure higher.

"I think it's nearer 500,000 now," said the head of a Somali think-tank, who asked not to be named because of the precarious security situation.

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Iron traffic flow strips deflate car tires – and more

By: Nasri Abu-Baker Al-Saqqaf
nassry_saqqaf@makoob.com
and Nisreen Shadad

A new phenomenon has cropped up on several streets around Sana'a. Iron tire deflator strips have been laid across certain streets to prevent cars from traveling in both directions on these roads. By order of the Sana'a traffic administration and the Ministry of General Labor, they were built to alleviate traffic accidents and congestion; however, according to drivers, such barriers have made the situation worse.

Cars used to pass along these roads peacefully from both directions. However, in an effort to decrease overcrowding and accidents, the traffic administration built these types of barriers, such as the one on Al-Itha'a Street (Radio Broadcast Street) beside the Civil Service Office and on Al-Siteen Street.

Drivers find it easier to drive on such roads at night because they're practically empty; however, the problem remains, whether at night or during the day. One driver explained, "We were going to Al-Thawra Hospital at 2 a.m. when our car tires suddenly blew out. Upon getting out of the car to look at the tires, we discovered the iron barrier. We were forced to leave our car and search for any car passing that way in order to aid our patient."

Car mechanic Ibrahim Aqlan says most drivers try to find repair shops, but are compelled to pay a lot for new tires. According to drivers, such damage isn't repaired easily, except at specific repair shops in Nuqum.

Aqlan added, "The number of cars damaged is no less than five per day, with no less than three tires blown out on each car. Such damage is beyond repair, so drivers are forced to buy new ones rather than repair them."

Amer Al-Zuraiqi, a pharmacy employee who lives on Al-Itha'a Street, said angrily, "I see terrorism existing in these iron barriers. Every day, I hear the



Drivers complain about unseen signs and new types of barriers. Speed bumps placed next to iron tire deflator strips cause additional damages.

PHOTOS BY NASRI AL-SAQQAF

sounds of car tires blowing because drivers are unaware of the existence of such barriers. They are driving along peacefully and then suddenly, they hear the bursting of their tires. They shout and cry, but none of the traffic officers respond to find a solution to their complaints."

Such barriers also don't prevent accidents. "Every day, we see many accidents occurring on Al-Itha'a Street," points out Amin Masoud, one resident along that street.

Dentist Zaid Isaq notes, "The reason for building these barriers is to prevent vehicles from Al-Itha'a Street or Kuwait Street from cutting through to 26 Street. However, this new solution has brought more troubles, as cars are not prevented from using this street. Drivers find minor roads as a way leading them to 26 Street instead of using larger, more pub-

lic ones. Added to this is the bursting of tires these barriers have caused for hundreds of cars."

Ishaq continued, "Within the first weeks of building this barrier, we couldn't even sleep because of the sound of cars driving over it. This sound not only annoys residents of these streets, it also frightens drivers, who think a large explosion has occurred near them."

Due to citizen complaints, the traffic administration subsequently built speed bumps (matabat in Arabic) in order to compel drivers to slow down when driving on such streets. However, because they were built near the deflator barriers, they damaged cars passing in both the right and wrong directions, according to Ishaq.

"I remember one bus driver was about to cry when examining his tires that were blown in front of him because such

damage isn't repairable. Therefore, he had to buy new ones," Ishaq recounted.

"These barriers and speed bumps have created problems rather than solved them. I was driving in the right direction, but then my tire blew out," driver Mohammed Al-Zarqua maintained.

However, his friend Mohammed said Al-Zarqua was driving at a speed so that his tire blew out somehow. As one traffic officer comments, "Those drivers who violate traffic rules must be responsible for their faults. The authority has erected signs indicating that certain streets are only one way, but they aren't heeded."

"Moreover, traffic officers working to prevent drivers from violating the rule and stopping them from going both directions have become exposed to attack from National Council members'

guards. We can't prevent them," he lamented.

Yahya Shabbill, general director of the Sana'a Traffic Office, explains, "The main reason to build such barriers is owing to the crowding created by violating vehicles when disrespecting the directions on roads. We affixed signs indicating no driving on particular streets; however, it was in vain. We also stationed traffic officers to stop vehicles from passing,

but that didn't solve the problems either."

He notes, "Most of those we suffer from are National Council members because they are the first to violate the rules. Even with such barriers, we can't prevent them from driving in the opposite direction on Al-Itha'a street. They now use the pavement as a street to pass through."

"Observing the proper directions and street lanes may take a few minutes longer, but it will save driver hours

wasted due to the crowding that is occurring," Shabbily adds, "The reason for such vehicle damages and losses are drivers' violations."

"In the future, we'll build speed bumps farther from iron barriers so as not to damage car tires. Moreover, we're going to erect much larger signs to help drivers see them and save their cars," he indicated, concluding, "Ultimately, we're forced to make such barriers for the general welfare."

Ayid Al-Shamyri, general director of labor in Sana'a, says, "Currently, the number of these barriers is limited, but we plan to build 15 to 20 more in various locations, depending on the importance of the location itself, as well as the number of accidents occurring there. Up until now, we've only erected two or three barriers, implementing them according to the administration of municipality traffic officers."

He adds, "We aren't informed of nor do we pay any compensation for damages. Even when something does occur, it's due to driving fast or not seeing the signs. Just driving over such barriers won't cause huge damage."

As Al-Shamyri describes, there are many ways to compel drivers to slow down, including speed bumps and other types of impediments; however, many citizens violate the rules. According to him, the best way to save citizens' lives is for drivers to be aware of and respect traffic rules.

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Walid Haidar: “Yemeni tourism lacks good quality services”

Walid Haidar first came to Yemen as a member of a team of journalists affiliated to Arabian Travel, which was sent to Yemen in order to make a Documentary about Yemen's tourism attractions. The team arrived to Yemen in the beginning of last March, and had several ups and downs during their journey. YemenTimes had the pleasure to Interview the Team's leader, Journalist Qalid Haidar, the Tourism Editor at the Channel.

Interviewed by Saddam Al-Ashmouri saddamalashmori@gmail.com

After visiting Yemen, what is your assessment of its tourism environment?

Some people believe that Yemeni tourism rests upon a group of heritage sites which help it to attract foreign visitors. However, tourism actually involves a group of interrelated components, beginning with airlines, airports, roads, telecommunication services and buses, coupled with organization and the thorough implementation of tourist programs.

If we are to consider all of these components however, we find that Yemen's tourism environment doesn't yet qualify as a real tourist industry because its environment is merely historical, which has the ability to attract visitors only once, something which is a real problem. When tourists return home, they then encourage their friends to visit the country which they have visited.

What are the obstacles facing tourists in Yemen?

Such obstacles are initially represented by its small airport, slow entry procedures and the small number of passport officers. Within Yemen, there's no specific system regulating the services of taxi. Additionally, the initial scenes when coming from the airport into the city centre do not help to boost tourism or tourist services. Roads are narrow and unclear, and hotels are neither tidy nor organized.

Regarding Yemeni people, we find that they're hospitable and cooperative,

read things that made me enthusiastic to visit this country. I read all of this wonderful information and printed off more than 300 pages about Yemen, its history and tourist sites.

I had a desire to extend my visit for longer than was planned and I agreed with the director and those in charge of about this; I wanted to tell Arab viewers that Yemen has much more to offer than they might expect, aside from its tourist treasures. Frankly, I came to Yemen with another aim, which was to advise others against visiting it; however, I didn't say this because I value and respect Yemen and its people. By the end of the visit, I apologized to Yemeni citizens, not their government, for not completing my planned television program.

Why did you apologize for not completing it and what's required in order to do so?

I apologized because the program's idea was based on providing tourist services in various areas of the country. When I found that there were no tourist services, I realized that the serials would merely convey a bad impression of Yemen. This isn't the goal of our program, which is based on objectively assessing Yemen's tourism situation.

For example, is it possible for one to find an international airport anywhere in the world without water in its bathrooms? When I used one of Sana'a airport's toilets, I found it very old and in poor condition.

I would like to say something, and I



Walid Haidar: Yemen has a lot of potential.

ing Saudi Arabia, are beginning to think about tourism and concentrate on it as an alternative income source to oil.

Yemen has been progressing slowly; however, tourism is supposed to be its main income source. It's important that Yemen allocates a significant budget to develop investment by establishing a national project to include various organizations and individuals.

Additionally, Yemen should establish another national project regarding its future and allow its citizens to play an integral role in increasing tourism awareness, as well as to train local staff to work in hotels and tourism agencies. In the hotel where I stayed, I discovered that employees were from Morocco, Lebanon and other Arab countries.

Of course, Yemen is rich in tourist attractions and sites, not only antiquities. The Yemeni government can establish tourist resorts atop mountains and in the deserts and boost desert activities because the desert is the biggest factor attracting foreign visitors. Just as Arab tourists appreciate Europe's snowy mountains, foreign visitors will appreciate Yemen's desert scenes.

The potential ideas are innumerable and Yemen can plan to develop its tourism capabilities with the help of foreign experts, who can specify exactly what European, Japanese and Chinese tourists want. In light of these requirements, the Yemeni government can then establish a tourist base and not depend solely on the Old City of Sana'a and other historic sites. As tourism has changed worldwide, Yemen should cope with any developments in the tourism sector.

Did those parties concerned with tourism help you while you were in Yemen?

The media advisor at the Yemeni Embassy in Abu Dhabi invited me to visit Yemen, instructing me to pay for the airline ticket. However, because we work for the media, we receive free tickets, so I waited for a free ticket and this delayed my visit to Yemen. I tried hard to persuade my media institution to pay for the ticket, but that didn't happen, so I seized the opportunity to visit Yemen as part of the tourist editor's program because they pay the costs of flights and accommodation.

Despite numerous objections to my trip, I decided to visit Yemen under the pretext that I would be witnessing real tourism, as I expected, so I insisted on visiting Yemen. At the very beginning, I was shocked to find that visitor visas are required in Yemen; however, such visas aren't required in other countries like Syria and Jordan.

Additionally, Gulf Cooperation Council countries provide visitor visas at the airport for any foreigners visiting in their territories in order to encourage them to visit tourist sites and attractions.

Did concerned parties authorize a guide for you?

Someone from the Ministry of Information was authorized to accompany us while photographing several sites and attractions, keeping with him a photography license and requesting we not take any photos unless he was present.

Those in charge of tourism in the Arab world should quit making such statements about unauthentic scores unless they're very sure of their authenticity. Those in charge of tourism in Yemen must say honestly that their country's tourism industry requires at least five years of hard work. They need to establish a well-studied plan and then start implementing it in real-life situations.

In your opinion, what are the shortcomings of Yemen's tourism industry?

Those in charge of tourism in Yemen constitute its main shortcomings – either the minister of tourism or the manager of the tourism promotion board. Undoubtedly, tourism requires joint efforts and cooperation between the concerned parties, but tourism officials must be the first ones responsible for implementing relevant plans.

I've seen Yemen's wings at international exhibitions promoting tourism, but I've remarked that such promotion must be in line with the tourism sector's true development; otherwise, such efforts and funds are wasted randomly without any benefit gained.

How it is possible to promote or merchandize a commodity that needs developing? If I was a tourism official in Yemen, I'd suspend Yemen's participation in the international tourism promotion exhibition for at least three years and all of that saved money could be spent on rehabilitating airports and improve the level of services.

Additionally, concerned authorities must print tourist manuals and maps and train local staff on how to provide top-quality services to foreign visitors.

Do you have any final comments?

Yemen must pay closer attention to tourism in order to improve its ailing economy through tourism and I advise those officials in charge of tourism to bear in mind that it's their country that will benefit from offering good-quality services, not the visitors.



Mareb: A neglected prime tourist attraction

but those who deal with tourists out of greed and a desire to exploit foreign visitors harm the future of tourism in Yemen.

There's a need to increase public awareness about tourism, but in general, Yemen lacks organized tourist services, as well as convenient sites for such services. We found that some individuals impose certain sums of money on tourists to pay for entering tourist sites, a situation to which the police can't a solution.

The other problem we faced was that of eating our meals outside of the hotels at which we stayed, as there are no good restaurants in the hotels. Even if there are various popular menus, they should be served in convenient places, either in Sana'a, Marib or other important cities.

While touring Yemen, we were accompanied by a female friend, who never ate a single meal, even though we went to the best restaurants in Sana'a. Finally, we took her to a pizza restaurant where the meal was served on a rusty plate.

As Tourism Editor at Arabian Travel, do you find the actual tourism experience in compliance with what's being promoted?

For me, visiting Yemen was a dream. Without exaggerating, Yemen was one of the few countries that I've been really eager to visit. I expected to find the most beautiful historic sites in the world, thanks to the cultural heritage Yemen enjoys. I visited Yemen's web site and

hope no one will be angry with me. During my visit to Yemen, which coincided with commemorating the passage of 40 days since the death of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, along with dozens of people who were invited to the event and stayed with us at the same hotel, I remarked that an awful lot of money was being spent on the commemoration.

Why wasn't this money spent on improving the conditions of the airport's toilets, as well as paving the road leading to Marib Dam, which is one of Yemen's most important historical tourist sites? And there are other bad roads too, such as the one linking Sana'a and Dar Al-Hajar.

What is your advice for foreign tourists visiting Yemen?

I would tell them not to expect much from the country, although they should view Yemen as a beloved and important part of the Arab world. Tourists expect high-class tourism services. I advise them to visit Yemen's ancient and historical ruins within the minimum time required.

Is Yemen rich in tourist sites and if exploited well, will such sites help Yemen towards a state in which they can rely on tourism as a main source of revenue, as some other countries do?

Tourism is a treasure and all nations move towards such attaining such treasure. Even the oil-rich Gulf states, includ-



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A Yemeni woman's success in the mountains of Shabbam

By :Alice Firebrace
For Yemen Times

The Hameeda restaurant in Shabbam, in the shadow of the cliffs of Kawkoban is a three story house, overlooking views of the mountains. It serves a wide range of traditional Yemeni food in clean and comfortable conditions. What makes it so unusual is that it was set up by a woman from scratch. Now, after years of growth and prosperity, it is still run by her, though she now has had two children who help, her daughter taking on many of the responsibilities now and so ensuring that the women's legacy that has built this place into what it is survives. The restaurant has been going strong now for some 45 years, and has blossomed from its rudimentary beginnings at the time of the Revolution to delighting Yemeni and international visitors alike.

It was started by Hameeda Hassan, an orphan who, as a means to support herself during her teenage days, worked as a labourer carrying mud for the construction of houses. In 1962 during the civil war between Republicans and Royalists, many soldiers from the Republican army were billeted in the village. Life was tough and the front line was not so far away, the fighting was close and bullets hailed down daily. With no family to

object, or provide for her she was both forced and empowered to work. She decided to set up a business supplementing the rudimentary rations of the soldiers. Working alone at the age of 18, she made local bread, from flour that she ground by hand on a stone mill and baked in a manure-fired mud oven. She also brewed local coffee from the husks of coffee beans and had to make do without meat which was too expensive. Water had to be carried in a 'tanak' on her head from the cistern on the other side of the village. Understandably water was conserved and used as frugally as possible.

As the business grew, she moved into a 1 roomed restaurant where the soldiers would typically stay for 15 minutes to eat their maloug (bread) and asid (porridge) and then leave. 35 years ago she moved into her current property, a 3 storey building, with five rooms on each floor. There are private areas suitable for families and communal rooms also. The restaurant has views over the Kawkoban mountain range. She no longer has to work alone and has Arowa and Bashir, her children, who help keep things ticking over and assist with all the bustle of restaurant life. Tourists have been coming there for 20 years now, attracted by the quality local food (especially the souss and bint al sahn, a kind of flat bread with honey drizzled over the top) and the traditional setting.

Now life is definitely much easier



The first of many dishes.

than in the early days. Water is pumped straight to the restaurant and they no longer need to hand-grind the flour for the bread. When I went to visit, we entered under an arch separating shops in front of the restaurant where a man cooked something delicious-smelling over a barbecue. We found ourselves facing a tall traditional Yemeni building. Outside you could see tens of little goats grazing around their pen, happily not realising that belonging to a popular restaurant such as this would not bode that well for them. We were ushered up to the top floor, where our party took up the

whole of one end of the long rooms. We were just down from a group of Italians on cushions lining the perimeter of the room, happily munching goat from the low tables in the centre. Within minutes large dishes of bread and stew came into the room followed by goat, and numerous other things, the dishes filling the table so completely that you no longer could see the wood. Once everyone had eaten until they were verging on popping, sweet bread, saturated in honey was brought in. This was an immediate favourite among the younger, more sweet toothed members of our group who just managed to make space in their crammed stomachs to fit it in. People were now feeling full and content with the world, and just a little sleepy, and at this point the Yemenis among us decided that this was the perfect opportunity to chew a bit of a qat and we all settled down until, too soon, we realised that we had to leave and begrudgingly left the comfortable seats for the bumpy road again.

Hameeda does not see her being a woman running a business as a problem, she has done it since she was young after all and indeed sees it as an advantage as she does. Yet, few rural women have made the moves that she has, or reeled in the rewards that have been earned by this enterprising and woman.



The first course.



Hameeda Hassan began her restaurant 45 years ago.



A natural view outside the restaurant.

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Genetically modified food: A new taste of life

By: Khalil Mohammed
For Yemen Times

Have you ever been offered a sweet potato or a dish of rice with increased iron and vitamins? Have you ever encountered bananas that produce human vaccines against infectious diseases like Hepatitis B; fish that mature faster; fruit and nut trees that yield years earlier or plants that produce new plastics with unique properties?

All of the above suggestions have become possible with what's undoubtedly the most powerful technology the world has ever known – genetically modified food.

In the 1990s, a new taste of life began with the first commercially grown genetically modified tomato, which was made more resistant to rotting and given a longer shelf life.

It was welcomed by consumers, who purchased it at two to five times the price of standard tomatoes.

Genetic modification is a specialized set of technologies that alter the genetic makeup of living organisms such as plants and animals, whose offspring are improved organisms with valuable and important traits. Genetically modified plants are grown commercially in more than 20 countries on six continents. In 2006, approximately 102 million hectares were planted with transgenic crops, mainly soybeans, corn, cotton and canola.

Will people accept it?

People have differing attitudes toward this new technology, which is being produced by large companies in more than 20 countries worldwide.

"I think this technology is designed to solve Third World nations' [nutritional] problems," University student Khalid Al-Qudami asserts.



Regarding whether he'll accept being supplied with genetically modified food instead of its conventional counterpart all of his life, Al-Qudami declared, "I need only healthy food, whatever it is. I trust what these companies produce."

To the contrary, some others maintain their fears and reservations about this dominant new technology. "I don't accept being a subject for these experiments. I won't trust these products until I see industrial nations consume them without fear," farmer and agricultural engineer Abdullah Al-Muntasir says.

Housewife Nouria Ali views the phenomenon from a different angle. "It seems nice to offer your children a dish with varying types of nutrients in it. The only thing I need is just good health for my children," she noted.

However, she has her own opinion about the phenomenon. Although she basically accepts the idea, Ali refuses to submit her nutritional life into the hands of human scientists. "Scientists know little about the consequences of such technology. If conventional crops disappear, they won't be able to return them," she warned.

The genetically modified food debate

Supporters say genetically modified crops can be cultivated for superior flavor, nutritional value and pest resistance, with higher yields and

lower production costs.

In a press release, Sara Stanner of the British Nutrition Foundation pointed out that there is growing evidence that certain chemicals in plants have a beneficial impact on health. "There are clear benefits associated with this type of genetically modified food, but also concerns about safety aspects," she admitted.

Though the developments seem promising, genetically modified foods may not be welcomed by all, with critics fearing that scientists are creating a monster, about which they know little.

Is it wise to alter Earth's species by tampering with DNA? Is it wise to splice DNA from one species into another's genetic code, e.g., from a fish to a strawberry? Will there be unforeseen, frightening consequences for Earth's ecosystems or will the result be abundant, high-quality food to feed the world's hungry? These are the questions heard repeatedly in the genetically modified food debate.

The hidden agenda of genetically modified technology

Some argue that the world has more than enough food and that the hunger crisis is caused by problems regarding food distribution, not production. They believe the increasing use of genetically modified major crops has caused an agricultural power shift toward biotechnology firms, which are gaining excessive control over the production chain of crops and food, as well as over farmers using their products, especially those in developing nations.

Mohammed Abdul Haleem, a student in Sana'a University's agriculture college, was doing a comparative study on the production quality factors of both conventional wheat and its modified counterparts.

Unfortunately, he suspended his study because he couldn't find a pure model for conventional wheat among all concerned authorities, as they only have imported modified ones.

Opponents of genetically modified technology believe it's simply a type of food "monopolization" by large production companies and an attempt to economically control the world. "Some companies producing such products throw their crops into the sea and don't distribute them in order to keep their prices high on the world market," farmer Al-Muntasir alleges.

Additionally, he points out, "The imported tomato seeds we have on the local market are unable to produce a second productive generation of seeds. As we are unable to produce such technology, if the natural seeds run out, we'll have to import the seeds all our life."

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Words of Wisdom



In the Third World today, the rulers have no fixed budgets or allocations, even when these exist on paper. The rulers simply spend as they please. Actually, the only limiting element is the lack of funds or the general poverty of the country.

Here in Yemen, this problem exists in a shameless way. Just a couple of weeks ago, a number of government palaces built by foreign aid were simply given away to the top president's men.

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

OUR
OPINIONThe future of Yemeni
visual-audio media

Finally, there has been a change in the TV and the Broadcasting Corporation's management. At least, a new vision would be allowed to manifest itself in this very important sector. With more than 60% of Yemenis without access to print media and even more than that without any knowledge or access to online media, TV and Radio take up first place in terms of outreach and influence.

The level of bureaucracy at that sector is astonishing and many talented hardworking people were put down and diminished because of resistance to change. Some were pushed out and started pursuing their careers in the private sector and some gave in the pressure and moved with the flow.

Today, new plans are being discussed and the management says that they want to ensure adequate planning for the various activities and programs and to avoid routine boring programs.

Many Yemenis do not watch Yemeni satellite channel or listen to Yemeni broadcast if they are given the choice. The BBC had a multi-hundred thousand dollar project targeting this particular sector in 2006. The aim of this project was to qualify the people working in Yemeni Radio and TV towards public issues and train them to be more professional and impartial in their reporting. A lot of focus was about the election coverage which took place in September 2006, but generally as experts from BBC told me it was about professionalism.

To what extent did this training and others penetrate the rigid old fashioned system, I don't know. But I hope that there will be a significant change. More importantly is the dire need for a change in the TV and Broadcasting Corporation law, which gives the government the privilege of being the sole owner of such media. There is a monopoly in this sector as no private TV or broadcasting projects are allowed to exist. Even the idea of community-based broadcasting is not acceptable to the people in charge of licensing.

The journey is long and we still have many battles to fight in order to ensure freedom of press in Yemen. However, the change in management of this sector and the attitude visible in their meetings seem encouraging. Despite it is the first good step, there are many miles to go before we sleep.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf
Editor-in-Chief

By: Mohammed Al-Ariqi

With the Yemeni market being open to foreign markets and the government ceasing its control of most of the basic commodities, some of those interested in the domestic affairs thought that the monitoring and commercial role, which the state has been exercising through what was known as the Ministry of Supply and Trade, has already ended. The market actions, particularly prices, have become based on supply and demand.

It has been made clear that chaos, development of greed and gluttony behaviors, monopoly, and cheat creep to the wholesale and retail stores while the consumer is always the victim. We expect the state's monitoring role, which cares for consumer protection, to be resumed via the new cabinet formation and the Ministry of Industry and Trade, which usually becomes

shocked at the first barrier it faces, thus attracting the public attention toward it.

The new cabinet formation was preceded by price hiking of some basic merchandises such as wheat, flour, and sugar. Such price hikes make the ordinary citizen more sensitive toward the state's policy. Further, the situation helps the opportunistic people to exploit the ordinary citizens for political matters and gain their support.

It is assumable that the Ministry of Industry and Trade may have the list of factors behind price hikes. Any how, it faces a great challenge. Also, it has to assert itself in the market and manifest its status and the significance of its role so as to gain the confidence of the consumer.

Certainly, the challenge posed to the performance of the Ministry of Industry and Trade isn't that easy and it is advised not to rely on its apparatuses, offices, and limited instruments in order to control the rhythm of the market and to purify it from monopoly and those who play

with prices, as well as those who don't abide by the quality specifications. In fact, all these things need solidarity and cooperation of the concerned parties, supported by the Prime Minister since the first test of the new cabinet is the market stability, which it should successfully pass.

The role, which the government is expected to play in order to keep prices stable, isn't a new indicator. Rather, the issue is taken into consideration and is a point of interest for the political leadership. President Ali Abdullah Saleh spoke about this more clearly when he chaired the first meeting of the new cabinet. Also, he demanded the new cabinet to improve citizens' living standards. Those points were re-emphasised by Prime Minister Ali Mujawar when he placed those issues at the top of his government's agenda.

The veteran Yahya Al-Mutawakel, who leads the Ministry of Industry and Trade, has scientific, practical, and referential thoughts that have

been closely related with the real-life situation with all its dimensions and directions for a long time period. Al-Mutawakel is extremely engaged in researches and studies that diagnose the various social and economic conditions of the society.

In addition to the great tasks required from the Ministry of Industry and Trade in the current stage, during which Yemen prepares for a distinctive move forward plus the economic reforms and the openness so as to attract investments at the local, regional, and international levels, Al-Mutawakel doesn't forget about the role of his ministry in maintaining competition and preventing monopoly and price hikes to ensure protection of the consumer. To do his duty efficiently, he needs to update the legislations, law, and order so that he can enliven the conscience of those concerned to be honest, credible, and loyal to their homeland.

Source: Al-Thawrah Daily

Media work and the culture of compatibility

By: Abdulbaqi Shamsan

The media and political community have been experiencing a sharp controversy over the old and new version of the Press and Publication Law, which the government drafted without consulting the Yemeni Journalist Syndicate or the prominent media personalities. Several symposia were held and reports were written about the legal obstacles imposed by the press law on the freedom of expression.

In this context, we don't deny that the legal environment, where the journalists work, is full of obstacles; the press law that restricts the press freedom, or the Crimes and Penalties Law that also imposes various restrictions on the freedom of expression. The article No. 26 in the latter stipulates that the death penalty is imposed in case a journalist crosses the red line during his/her work. In addition, the Penal Procedures Law No. 13 for the year 1994 contains sentences against the violating newspaper.

The legal environment is one of the dimensions of press freedom in the countries of growing democracy in general and Yemen in particular. These dimensions vary due to the policy of divisions cited during the first stage of moving toward party pluralism. Also, it was based on the harmony that has been established and changed into a culture including different means and components. The policy of divisions during the infancy stage and the results of the parliamentary elections, which took place in 1993 haven't played any role to make this culture deep-rooted. The two events hindered the progress toward democracy when a three-side coalition was formed, thus aborting the fetus of the government and the opposition at an early age.

The compatible culture helps the political party and media work to go beyond the legal

and constitutional context or not to take them into consideration at the time of containing conflicts. Our previous viewpoints confirm the complaints and sufferings of journalists due to legal restrictions. However, in the past journalists worked freely in the same legal environment.

To make the matter clearer, we cited the conflict that took place recently over the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum (SCER) when the political parties accepted the game of closed circles as well as the crisis and deal which are based on compatibility. The parties go beyond the constitutional and legal limits during the first period while the culture of compatibility hadn't enabled them discover the legal chains and restrictions. However, practice alone could enable them spot the chains. The political parties found themselves surrounded in a tight corner that didn't allow them to take breath. Further, they discovered that the law is the main barrier posed to their progress.

Culture of democracy

I am strongly loyal with the cultural current that the priority of the democratic transformation and the availability of a democratic culture at the level of communities and the ruling policies will work on enhancing the democratic option through establishing good institutions. In return, these institutions are due to spread confidence among the community components in order for the democratic culture to be interpreted into an individual and group behaviour. This condition is not made available with the Yemeni community's move toward party pluralism; rather it featured striking historic events at different levels. Here, I have to indicate that civil community organizations and political parties are the product of community environment, which is the reason why they neither have the institutional dimension nor do they exercise the internal democracy.

These facts weakened their presence and contribution, particularly if we focused on the media institutions which are usually seen to harshly criticize the authorities and the official newspapers, that are described as lacking the freedom of expression. On the other hand, the opposition newspapers exercise the same behaviour when they restrict the freedom of their workers.

Needs

The Center to Project Journalists in the Jordanian capital Amman released a report entitled 'Investment in the Future' in cooperation with Free Voice. The report covered six countries including Yemen and aimed to set a strategy to develop the media capacities and protect journalists. Although I am the one who prepared the part of the report concerned with Yemen except for variables of the form, I didn't agree with the researchers in the Cairo-based Headquarters where people expressed their viewpoints without considering the community privacies. They based their viewpoints on three requirements to reach strategic goals, the first of which is developing the capacities of journalists and protecting them with more emphasis on the legal environment. The second goal is increasing legal awareness and performance while the third is represented by being liberal and open to the modern technology and knowledge.

Scope of operations:

We mean by this the space where civil community organizations exercise activities, as well as expand their activities according to the democratic principles and values. As you know, countries of changeable democracies or the ones characterized by growing democracies specify the space that spots the strengths and weaknesses of civil community organizations in terms of the spread of these institutions in the community and institution-

al judiciary.

On the other hand, these institutions tend to organize activists and enable them to participate via the solidarity mechanisms. Here, I say that civil community organizations lack the sense of institutionalism and suffer weaknesses.

The just-said process is called the conflict of sites within the community and institutional judiciary. For instance, the Yemeni Journalist Syndicate, which was previously called the Yemeni Writers Union, is a site of conflicts. If the state controls it through elections, it will return to its former situation while the opposite leads to expanding the scope of freedom.

We usually realize that those working in the field of media have taken a pragmatic position when they grabbed on the middle of the stick. President of YJS Nasr Taha Mustafa is known for his relation with the decision-making authorities. He also enjoys regard and respect of the majority of media workers. As a result, this relation is bound to influence performance of the syndicate. If there is no harmony between the YJS board members, the syndicate may take a pragmatic approach in the management of conflicts based on the rule of less harm.

Privatization

I have talked about the media work, which I mean the readable one, which is required to take good steps toward free and independent media. In addition, I suggest that part of the visible and audible media, as well as the written press, should be privatized while the government maintains a certain part.

In fact, Yemen is one of the few growing-democracy countries where newspapers vary in abundance. Also, it is a country where the influence of the press is limited due to the high illiteracy rates, coupled with the firm restrictions the government imposes on press freedom.

Letters to the Editor

The OROMO refugees living in Sana'a

We are the Oromo ethnic group refugees of asylum seekers. At the moment we are registered under U.N.C.R for the refugee protection Status in Sana'a. We were departed from our home country because of the political conflicts there, but we haven't got any response or solution for our problems from the UNCR office in Sana'a.

We are the Oromo refugees threatened by the Ethiopian government prosecution. The following suggestions are the main points of our problems occurred to Oromo refugees in Yemen.

- 1- The UNCR interpreters don't know our status in Sana'a.
- 2- The UNCR staff members or employees changed the files of the Oromo refugees without our knowledge. So, there is a sort of

discrimination.

- 3- The one who has got under the mandate doesn't get the security and safety life under protection, all refugees are kicked and not respected in contradiction to what stated in the protocol convention, 1951.

- 4- When the appointment held they extended it for a period of 6 months plus they postponed it for 3 times as a matter of hesitation. However, we were waiting till the appointment came and finally they gave us a rejection.

- 5- If one of our refugees is arrested, no-one would follow his/her case to set him/her free. Also, there are neither health centers nor schools for refugees.

There is some news that the Ethiopian government & Yemeni government are negotiating to co-operate

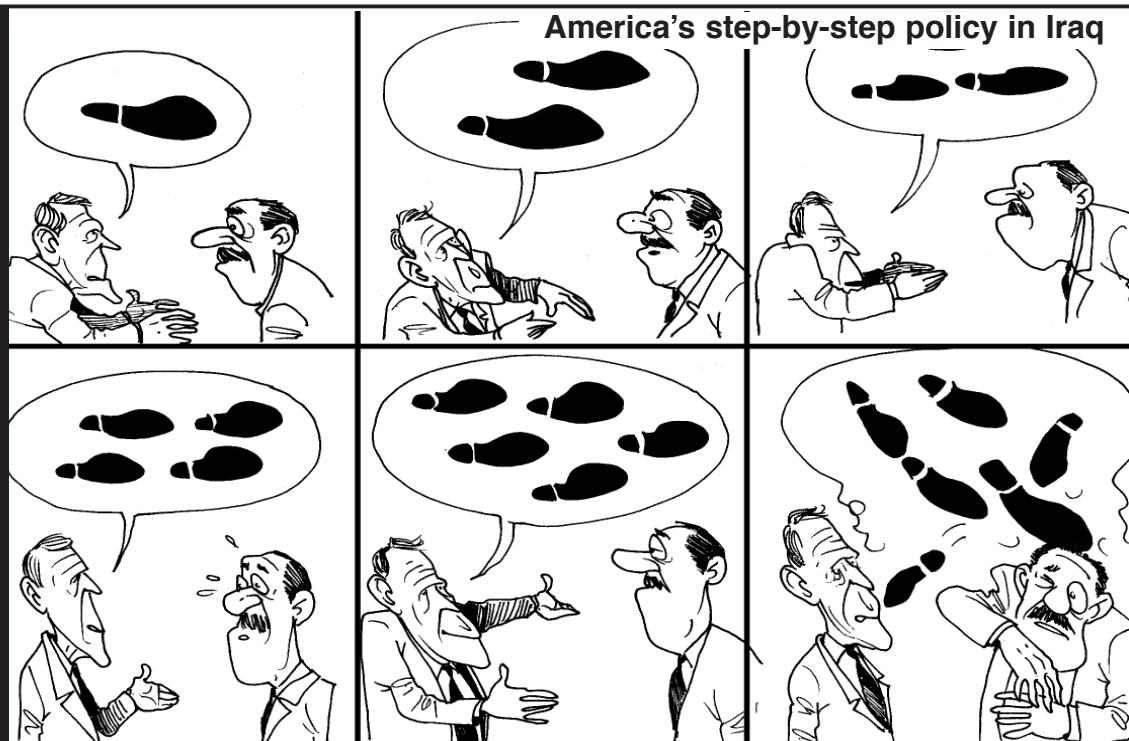
the departure of those refugees from Yemen to Ethiopia. How come at this time? It is dangerous for us to be departed to a country we had escaped from.

There are many serious problems face us. One of them is that the Yemeni soldiers interrogate us every where they meet us especially at night. Also, they take us to the prison and rob what we have.

At large, we haven't any right in this country. If we want to explain it to UNCR deputy representative we couldn't find him/her. Still, we haven't got the solution to our problems so we are kindly request you that our serious problems to be investigated by the concerned as soon as possible.

Thank you for your co-operation
The OROMO refugees in Sana'a
e-mail: getacc-10@hotmail.com
usyo-@yahoo.com

SKETCHED OPINION



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Yemen Press Review

By: Adel Al-Khawlani



Al-Wahdah Comprehensive Political Weekly
Wednesday, April 18

Main Headlines

- PM confirms to Parliament that improving investment and living standards tops his government agenda
- Legal Affairs Minister: We have a package of legislations to implement during the coming two years
- Yemenis have the least savings in the Arab world
- Old Sana'a City houses threatened to collapse
- Yemen stresses Arab rights for peace with Israel
- Yemen's negotiations with WTO enter final phases

The weekly said that Hamoud Al-Najjar, Chairman of the office of communicating and coordinating with the World Trade Organization (WTO) declared in a statement that Yemen has approved the list of restricted and banned imports. He added the Yemeni government is due to forward the list to WTO before holding the coming session of negotiations between Yemen and WTO.

Al-Najjar pointed out that there are several international agreements that ban the exchange of some commodities that contradict the national privacies of some countries including Yemen. The commodities, the import of which is banned, include pesticides and other products, which are harmful to agriculture and environment. He excepted other commodities that may be imported in case there is an urgent necessity for them and under licenses from the concerned parties.



Al-Methaq Weekly, Mouthpiece of the General People Congress
Monday, April 16

Main Headlines

- Saleh welcomes UAE contractor to construct towers and tourist cities in Yemen
- Conference expected to offer up to 100 investment opportunities
- Bajammal stresses boosting Al-Methaq Institute's activities
- Yemen signs two new agreements to participate in the oil sector
- Amran-Aden highway expansion project costs nearly \$ 2 billion
- Government presents platform to Parliament
- Parliament examines files of anti-corruption authority candidates

The ruling party-affiliated weekly reported that the parliamentary constitutional and legal committee is about to finish checking the files and particulars of candidates applying for seats in the Higher Anti-Corruption Authority. Also, it will prepare a report and forwarded it to Parliament presidency board to selected the 11 most eligible candidates to fill seats of the newly formed authority. In a statement to Al-Methaq weekly, Fatahi Tawfiq Abdurrahim, head of the parliamentary financial committee, accused opposition parties of fishing in the troubled water. By this, he means that the opposition parties don't accept anything. Abdurrahim said that opposition parties spread rumours that Parliament and Central Organization for Control and Audit are unable to fight corruption.

The newspaper added that Abdurrahim confirmed that the new authority with its eligible members will succeed in fighting corruption, pointing

out that the Anti-corruption Law ensures full independence of this committee and grant its members absolute freedom to take any political and legal decisions they want.



Al-Tajamu Weekly, Organ of the Yemeni Unionist Congregation Party (YUCP)
Monday, April 16

Main Headlines

- Dozens killed, others injured in Dhahian and Ghamr areas of Sa'ada province
- Higher Education Minister confirms his ministry commitment to monitor and support private universities to improve education quality
- 105 companies participate in the investment opportunity exploration conference
- HOOD denounces lawyer's imprisonment
- Saleh and National Security Chairman discuss security cooperation and battling terrorism in coordination with Egyptian intelligence
- Yemeni militants crossing to Iraq number up to 2000

The newspaper quoted unofficial reports as saying that Yemeni militants, who cross into Iraqi to fight against the Iraqi government and the occupation forces, number up to 2000. The scores added that most of the militants come from the Yemeni south province of Abyan and Miseik area, east of the capital, and they organize their trips to the war-ravaged country illegally. Official security sources mentioned that these militants use the internet in order to attract youths aged between 18 and 37 years and train them on how to fight in Iraq.

The same sources disclosed that many of those who cross to Iraq to fight the occupation forces have been registered students at the Eman University, the biggest Islamic education institutions in Yemen.



Al-Nass Comprehensive Weekly
Monday, April 16

Main Headlines

- FAO warns of wheat killer being spread in Yemen
- Teacher claims Interior Ministry to release him, investigate his abduction
- Parliament rejects a report on anti-corruption authority, MPs warns of indifference consequences
- Industry and Trade Minister: Removing officials from investment is a main task
- Brochures describe Al-Houthi loyalists as Shiites of Iraq, rebellion leader vows of distributing brochures to disclose oppression of authorities
- Women call for amending Parties Law
- Joint Meeting Parties' official spokesman Mohammed Al-Sabri confirmed that the current system of elections doesn't back the right and principle of equality between men and women, the weekly reported. During a workshop organized by the Union of Women Leaders on women political participation, Al-Sabri explained: "At JMP, we are committed to dialogue in conformity with a report made by the European Union Election Observation Mission to Yemen last year, which insists on the concerned parties to give top priority to improving the climate of women's political participation.

The newspaper said that Tareq Al-

Shami, head of the General People Congress's Media Sector confirmed that there is a clarity, vision and agreement between political parties and these things are due to be applied in real-life situations. Al-Shami added that women activists could convince other women to interact with them with the aim of boosting their political representation.



Al-Shoura Weekly, Organ of Yemeni Popular Forces Union (YPFU)
Wednesday, April 18

Main Headlines

- Al-Shoura Council postpones discussing education situations
- Head of Committee to Defend Al-Moayyad accuses U.S. authorities of abusing human rights
- Gunmen assassinate a senior police officer in Al-Jawf
- Authorities arrest blackmailing and extortion gang
- Hadramout threatened of swarms of locusts
- Sa'ada terrorists rape women, MP block a highway leading to Hodeida

The newspaper reported that a woman in her fourth decade committed suicide after she was subjected to rape by a group of terrorist elements loyal with Al-Houthi-led rebellion. The paper quoted Sa'ada sources as saying the 33-year-old woman, who is from Fard area, ended her life by drinking poison after she was brutally raped on Monday by an armed group of Al-Houthi followers who fight against the army.

According to the weekly, the women had no alternative but to commit suicide and end his life. The local sources clarified that rebels have

recently resorted to raid homes of innocent citizens, loot their property and rape women under the pretext that their ideologies and references allow them to do such things.



Al-Wasat Comprehensive Political Weekly
Wednesday, April 18

Main Headlines

- High-ranking authorities order engagement of different military units in Sa'ada clashes
- Government presents its platform to Parliament to gain confidence
- Political Security detention inmates accuses jail officials of torture
- Government enraged over reports that Yemeni militants cross to Iraq to fight occupation forces
- Qat causes conflicts between local councils and tax office in Mahrah
- Authorities deport 130 foreigners registered in Sa'ada-based Damaj Institute

The weekly quoted Salafi sources as saying that security authorities in Sa'ada governorate deported as many as 130 foreign students, who are enrolled in Damaj Institute for Legal Sciences, to Sana'a, as a first step prior to deporting them to their home countries. The institute was founded by the late Salafi leader Muqbil Al-Wade'i

The same sources told Al-Wasat that the procedure comes as part of an initiative taken the security authorities to ensure safety of foreigners in its territory. The authorities advised the foreign students, most of whom hold British and French citizenships, to fly back home and stop attending classes in the government where rebellion expands and may expose them to risk.

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وَأُصَدِّقُ الْمَوَاسَاةَ إِلَى

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نائب رئيس الجمهورية

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الشيخ/علي منصور هادي

سائلين المولى عز وجل أن يتغمد الفقيد بواسع رحمته وعظيم غفرانه

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Educating Texas ‘Aggies’ about Yemen

By: Yemen Times Staff

“In the future, a day will come when you’re going to see me on your living room TV as a minister or a politician. Hopefully, you’ll remember me and say, ‘I know that guy! He once spoke to us about his country,’” Mohammed Al-Seraji told attendees at the City Council Hall during the second Arab Culture Week in College Station, Texas this past February.

Organized by Texas A&M University, Arab Culture Week aimed to create a platform for the College Station community to get to know its Arab neighbors, as well as understand Arab culture and heritage. The week was sponsored by the International Programs Office and Arab students at Texas A&M.

The only Yemeni at the university, Al-Seraji was assigned in the steering committee, which consisted of several Arab students, to organize and draw up a plan for the event.

In addition to Al-Seraji, there are more than 100 students from 14 Arab countries, including Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine (i.e., the occupied territories), Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. Another 200 students from the university’s branch campus in Qatar

participated in the creation of the country display activity.

Representing Yemen, Al-Seraji set up a booth about his homeland, which, thanks to his dedication and the help of friends, looked very professional. He was a living display of a traditional Yemeni, wearing the traditional Sana’ani dress of a thobe and jambiyya, which attracted much attention as many attendees asked him questions about why Yemenis wear it.

Commenting on this, he said, “I had to explain my costume many times, not only to Americans, but also to my fellow Arab students attending the same university. Many staff, students and friends wanted to take a photo with me as a souvenir.”

The Arab Culture Week event presented a good opportunity to create a platform for students on the Texas A&M campus and in the community to gain an understanding of Arab culture through public lectures, cultural displays, a teacher’s workshop and a student panel discussion as Arab students had the chance to represent their cultures and educate others about Arab heritage. The event promoted a friendly atmosphere between Arab students on campus and their fellow ‘Aggies’ (i.e., Texas A&M students), as well as between Arab students living off campus and their neighbors.

Egyptian computer science graduate

student Salah Aly commented on the event, “Regarding the cultural displays, some tables attracted people to stop. I personally liked the Yemen and Saudi cultural displays because their tables were well organized and the items they displayed were really informative and reflected their traditions. It was an opportunity to learn more about Yemen, as well as a chance to learn about what type of clothing people wear there. I liked the cultural displays, especially the computer animation and presentations.”

He continued, “It’s nice if Arab students can focus on new infrastructure, modern cities and lifestyles in the Gulf region because this will encourage students both on campus and in the community to visit those remarkable overseas places and even attend some classes there. I think this event has started to grow and it’ll be one of the most interesting events for Arab students at Texas A&M. However, its success is based on participation by Arab students throughout the week’s activities.”

The Yemeni booth included photographs, antiques, books and brochures, videos and traditional Oud music from Yemen. Al-Seraji also gave a presentation about Yemen at the College Station City Council meeting and to its mayor, Ron Silvia.

“Now, the mayor is a good friend of mine. He was in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia 10 years ago and said he loved working there and he definitely would like to visit the area in the future. I showed him my five-story house and gave him – and all the council members – an open invitation to visit Yemen anytime,” Al-Seraji said in a display of Yemeni hospitality.

Saudi Student Association President Eid Al-Mutairi commented on the Yemeni student’s participation, saying, “I’m very pleased at how I’ve been inspired by [Al-Seraji’s] participation in representing Yemen. As a representative of Yemen, [Al-Seraji] is a successful young man able to work hard at his studies while simultaneously devoting some of his time to representing his nation and its culture.

“[Al-Seraji’s] participation doesn’t end there; rather, due to his talents and pleasant character, he’s been elected the Saudi Student Association’s culture offi-



Al-Seraji (right) making a presentation about Yemen.

cer. I’m proud that he’s one of those to work with as a management team in the Saudi Student Association in the Bryan-College Station area. I’ve witnessed his enthusiasm and his eagerness to contribute and participate in many activities,” Al-Mutairi concluded.

For the student panel discussion, 120 American and Arab students were selected and invited to attend a panel discussion and luncheon at the university’s Student Center. The discussion focused on history, religion, language, political systems, education and women in the Arab world. It was a very educational time and rich in information. Even though it was scheduled for only an hour, many students stayed and kept asking the panelists questions about their interests.

The International Programs Office at Texas A&M works with student groups each year to present cultural programs to raise awareness about a particular country, region or continent to audiences both on campus and within the community. This year was Texas A&M’s second celebration of Arab Culture Week, which is designed to bring events and activities that will be entertaining and informative.

Both students and a number of faculty members from Arab countries wanted to help Texas A&M students, staff and faculty, as well as the local community, to better understand their culture and values. The planners hoped to dispel stereotypes, build positive relationships and let the community know that Arab students are there to learn and build a better future for themselves, their home countries and ultimately, the world.

Al-Seraji made a presentation about Yemen to community leaders at the College Station City Council’s bi-weekly meeting. Kim Fox, program coordinator for the university’s Office of International Outreach, hoped that Al-Seraji will share as many good memories of Texas A&M University when he returns home as he has brought to the citizens in his temporary ‘home’ in College Station.

Presenting Yemen gave those who didn’t know about this country a chance to become aware about Yemeni culture and history. Construction management major Jeremy Copeland explained this when he said, “Before hearing [Al-Seraji] speak at the conference, I had no clue there was a country named Yemen, but now I know it’s a beautiful country

with no desert, great structures and that it’s the home of ancient civilizations like the Kingdom of Sheba.”

He continued, “[Al-Seraji] was very enthusiastic about his country and impressed the city council with his raw politician abilities. If all Yemenis are like him, I would definitely love to visit one day! Yemen sounds like a great place to live.”

In addition to presentations by locals, the weeklong event’s steering committee invited guest speakers: Qatari Ambassador Nasser Bin Hamad M. Al-Khalifa, Dr. Philip A. Salem, a physician, researcher and educator who gave a presentation about Arabs in America, and Dr. Rola Al-Husseini, who participated in an academic symposium.

For Al-Seraji, his meeting with Ambassador Al-Khalifa was filled with interesting conversation and was a great learning experience in a friendly atmosphere. “When I told him I’m from Yemen, he responded, ‘I’ve visited Sana’a twice and I want to visit again.’ He told me he had talked to Yemeni Ambassador Abdulwahab Al-Hajri in Washington D.C. that morning and that they’re good friends,” Al-Seraji noted.



More than 100 Arab students participated in the cultural week.

Links between traditional dress and city architecture

By: Amatalrazak Yahya Jahaf

Regarding its comprehensive significance, folklore is no more than a pleasant human act satisfying man’s spiritual and material needs. It is the standard from which this article will attempt to prove the integrated organic unity between the various components comprising Yemen’s cultural heritage. It is evidence of Yemenis’ psychological health and spiritual beauty reflected in dance, music, architecture and costume.

Sana’ani folkloric costume

A traditional Sana’ani house is built of two key blocks, the first of which is built of strong stones comprising the home’s foundation, while the second is made of brick and comprises the rest of the house. The particular area of the street as well as the home’s height offer comfortable movement within a space protected from direct sunlight.

Both the building materials and the thickness of walls prevent heat from transferring into and out of the home, while those spaces subjected to the external environment are small due to adjacent houses and narrow alleys. Likewise, such characteristics and significant engineering features are reflected in Sana’ani folk costumes.

The difference between those facades overlooking the south, whose doors receive the winter sun’s warmth, and north facades, which are more enclosed and less beautiful, are reproduced in traditional Sana’ani costumes made of cotton and linen; thus, preventing the cold from reaching the body, while wrapping oneself in wool dress in the summer will cause the body to be unaffected by the heat.

A beautiful relationship exists

between intervals and completeness, in addition to the balance between flat and raised stones, which reflects the functional relationship between a building and its adornment, wherein every useful element is adorned.

This is reflected clearly in Sana’ani folk dress, as some parts are adorned while others aren’t. For example, only those parts performing a certain function will be adorned, such as the ends of the sleeves and the neck opening. Additionally, there’s a delicate balance between the use of colored beads and semi-precious stones decorating the adorned portions.

Further, a Sana’ani home’s jutting bay windows enable those inside to see outside without being seen. The same function is served by a cotton covering called Al-Maghmuq and dyed with red, black and white patches.

Although builders and carpenters take care when mixing the various elements of décor together into a fine artistic unit with strict detail and integrated engineering designs, they don’t avoid adding special imprints to Sana’ani buildings in order to preserve detail and prevent boredom or uniformity. The same applies to the care a professional Yemeni woman takes in mastering adornment and embroidery art.

Although it may seem repetitive and similar at first glance, every part and color has its own characteristic. Further, different types of jewelry are selected to suit each costume, as jewelry selection is considered complementary to a woman’s uniqueness and distinction. This seems clear in many types of Sana’ani women’s dress, such as Al-Ospah, which is a mixture of many materials and colors with a harmonious mixture of silver jewelry and red coral stone

The top of a Sana’ani house is con-

sidered its main and most important part, so builders pay all of their attention to decorating it, using their skills to draw different inscriptions until the house appears in its full style. The way of decorating Yemeni buildings is reflected in Yemeni women’s dress in that women take care to decorate their head and hair with wonderfully different designs and decorations for both formal and informal occasions.

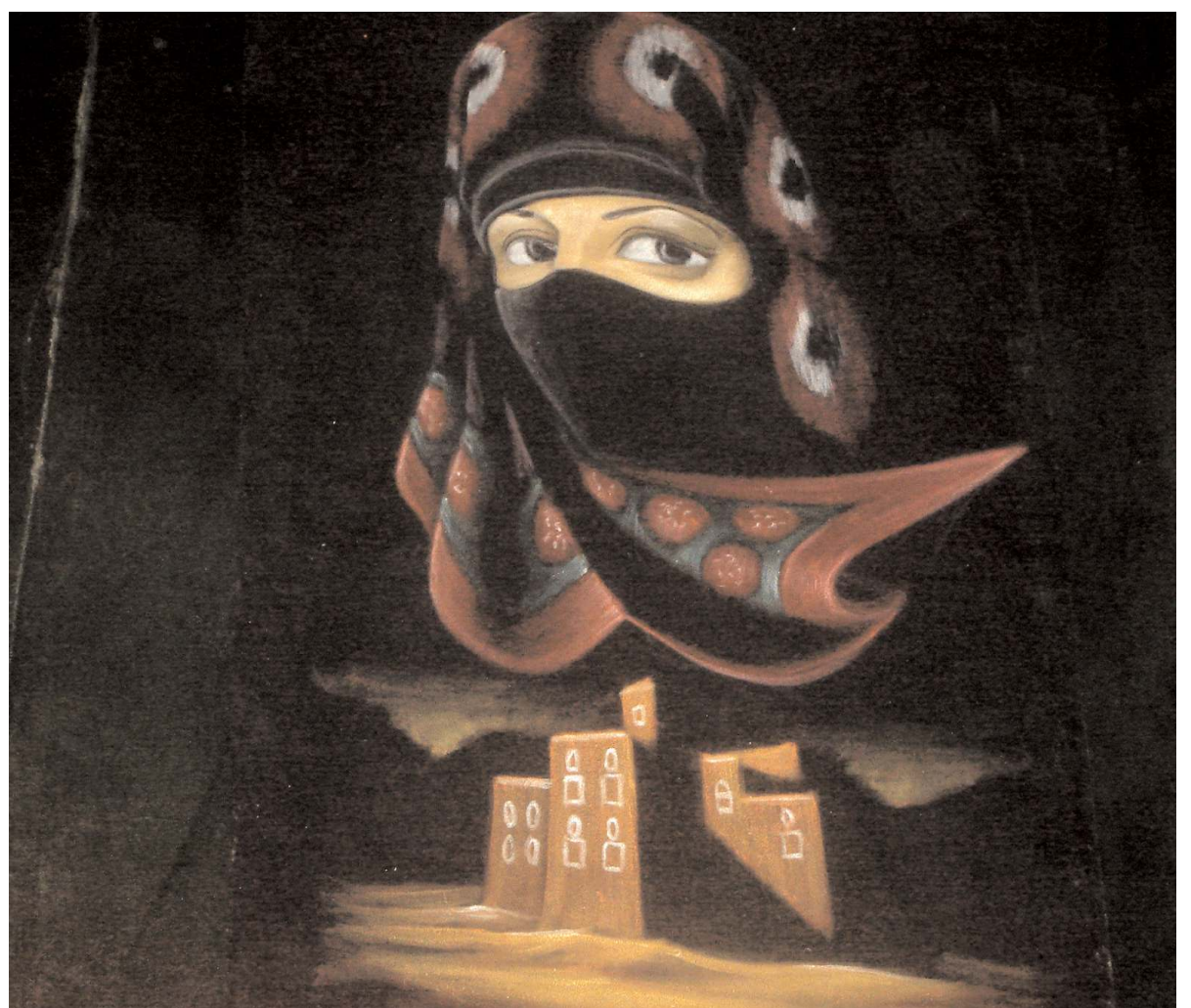
For small parties, women wear Al-Masar Al-Tali’a along with special jewelry called al-brashat or al-fratiq al-faratiq, whereas for special occasions like wedding parties, they spend much time decorating their heads with jewelry, flowers or other decorations to make themselves more attractive.

The Yemeni Taj (crown) is coordinated with decorative dress and special jewelry called al-faratiq, which is placed on a bride’s head. As a reflection of Yemeni window design, which looks like the form of a qamariyya, the upper portion of windows in Sana’ani homes, Al-Masar Al-Tali’a begins by folding a square into a triangular shape. It’s then wrapped around a piece of cardboard shaped like a crown (a half circle). After wrapping the fabric, its edges can be tied around the head.

Zabidi traditional dress

The buildings of Zabidi are designed simply, thus reflecting the simplicity and spirit of its people. Buildings normally consist of one floor with a high roof, a wide window and open space inside the home. Likewise, Zabidi traditional dress is made of only one material without mixing colors. Most often, a white dress is worn; however, Zabidi women will wear a black dress on some special occasions.

White decoration is used more for Zabidi houses, especially on the front,



which is made from white material called Al-Norah, thus displaying unity in decoration and the beauty of Zabidi homes. Just as builders, Zabidi women use the same concept when decorating their clothing. Only using embroidery, their dress gleams like the dawn with silver threads forming a wonderfully harmonious design.

Generally, like Zabidi buildings, it is a loose dress, especially in the sleeves and at the sides, which extend from the

top to the bottom of the dress.

On their heads, Zabidi residents wear a conical-shaped straw hat decorated at its edges.

Hadrami dress design and Shibami architecture

Traditional Hadrami building design consists of several mud floors separated with a mud line. Hadrami buildings actually border each other in a progressive row, which is similar to the

design of Hadrami dress. The dress’s neckline is square with bands embroidered around it and at the edges.

The entrance to a Shibami house opens directly to the stairs and leads to the upper floors, which corresponds to why the front of Hadrami dresses are short. Also, the lack of decoration on the front of the house, unless it’s in the wooden doors and windows, reflects why Hadrami dress is decorated only at the top and the bottom.

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Scary photos of cancer patients seek to discourage tobacco users

By: Bobby Ramakant
For Yemen Times

From June 1, 2007, tobacco products in India will contain pictorial warnings with photographs of tobacco-related cancer patients. Many countries like Canada, Australia, South Africa, Poland, Thailand and Singapore already have strong warning label regulations. Bobby Ramakant ponders the effectiveness of warning labels in preventing needless tobacco-related deaths.

Health warning labels, both on cigarette packaging and on all tobacco products' marketing materials, help create informed consent between tobacco companies and their customers and are an inexpensive and important first step in a national health education program.

On February 22, Yemen ratified the world's first corporate accountability and public health treaty, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). Article 11 of the convention stipulates that warnings should cover at least 50 percent of the packaging's principal display areas (i.e., both the front and back), but at a minimum, it must cover at least 30 percent of principal display areas.

It further requires the messages be rotated and encourages the use of pictures and pictograms, as well as the use of non-health messages like, "Quit smoking – Save money."

Speaking April 10 at the New Delhi summit of the Confederation of Indian Industries and the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, India's Union Health Minister, Dr. Ambumani Ramadoss, lamented, "We've tried everything, but it's been of no use, so we've now decided to put scary photos



of cancer patients on tobacco products in order to discourage consumers."

He further announced, "As a further warning, from June 1, all tobacco products will bear photographs of patients suffering from cancer caused by tobacco consumption."

Tobacco product packaging should be designed to maximize consumers' informed consent rather than maximizing the product's appeal. Strong and prominent health warning labels, limits on labels such as "slim" and "light," package inserts containing detailed health and ingredient information and standardized packaging formats are among the ways to accomplish this goal.

Unfortunately, such warning labels tend to be weak in all but a few countries. More than 40 developing countries don't require any warning labels at all. Of those that do, 73 percent require weakly worded warnings on the side of the package and many of those are in English rather than local languages.



Numerous studies have been done to determine the most important elements in creating effective labels. The findings include:

- To command attention, warning labels should occupy a minimum of 25 percent of the top front and back of the packaging. They should be in black and white or other sharply contrasting colors. Type style and size also must be specified in order to avoid industry efforts to undermine the warning's impact.
- Messages should be unequivocal, simple and stark. They should convey both the nature and magnitude of the risks, since studies show that smokers underestimate most risks associated with using

tobacco.

Pictorial warnings also may be appropriate, particularly in countries with low literacy rates or where research shows that smokers ignore standard warning labels.

Several nations have implemented strong health warning label requirements. Examples include:

- Canada's health minister recently proposed enlarging warning labels from 30 percent to 60 percent of the packaging face
- Thailand has added the message, "SMOKING CAUSES IMPOTENCE," to its list of required warnings
- Australia was the first nation to require "how to quit" information be printed on every package
- South Africa, Poland and Singapore also require strong warning labels

Tobacco companies use words like "light," "ultra light," "slim" and "super slim" in their brand names and in their marketing materials. Research suggests that these words are intended to make implicit health claims minimizing the product's harmfulness and may encourage those smokers who are motivated to quit to switch to a "light" brand. These words also appeal to smokers, primarily women, who believe they can use cigarettes to lose weight.

Pictorial warnings provide smokers helpful information about health effects. Most smokers want this information and certainly want their children to have this information too. The tobacco industry is continuing its decades-long strategy of trying to minimize the effectiveness of package warnings. The tobacco industry is no friend to smokers – and ironically, it's

true that "the tobacco industry kills its best customers."

Package warnings also are a good public health strategy because tobacco companies, not the government, pay the costs of such warnings. In order to attain public health gains in the long run, this shouldn't be viewed as an isolated initiative; rather, it must be supported by comprehensive health care, legislation and education programs.

Among its many measures, the FCTC treaty requires countries to impose restrictions on tobacco advertising, sponsorship and promotion; establish new packaging and labelling of tobacco products; establish clean indoor air controls; and strengthen legislation to clamp down on tobacco smuggling.

Advertising, sponsorship and promotion

Tobacco products are advertised through sports events, music events, films, fashion - in fact, any place where the tobacco industry can target potential new smokers (young people). The treaty obliges Party States to undertake a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, as far as their constitutions permit.

Packaging and labelling of tobacco products

As advertising restrictions are implemented, tobacco packaging plays an increasingly important role in encouraging tobacco consumption. The treaty obliges Party States to adopt and implement large, clear, visible, legible, and rotating health warnings and messages on tobacco products and its outside packaging, occupying at least 30% of the principal display areas. This is required within three years of entry

into force of the Convention.

Protection from exposure to tobacco smoke

Second-hand smoke is a real and significant threat to public health. Children are at particular risk - exposure to tobacco smoke in children can cause respiratory disease, middle ear disease, asthma attacks, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). The treaty obliges Party States to adopt and implement (in areas of existing national jurisdiction as determined by national law), or promote (at other jurisdictional levels), effective measures providing for protection from exposure to tobacco smoke in indoor workplaces, public transport, indoor public places and, as appropriate, other public places.

Illicit trade in tobacco products

Cigarettes are smuggled widely throughout the world. In addition to making international brands more affordable and accessible, illegal cigarettes evade restrictions and health regulations. The treaty obliges State Parties to adopt and implement effective measures to eliminate illicit trade, illicit manufacturing, and counterfeiting of tobacco products.

Effective implementation of FCTC is indeed a huge challenge countries are confronted with. There is a long way to go for effective comprehensive tobacco control to become a reality.

Bobby Ramakant is a health and development journalist, senior tobacco control advocate and member of Network for Accountability of Tobacco Transnational (NATT) and Asia representative for Global Youth Advocacy Training Network (GYAT). He can be contacted at: bobbyramakant@yahoo.com

Avian influenza national plan: Needs and challenges

By: Jamal Al-Najjar
jamalnajar@hotmail.com

In cooperation with USAID, the Ministry of Agriculture has put in place a national plan to deal with any potential outbreak of avian influenza (bird flu) in Yemen.

The plan requires more than \$50 million in order to strengthen disease surveillance and rapid response nationwide. However, both the government and those donors concerned about the issue still should exert persistent efforts so that the plan may be fruitful and fulfill its goals in order to prevent a possible outbreak of the flu, which threatens both birds and humans.

Although the government confirms that bird flu hasn't reached Yemen, several measures and precautions should be taken, particularly after the outbreak reached Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The current disease surveillance system, as well as the rapid response service, remains in poor condition, particularly in those governorates at risk, such as Taiz, Hodeidah, Aden, Hadramout and Hajjah. Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation Mansour Al-Houshabi maintains that his ministry is coordinating with the Ministry of Public Health and Population, Civil Service and other government sectors to prepare a joint plan to enhance Yemen's surveillance system and increase its capabilities to contain any bird flu outbreak.

Prepared in May 2006, the plan contains several objectives, topped by strengthening central, regional and community surveillance and investigation capabilities, in addition to providing required centers to ensure rapid response to an outbreak.

The plan also aims to assist in bridging gaps in implementation at the village level, as well as facilitate the involvement of local farming communities to help implement the national plan.



Main considerations of the national plan:

- Strengthening current grassroots capacities for early detection, reporting and responding to a possible bird flu outbreak.
- Local systems should feed into the existing national structure of disease surveillance and reporting, rather than build another monitoring and detection system.
- Providing public information management and launching awareness campaigns to support the production and dissemination of technical documents and farmer teaching materials.
- Providing a program to help farmers properly cope with any outbreak.

The plan's policy statements to be followed:

- Banning backyard poultry in coastal areas.
- Banning backyard poultry around major commercial poultry farms.
- Stamping out is the first line of

action against an outbreak.

- Stamping out should be a multi-agency emergency task.
- Following an immunization system only if stamping out has failed to contain the outbreak.
- Providing farmers incentives and compensation.
- Strengthening central surveillance and diagnostic capability, as well as establishing bird flu surveillance.
- Establishing regional avian influenza laboratories.
- Strengthening regulatory enforcement according to Livestock Law No. 17.
- Completing and prioritizing staff training needs.
- Directing action and measures to priority governorates regarding risk and poultry industry loss.
- Following and establishing criteria for any potential declaration of stamping out failure.
- Raising public awareness and strengthening coordination between involved authorities.

- Providing prophylaxis to field staff.

Weak points representing obstacles to the plan are:

- Incomplete surveillance and diagnostic capacities.
- Lack of funds and delayed release of support.
- Shortage of trained staff in concerned sectors and lack of transport means.
- Lack of financial incentives needed for veterinary professionals and other cooperative individuals.
- No specific compensation system exists for those experiencing losses due to outbreak prevention measures.
- More than 95 percent of farms suffer from bio-security.
- Ambulant live markets exist, which makes it difficult to control outbreak.
- Quarantine ports aren't fully functional and public awareness remains low.
- Lack of a reporting system between the private sector and the government.

Additionally, the surveillance process still requires a massive effort in order to enable it fulfill the goals of the national plan. Eleven Yemeni governorates containing 220 districts are considered at risk; therefore, a surveillance center should be provided for every district.

One center is estimated at \$165,950 for preparation and equipment, as well as training 440 vets and technicians to be deployed in the districts. Additionally, the plan aims to prepare surveillance centers at the governorate level at a cost of \$616,500 per center and provide 18 vets and technicians in the 11 targeted governorates.

Concerning the delay in financial support, Dr. Ghalib Fadhl Al-Eryani, director general of animal resources at the Ministry of Agriculture, revealed that the ministry will present the national plan to the Yemeni Cabinet, which in turn will submit it to those donors concerned about this issue in order to receive the required support.

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Al-jamaeh: A social project to raise collective funds

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When citizens' income decreases, they must consider some business or project to increase it. In Yemen, raising money is called al-jamaeh or al-habakah, which is a special project wherein a group of individuals amass money for someone. It is a phenomenon that has appeared as a result of poor economic conditions.

Basically, al-jamaeh is a group of individuals who agree to set aside a portion of their income monthly for a specified time period in order to fund a specific project for a group or individual. It is a project in itself. Friends, relatives, neighbors and company employees are examples of groups doing al-jamaeh, with each one deciding to do it for a specific project he or she plans to achieve.

Many people don't have enough money to do a simple project or can't obtain a bank loan, so they do al-jamaeh because it's easy to amass the needed funds on time and they can submit the money regularly in small portions to a chief manager.

Al-jamaeh is like a union. It has a chief manager who is a member of the group and other members to help the chief manager. They have regular meetings. At the first meeting, they decide the number of participants, they agree on how much they'll pay or collect and list the participants' names.

They order the names according to a jointly signed agreement. Most participants do al-jamaeh in order to accumulate money in a short time, so everyone wants to be the first to get it; however, they must follow the rules of listing the names at the outset of the project.

Names are listed according to certain conditions; for example, they sometimes list them according to the most urgent reason or the one needing the money in the shortest time. Someone has arranged his marriage and needs the money for the wedding festivities, someone else has built a house and needs the money to complete it, while another wants to travel to study at a specific time and so he'll register his name at the top of the list. Most participants are in urgent situations and most need the money first, so the chief manager lists the names according to the participant's monetary share.

Rules for al-jamaeh

Every project requires principles to make it successful; thus, along with the chief manager, al-jamaeh participants establish rules for their group, according to participants' situations and incomes, followed by signing an agreement, especially if the money shares are high. Al-jamaeh sometimes



reaches millions of riyals, so in this case, participants prefer to sign the agreement at a police station or talk to their zone chief about collecting all of their money.

Having a regular income is the main requirement to participate in such a project. Everyone must submit funds on time; otherwise, the participant will be punished according to the signed agreement.

In large al-jamaeh projects with high amounts of money, participants provide bail to the chief manager to insure that no one will escape after he or she receives his share of the money.

Problems during al-jamaeh

After participants sign onto al-jamaeh, they often start talking about it everywhere they meet, especially women participants, always thinking about what they'll do when they receive the money. Because they sometimes bother others who aren't involved in their group, they hold their own gathering to talk about al-

jamaeh, often neglecting the duties of their home, children and husband.

The chief manager faces many problems while holding al-jamaeh

responsibilities. Many times, one participant wants to break the rules that all participants must follow. Some request the money before his or her turn, especially if it's an urgent matter. This might bother the other participants, who'll be angry or might refuse to accept this. In this case, the chief must be wise enough to solve such problems, especially if many of the participants have urgent matters.

To solve this problem, al-jamaeh participants sometimes agree in writing not to change the rules, no matter what happens to a participant. The chief manager carries the responsibility for this by signing minutes at the police station to solve the problem.

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