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Thursday, 27 March, 2008 • Issue No. 1141 • Founded in 1991 by Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf • www.yementimes.com Price 40 Yemeni Riyals

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## Post his failure to release Khawlan hostages, Parliament demands Interior Minister resign

By: Almgidaj Mojalli

SANA'A, March 26 — Yemen's Minister of Interior Rashad Al-Alimi announced on Monday in a parliamentary session that his ministry has failed to secure the release of two teens and five engineers kidnapped and held in Bani Dhabian in Sana'a governorate's Khawlan district, located 50 kilometers east of Sana'a, for nine months.

Al-Alimi attributed the failure to the spread of arms, tribal fanaticism and underdevelopment, accusing some Yemeni universities and opposition parties of spreading a culture of arms-bearing. The minister's confession and subsequent accusations aroused wide resentment among members of Parliament, who thought Al-Alimi was attempting to justify the ministry's failure to control security problems.

MP Mansour Al-Zindani requested Al-Alimi's resignation after he announced this failure. According to sources who attended the meeting, Al-Zindani also spoke about the ministry's inability to carry out President Ali Abdullah Saleh's orders to release the two Al-Kumaim teens and the five



Jihana arms market in Khawlan, Sana'a governorate where Bani Dhabian is located. Owning arms is part of Yemen's culture. There are around 60 million small arms nationwide, which makes abduction easy in the country.



A mountain road leading to Dhafar village in Ibb governorate. Less than half of Yemen is inhabited and over 77 percent of the population lives in rural areas where there is hardly any infrastructure and the difficult terrains prevent adequate state control.

engineers. Addressing Al-Alimi, Al-Zindani said, "Countries prepare plans to protect their citizens who are kidnapped overseas, while you haven't prepared plans for [your own] zones to protect your people."

The MPs accused the Interior Ministry of adopting the same kidnapping policy they condemned when it illegally arrested members of Bani Dhabian tribe in an attempt to force the release of the seven hostages.

According to MP Shawqi Al-Qadi of the Islah Party, Al-Alimi confessed that the government did in fact count-

er the original kidnapping by "kidnapping people from the same district to oblige the kidnapper to release his hostages."

Fellow Islah Party member MP Sakher Al-Wajih indicated that the Yemeni government doesn't respond to complaints lodged legally and peacefully, only to those actions using force, which consequently encourages people to carry weapons.

Al-Qadi says the Yemeni Parliament will have a difficult time actually dismissing Al-Alimi because the ruling General People's Congress Party, which holds a majority in Parliament, won't force his resignation.

Last Sunday, Bani Dhabian's Al-Taher clan kidnapped another child, although this incident appears to be conducted by a different kidnapper possibly unrelated to the previous incidents. There are currently no further details about Sunday's kidnapping.

"[This latest kidnapping] defies the Ministry of Interior and the entire Yemeni government, particularly because it happened a day before Parliament's session," Al-Qadi noted. Last week, the kidnapper of two

teens and five engineers threatened to kill the hostages if the Interior Ministry employs military force to secure their release. "We place all of the responsibility on the ministry for anything that happens to them," principal captor Abdurabu Alttam said in a telephone conversation with the Yemen Times.

Alttam has demanded a YR 150 million ransom, as well as his YR 70 million share in a disputed plot of land. According to him, the Yemeni government is liable for its failure to help him resolve a dispute with three business partners and therefore, it should help pay the ransom to release the hostages.

The two teenage hostages, 15-year-old Abdullah Ali Saleh Al-Kumaim and 17-year-old Mohammed Yahya Nasser Al-Kumaim, were kidnapped in Sana'a last June while the five engineers, who were surveying a road project in Bani Dhabian, were kidnapped on January 8 of this year.

The Ministry of the Interior did not specify the ages of the 134 kidnapped individuals listed in its 2006 records. Civil society groups such as HOOD, the Democratic School and the Yemeni

Democratic Observatory Forum registered 26 child kidnapping cases in 2006 and 2007: 13 in the Capital

Secretariat, five in Taiz, four in Sana'a governorate, one in Hajjah, one in Marib, one in Abyan and one in Ibb.

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## In brief

## SANA'A

**Lecture on diplomacy in a era of globalisation**

Kuwaiti ambassador Salim Ghassab Al-Zamanan to Yemen will be giving a lecture on diplomacy and globalisation at the Yemeni Center for Strategic Studies coming Monday March 31. The lecture will be in Arabic and is open to public.

**French artiste performs in Sana'a**  
Bridget Carl, a French artiste performed at the French Cultural Center on the occasion of the world day for theatre. She had been to Yemen twenty years ago and has written a play on her journey in Yemen.

**Survey on the prevalence of smoking among youth**

Students in 25 schools from Sana'a governorate were the target of a survey on the spread of smoking among Yemeni youth. The survey was carried by the Ministry of Public Health and Population through its anti smoking program. The survey takes place during one week where students aged between 13 and 15 years old are surveyed on their smoking habits including their use of snuff, water pipes ...etc

## SOCOTRA

**New discovery of a plant on the verge of extinction**

Over six rare plants of the cat family were found on Socatra bay at 1600 meters above sea level. The same group was also found half a kilo away from the first discovery only to confirm that the island is a home to many of the rare plants on the verge of extinction.

## DHAMAR

**20 medical establishments controlled**

The drugs and medical supply in Dhamar governorate reported that twenty medical establishments carried out violations in terms of legal standards and quality control measurements. Six of those have been closed down while the rest are being monitored after they were given a probation time to fulfil the standard requirements before operating.

## MAHARA

**3 Egyptian ships violate marine law**  
Three fishing ships of Egyptian nationality have been referred to the general attorney for violating the fishing law. The ships were caught by the marine monitoring and control office in Qishin district of Al-Mahara governorate who reported the illegal activities of the ships based on the locals complaints.

## IBB

**University students invent sound system in water**

Students at IBB University, college of electronic engineering and physics created together a laboratory system which allow sound penetration of water through using laser radiation. The invention can be used for communication underwater and will be presented in the cultural scientific week the university will be organizing in May.

**Ibb scouts celebrate Arab Brotherhood Day**

Over 300 scouts participated in a march on Monday in celebration of the Arab Brotherhood Day marked on March 22 every year. The march walked around the city streets singing national and Arab patriotic anthems and songs and ended the march by a ceremony and photo taking session.

## HODIEDAH

**Job seekers registration commences**  
The civil services and insurances office in Hodiedah started the registration process of job seekers for year 2008. Last year 13 thousand young men and women from Hodiedah applied registered with the office in hope of being allotted government employment. The office expects to receive 16 thousand applications this year. The names of those who made it through will be announced in April based on competition and qualifications. The lists will be published in the newspapers as well as in the civil services ministry's site www.mocsi7.com

## ADEN

**HIV/AIDS free consultation and testing unit opened**

With support from UNICEF, a health unit for providing consultation and voluntarily testing of HIV/AIDS has been inaugurated at Shiekh Othman district in Aden governorate. Two more similar units will be opened in Dar Sa'ad and Khour Maksra districts on the governorate.

## New initiative to achieve Millennium Goal of primary education for all

SANA'A, March 26 — Now more than ever, Yemen is coming closer to achieving the second Millennium Development Goal regarding primary education.

There's a considerable gender gap in primary education and national illiteracy rates according to the government, which indicates that one out of every two Yemeni females is illiterate.

However, a network of 12 Girls Education Coordination Councils was established in an attempt to play a coordinating and influencing role in increasing the enrollment rate for girls and their retention.

Council members include deputy governors, general directors of the relevant ministries and department directors, as well as civil society representatives.

Education Minister Abdulsalam Al-Jawfi chaired the councils' first workshop wherein 70 participants from Yemen's 12 governorates assembled for two days to share success stories, identify challenges and obstacles and exchange organizational and technical suggestions.

"The councils will create a cooperation mechanism between governmental institutions, private sector and civil society organizations," Al-Jawfi said at the inauguration.

He stressed that there is only one solution to Yemen's major problems, as embodied in its high population growth rate, water scarcity and health problems, and that is to ensure education for women thereby creating an effective element within families.

The problem of girls' education not only regards enrollment, but equally important is their retention in school, as there's a particularly high dropout rate due to cultural reasons such as early marriage or economic reasons due to poverty.



PHOTO BY HAMED THABET  
**Around half of Yemeni girls in the age of primary education are out of schools. Crowded classrooms, lack of female teachers and difficult access to schools are of the main reasons behind this high percentage.**

According to the 2005 Arab Human Development Report, females account for just 52.8 percent of the number of males enrolled in primary education, and for secondary education, the rate is only 35.3 percent of enrolled males — making Yemen's female enrollment rates among the lowest in the Arab world.

Over the past few years, the Yemeni government has begun several initiatives to decrease the primary education gender gap between boys and girls, including abolishing school fees for girls, increasing the number of female teachers and having religious leaders encourage Yemeni families to educate their daughters.

Deputy education minister and director of the girls' education sector, Fawzia Noman, notes that educating girls is a requirement for real democracy. "In order to experience true democ-

racy, women should be educated, which will result in them selecting their choice for appropriate members of Parliament, rather than doing so according to their husband's wishes," she said at the workshop, adding, "It also will result in political parties developing more sophisticated programs."

International organizations also have contributed to increasing girls' education through anti-early marriage campaigns and school feeding programs.

"Education is the responsibility of society as a whole, not just the Ministry of Education or the government. Other actors have an important role to play as well and working together is essential to achieving constructive change," commented UNICEF MENA Regional Director Sigrid Kaag, who attended the inauguration of the councils' workshop.

## Religious leaders lobby to stop child labor

By: Hamed Thabet

SANA'A, March 26 — The Ministry of Religious Endowments and Ministry of Social Affairs & Labor, in coordination with certain imams (Islamic religious leaders), have laid out a practical plan to stop child labor in rural areas of different governorates.

"The imams will give lectures and advise families and employers to stop making children work in risky and banned jobs," said Mona Salem, director of the Combating Child Labor Unit in the Ministry of Social Affairs & Labor.

Twenty imams from different governorates are being trained this week for three days on how to advocate for children's rights. The training will include teaching the international convention on child rights, and informing the imams of the dangerous jobs Yemeni children are performing.

According to Salem, most of the imams used to talk about childhood and family issues, but only in a general sense. She added that after being trained, they should talk specifically about child labor in order to preserve children's lives. Consequently, the imams will train and lead other imams to do the same in their mosques, especially during Friday sermons.

The project hopes to have a strong impact on the rural communities where there are hardly any formal communication channels.

Last month, 21 advocates were trained by the child labor unit to work as inspectors in 10 governorates around the republic on legal issues regarding child labor. These inspectors will undergo another training session in April on advocacy and community mobilization in order to be equipped to convince families and employers to provide better living environments for children.

Field work will start in May, where-by the inspectors will visit the various governorates to ensure safe working environments for children, and to ensure imams to start lobbying for child rights in the mosques and social sessions.

**Most hazardous risks for child laborers**

In 1999, Yemen signed an international labor convention which includes article 182 on the worst forms of child labor, some of which include:

(a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory



PHOTO BY HAMED THABET  
**Some children in Yemen, especially in rural areas are subjected to risky situation because they work as bodyguards.**

recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.

(b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances.

(c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties.

(d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

In 2002, the Labor Ministry approved article 45 of the labor code, which grants many rights for child laborers under the age of 14. According to the article, anyone under 14 is not permitted to work under any circumstances. Youths over 14 cannot work more than six hours per day and are banned from working at night. They also receive the same rights as adult workers, like safe working environments and leave benefits. In 2004, the Ministry of Social Affairs & Labor defined a list of 72 hazardous jobs to be banned for children in Yemen. However, this promising activity remains ineffective due to a lack of the list's implementation.

"We are trying our best to approach the responsible authorities to activate this article. In order to find an appropri-

ate solution, the Ministry of Labor should coordinate with other relevant bodies to achieve this goal," said Salem.

Sexual harassment, drowning at sea and exposure to pesticides are the main three risks facing Yemeni child laborers, said an expert from the Yemeni Ministry of Social Affairs & Labor. Children who work in motels are subjected to sexual harassment by visitors, while those working in the sea with fishermen are at risk of drowning. Over 90 percent of child labor is in the agriculture sector, where they are subjected to dangerous chemicals and toxic pesticides.

According to a Yemen Poverty Monitoring Survey conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1999, around 56 percent of children who spray such agricultural chemical poisons are between the ages of eight and 10, while 90 percent of children from these rural regions chew qat polluted by these herbicides. The same study shows an estimated 700,000 Yemeni children between the ages of six and 14 work.

Poverty is one of the main reasons behind this phenomenon in Yemen., "whenever poverty in Yemen decreases, children will stop working," said Salem. "But until that time, we will try to stop children from working in dangerous jobs and risky environments."

## Tractor donation to encourage wheat production

SANA'A, March 25 — The Japanese government donated more than 200 tractors to various Yemeni agricultural associations last Saturday in a ceremony attended by President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Yemen is currently trying to increase wheat production and decrease imports after the cost rose 220 percent on the international market. Yemen imports one million tons of American and Australian wheat annually.

"Nowadays, people are concerned about price hikes and the difficulty of making a livelihood because we depend on foreign imports, especially grains," said Saleh. "For this reason, we call on farmers to reclaim more agricultural lands."

The cooperative agriculture associations received the 224 Kubota tractors at the ceremony, where Saleh announced that Yemen will buy 500 tractors from Czech Republic for the same purpose, funded partially by the Ministry of Agriculture and partially by the Financial Ministry.

Saleh called on the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation to conduct studies with the help of expert technicians to test the soil and its eligibility for wheat-growing, especially in Al-Hodeidah and Abyan provinces.

He clarified that expansion in field of agricultural products, especially wheat, would greatly reduce Yemen's financial importing burden. Yemen mainly imports wheat from Canada, Australia and the United States, but Yemen's own wheat production has risen gradually from 130,000 tons to 217,000 tons.

"When we decided to ban fruit importing in 1984, we used to import US \$105 million worth of citrus fruits and bananas. Now we export a surplus of fruits," said the president. "If we cannot plant wheat in Tihama, Abyan and Lahj and the production is promising, why don't we plant corn and millet since the latter can replace wheat, especially in coastal areas."

Mansoor Al-Hawshabi, the Minister of Agriculture, stated that the cereal production has risen from 730,000 tons in 2006 to 99,000 tons last year, an increase of 29 percent.

Yemen suffers from a crisis that stems from water scarcity and mismanagement. It also faces a difficulty in motivating farmers to grow cereal instead of qat, a more lucrative crop, but one that consumes 90 percent of underground water storage.

Because of this, the president urged the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and the related government bodies to carry out media campaigns to educate civilians about the importance of expanding agricultural lands and using them for production of essential crops like cereals. He also encouraged Yemen to decrease its dependence on imported products and to instead achieve food security on its own.

There are a number of projects, including irrigation networks, being planned that will get underway as funds permits, according to Al-Hawshabi. Yemen implemented more than 21 water projects, such as dams, barriers and tanks, and opened eight facilities during 2007 and the first quarter of this year.

## Yemen arrests 15 Bangladeshis 3,000 Bangladeshis in Yemen victims of illegal human trafficking

SANA'A, March 26 — A group of 15 Bangladeshis have been imprisoned by the Department of Immigration and arrested on Tuesday. The arrests have brought to light the plight of approximately 3,000 Bangladeshi nationals who were illegally trafficked into Yemen and work in conditions close to indentured servitude.

The departmental source did not want to give more details about the Bangladeshis' custody conditions, because he was directed not to speak to the media.

The Yemen Times received an appeal letter entitled "Bangladeshi nationals are suffering," on Sunday that referred to the 15 arrested Bangladeshis.

The letter said that some Bangladeshi "brokers" are bringing workers from Bangladesh, providing them with tourist visas to enter Yemen and promising them high salaries of up to US \$500 per month, with the support of Yemeni sponsors.

"After bringing these potential workers to Yemen, 'brokers' engage them in inferior jobs illegally, which don't match what they were offered," said the letter. "Most of the time they don't provide work [at all]." The letter revealed the names of four major Bangladeshi brokers, including Kabir Hussein, Anamul Hoque, Harunur Rashid and A. Rahman.

According to a reliable Bangladeshi source who asked to remain anonymous, "the 'brokers' take US \$4,000 for each Bangladeshi worker and give them hope of good jobs and salaries," he said.

"However, they mostly find themselves working as cleaners at restaurants and companies or construction workers."

The source said that there are currently at least 3,000 illegal Bangladeshi workers in Yemen who end up taking menial jobs because they have no other choice. They receive between US \$100-130 per month, or approximately three dollars per day.

According to Yemeni labor laws, foreigners are not allowed to work in Yemen without proper labor permits, which must be issued by the government. Frequently in cases like these, the foreigners are arrested and deported.

"For this reason, so many poor Bangladeshi innocent people are suffering in Yemen," said the Bangladeshi source. "Some of them are unemployed and some are working illegally with very low earnings, which aren't sufficient for their livelihood, as they don't have any other choice."

The same source added some of these illegally trafficked Bangladeshi nationals escape to neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia through dangerous and often illegal ways, hiring smugglers to help them cross the Yemen-Saudi border.

"The immigration of Bangladeshi workers started increasing from September 2007 onwards," said the source. "Every week, 20 to 30 Bangladeshi workers come into the country."

The Yemen Times contacted the Department of Immigration, but representatives from the department refused to comment on the issue.

## Tunisian singer visits Yemen

SANA'A, March 26 — Tunisian singer Amel Mathlouthi visited Yemen at the behest of the French Cultural Institute last week to hold a workshop with Yemeni singers and perform a concert with a group of renowned Yemeni musicians.

Mathlouthi, a 26 year-old lyrical singer and guitarist who lives in both Tunis and Paris, and her band played original songs she penned on themes such as revolution, dreams and hope. Mathlouthi sang in both French and Arabic at the concert, and was cheered on wildly by the crowd of approximately 650 people. She was joined onstage by Yemeni performers Taha Ennouri, who played percussion, Abdellatif Yacoub and Sharaf Al-Qaedi on the oud (lute) and female singer Nashwa, who comes from Taiz.

"I am so happy to perform a concert in Yemen and I dedicate my songs to all Arab women, especially those who can-



not express their dreams," said Mathlouthi. "I am happy to participate in this cultural exchange."

The concert, which was held at the Yemeni Cultural Center in Sana'a, was hosted by the French Cultural Center in honor of International Women's Day and the International Week of the French-speaking community.



## WHAT IT MEANS...

## Cross-Ideological Coalitions in Yemen

By: Khaled Fattah

Cross-ideological inter-party coalitions are one of the most striking features of party pluralism in united Yemen. In addition to challenging the common assumption that opposition parties' ideology is a linear continuum between religious and secular, left and right, or liberal and conservative, these coalitions have acted as a catalyst for replacing the attitude of "my way or the highway" with an attitude of cooperation based on mutual interests and acceptance of differences.

In less than a decade, three of such coalitions blocs have surfaced on the political landscape of unified Yemen. The first was the Supreme Coordination Council for Opposition Parties (SCCOP), which was composed of the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), the Nasserite Unionist Popular, Al-Haq, the Socialist Arab Ba'ath, the Constitutional Freedom and the Popular Forces parties. The SCCOP was founded on the basis of the so-called Waseeqat al-A'had wa al-Itfaq (Document of Promise and Agreement), which highlighted Yemen's commitment to

peaceful and democratic means of political opposition, and bound the coalition parties together with their common objectives stipulated in the election programs.

The second coalition, the government-sponsored National Council for Opposition (NCO), emerged in 1997, was made up of eight small parties, seven of them having no representation in the parliament. With the government resorting to a tactic of cloning opposition parties in order to divide them and undermine their mobilization, the number of parties in the NCO would later grow to include many of those mostly one-person-parties that usually have names similar to those of actual opposition parties. In fact, the NCO itself was formed by the government as a reaction to the founding of SCCOP. While the number of parties within the NCO tends to fluctuate as some of its parties eventually merge with the ruling party, they all support president Saleh's initiatives and policies and act strictly as a loyal opposition.

The third, and, indeed, the most influential coalition, is the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP). This cross-ideological bloc of Islamists, Socialists and Nasserites has altered the orthodox regime-opposition

relations not only in Yemen but also in the entire region.

The performance of the JMP during the last few years, particularly during the presidential elections of 2006, has led observers of the region to identify it as a strong national bloc that is forging a formidable unified opposition. But what holds Islamists and Leftists together in a conservative tribal country like Yemen? How can such strange bedfellows maintain their bond, despite the Islamist-Socialist history of enmity and the concerted effort of the ruling party to break such a relation? Author Mohamed Qahtan, head of the Political Office of the Islah Party, insightfully answered this question in an earlier interview. "Under the banner of the JMP, we in the opposition have agreed to share together the weight of national concerns, coordinate our moves and subordinate ideological agendas to what we all have in common," said Qahtan. "In the JMP, we all agree, for instance, that money and absolute authority should not be allowed to sleep together in the same bed without being monitored."

In my view, however, no complete answer can be constructed without looking into local, regional, and international

political dynamics. At the local level, cross-ideological bridge-building efforts are tactics for uniting Islamist and leftist ranks in the face of repressive laws, rampant corruption, manipulated election results, and regimes war on legitimate political opposition.

In the light of this, the emerging Islamist-Socialist-Nasserite alliance in Yemen under the umbrella of the JMP should be examined through the prism of new, broader political context of the ongoing battle of opposition parties and activists in the Arab Middle East over applying constitutional and legal rights of citizenship, lifting restrictions on democratic expressions, broadening the base of political participation in the decision-making process, and above all, applying the principals of social justice. The rise of the JMP shows how strategic alliances in the corner of Arabia are becoming more important than ideology in politics. It is also a healthy sign of the increasing flexible pragmatism within the Yemeni secular and religious-based political opposition. For the partners in the JMP to continue their mission of exercising pressure for political, economic and social reforms, they must maintain

their sense of solidarity and deliver what many Yemenis are expecting from them. Every success which the JMP achieves is a step forward in the road to a civilized and peaceful solution to the acute political and economic crisis in Yemen.

At the regional level, what bridges the ideological gap between Islamists and the Left are the U.S. military interventions, Washington's double standard reflected in its calls for democracy while supporting repressive regimes, the continued denial of Palestinian human rights, and Israel's politics of occupation, humiliation and aggression.

At the international level, the Islamists and the Left do share a number of similar views, such as the idea that globalization is a guise for U.S. political, economic and cultural hegemony and repression. That the mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, invited Sheikh Yusef Al-Qaradawi to visit his city and Iran's President Ahmadinejad's warm relations with the rising Leftist governments in South America exemplify this new form of international anti-imperialism movement.

Khaled Fattah is a PhD Candidate at University of St. Andrews, UK

What it means is an analytical feature of Yemen Times, in which Yemeni topics are discussed and analyzed by Yemeni and international experts. Contributions and comments are welcomed, they could be sent to yteditor@gmail.com.

## Their News

## Urgent need for policy makers to better adapt to changing labour markets



A worldwide survey launched today by the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) reveals the urgent need for policy makers to adapt more effectively to the changing needs of global labour markets.

The IOE's "Trends in the Workplace 2008" provides comparative data between countries and regions on current labour market issues and trends from an employers' perspective. With this annual publication, the IOE aims to regularly inform policy makers on key labour issues and trends, which are likely to impact the world economy. This year the survey indicates an urgent need for national policy makers to adapt in a more effective and timely manner to changes in the global labour markets. Some of the more prominent factors impacting the labour markets include the following:

- More women and migrants are working than ever before;
- There is a growing demand from workers for more flexible working arrangements;
- Employers are anticipating major labour market implications as a result of demographic changes;
- Faster growing economies are not turning out enough skilled school-leavers and graduates – employers are not satisfied with the skills of new labour market entrants;
- Enterprises across all regions indicate a shortage in the types of skill that really fit their needs;
- 'Doing' business (i.e. carrying out standard business activities) still remains a challenge in far too many economies; and
- A vast majority of governments are still not making cost/impact analyses of their labour and social legislation.

Launching the survey, Antonio Penalosa, IOE Secretary-General, noted that "if countries hope to benefit from new markets or become destinations of choice for investors, then serious efforts will be required to get the balance right on labour legislation; the right skills flowing into the labour market; an increased

focus on management performance; and a culture and environment conducive to business start-up and development".

## Arab civil society meets to advance international justice strategies in region



The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) will hold its second Regional Strategic Meeting for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) from 29-31st March 2008 at the Flamenco Hotel in Cairo, Egypt. Participants will include civil society members and national coalition leaders from eleven Arab countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

A press conference with CICC and Egyptian ICC campaigners will be held on Monday, 31st March at 1:00 p.m. in the Picasso room at the Flamenco Hotel in Zamalek, Cairo.

Expected key outcomes of the meetings with Arab civil society and government officials are as follows:

- A statement by Arab civil society in support of increased regional ratification of the Rome Statute, and a call for greater Arab cooperation with the Court.
- An appeal to the Arab League to adopt a common position in support of the ICC given the new Arab Charter for Human Rights, which was announced by the League of Arab States on Saturday, 15th March 2008.
- Two-year action plans for civil society that includes pro-ICC outreach strategies for national and regional media, jurists, NGOs, academia and government officials.

Specific to Egypt's position on the ICC, the Coalition will hold a closed NGO roundtable on March 30th that will focus on the campaign for Egyptian ratification of the Rome Statute.

## Ikhwan Thabit train on marketing and distribution strategies

On March 17 Ikhwan Thabit Group (ITG) organized a workshop on marketing and distribution strategies

with collaboration with the International Finance Institution (IFI) at the World Bank represented by Business Edge.

A representative from the ITG said in the opening speech, "This workshop is the beginning of cooperation between the ITG and the IFI which we hope to continue to encompass different aspects targeting building capacities of the group in order to provide the best services to the consumer." He added that, "Our group is looking forward to organizing similar events to others traders who did not have the chance to attend this time. We are always delighted to meet our clients and listen to their views that assist in developing our business and improving our services. We also hope that this meeting will be beneficial to everyone."

Wael Makki, Business Edge Project Analyst said, "The workshop is part of the IFI's strategy to improve the private sector in general and the small and micro enterprises in particular. This workshop is conducted with cooperation with the ITG to develop the capacities of the ITG products' distributors who are considered part of the small and micro enterprises in Yemen. We recognize the importance of training this sector that lays in building entrepreneurs' capacities, increase their income and expand their services."

On the other hand, the trainer Adnan Mohammad Al-Sada stated that Business Edge provides scientific solutions that can help traders in reality-based fields and activities.

Attendees included traders, agents and distributors of the ITG's products as well as representatives of some companies.

## UNFPA Welcomes the Islamic Conference (OIC) Commitment to Poverty Eradication, and Urges the Focus on Women and Young People



UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, welcomes the focus on peace and economic development at the 11th Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). "We welcome the focus on poverty eradication," said

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UNFPA Executive Director.

"Improving the health and education of women and young people will reduce poverty by increasing productivity and political, social and economic empowerment," said Dr. Thoraya Obaid.

"Women have an important role to play," she stressed, "because they care deeply about their families, communities and nations and can make a positive contribution to peace, development and social cohesion." "The OIC is a political organization that has the moral authority to bring about a dialogue on the position of women in Muslim countries in the 21st century," said Dr. Obaid.

"UNFPA is eager to work with the OIC to improve the education, health and participation of women and youth and achieve the Millennium Development Goals," she said. "We welcome the proposal by President Wade of Senegal to devote funds for poverty eradication and development to improve maternal and child health." Thoraya Ahmed Obaid was appointed head of UNFPA, effective 1 January 2001, with the rank of Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations. She is the first Saudi Arabian to head a United Nations agency.

## US Embassy delivers assessment of Yemen's financial systems to Yemeni government



The U.S. Embassy delivered an evaluation of Yemen's capacity to combat money laundering and terrorist financing to Ahmed Ghaleb, Chair of the Yemen Government's National Anti-Money Laundering Committee and Chair of the Tax Authority, on March 24, 2008 as part of its ongoing support for transparency and anti-corruption efforts in Yemen.

The assessment identified several areas of focus for joint US-Yemeni initiatives and programming, including the drafting of a new counter-terrorist financing law and expanded training for examiners from Yemen's Central Bank.

The report was drafted by a US

government-sponsored Financial Systems Assessment Team made up of financial experts from a number of US government agencies. The team visited Yemen in March 2007 and conducted visits to a number of government and private sector entities, including the Central Bank, the Anti-Money Laundering Information Unit, the National Anti-Money Laundering Information Unit, the Political Security Organization, the Ministry of Interior, the Attorney General's Office, the Customs Authority, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the Tax Authority, the Foreign Affairs and Constitutional Committees of the Yemen Parliament, the Yemen Parliamentarians Against Corruption (YemenPAC) and the Yemen Bankers Association.

The U.S. Embassy stands ready to assist the ROYG in its Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing efforts.

## Accountant Needed

An experienced accountant is needed for an immediate employment in Sana'a. Interested applicants are requested to send their resumes at fax number 448442.

## QATAR AIRWAYS CELEBRATE THE LAUNCH OF GUANGZHOU



Qatar Airways held a party on March 19, at Sheraton Hotel (Chinese Restaurant) to celebrate the launch of flights to the southern industrial city of Goungzhou in China starting from March 31.

The party was well attended by diplomatic, business community along with travel agents.

The Program started with a welcome speech by Mr. Wael Al Khaldi – Area Manager – Yemen followed by a brief presentation about the new destination in China.

Beginning March 31, Qatar Airways will become the first airline from the Gulf to serve Guangzhou. It will operate four flights a week non stop using an Airbus A330 aircraft in a two-class configuration of up to 24 seats in Business class and a maximum 248 in

Economy.

Qatar Airways' China operation currently includes daily flights to Hong Kong, four weekly services to Beijing and five services a week to Shanghai.

The airline currently operates a modern fleet of 62 Airbus and Boeing aircraft to 81 destinations across Europe, Middle East, Africa, Indian Subcontinent, Far East and North America.

Qatar Airways is one of only six airlines in the world with a five star ranking for service and excellence awarded by Skytrax, the independent aviation industry monitoring agency. Skytrax also named Qatar Airways' cabin crew as Best in the Middle East for the fifth year running in 2007 following a survey of more than 15 million passengers worldwide.



# VACANCIES

## Accountant (2 positions)

The Project Administration Unit (PAU) is responsible for administering program funds and ensures fiduciary responsibilities to facilitate and support the implementation of Basic Education Development Project (BEDP) and other subsequent projects. Under the directions of the Chief Accounts:

**The first accountant** will be responsible for the entire daily routine accounting of the Project in term of Education grants in Secondary Education and CCT, WSI and Female Teacher Incentive in Basic Education Development Project, and will work closely with all sectors and departments of MOE, Governorates Offices and Districts Offices of MOE involved in the Project.

### The first accountant would:

- Prepare the withdrawal applications, claims, and related governmental letters.
- Record transactions in the computerized accounting system of the financial activities of the project
- Make the necessary replenishment to the local accounts for all cash transfers activities and maintain the necessary control registers.
- Make sure that all bank vouchers, withdrawal applications, claims, correspondence are properly filed and easily accessible once required.
- Assessment of FMs capacities at the governorates level in term of the related activities.
- Clear all the cash transfers advances in regular basis.
- Assist Finance Officer in maintaining overall integrity of financial statements and accounting records.
- Assist Chief Accounts & Finance Officer in developing, proposing, implementing & supporting changes or improvements to financial policies & procedures for all the cash transfers activities.
- Any other tasks as required by the project Chief Accounts and Financial Officer.

**The second accountant** will be responsible for all Civil Works activities in PAU operations including BEDP, FTI and any subsequent operations and will work closely with all sectors and departments of MOE, Governorates Offices and Districts Offices of MOE and any other implementation agencies involved in the Project.

### The second accountant would:

- Check the withdrawal applications, claims, reports that provided by the implementation agencies.
- Record transactions in the computerized accounting system of the Civil Work activities of the project
- Prepare the necessary reports and follow ups to have the funds available for the implementation agencies in the appropriate time and maintain the necessary control registers.
- Make sure that all bank vouchers, withdrawal applications, claims, correspondence are properly filed and easily accessible once required.
- Assist Chief Accounts & Finance Officer in maintaining overall integrity of financial statements and accounting records.
- Assist Chief Accounts & Finance Officer in developing, proposing, implementing & supporting changes or improvements to financial policies & procedures for all the Civil Work activities.
- Any other tasks as required by the project Chief Accounts and Financial Officer.

### Qualifications:

- A minimum of Bachelor's degree in Accounting or Business Administration with major in accounting and finance.
- Minimum of 3 years of professional experience in a financial management and accounting position, preferably in the private sector.
- Familiarity with the government's and IDA's financial management requirement is a plus.
- Experience in the use of accounting programs and software.
- Proficiency in both Arabic and English.
- Good interpersonal and communication skills.

## Chief Accountants

### Background

The Chief Accounts will work Under the directions of the Financial Officer, and will be responsible for the finance reporting tasks of the Project, and will work closely with all sectors and departments of MOE, Governorates Offices and Districts Offices of MOE involved in the Project.

### The Chief Accounts would:

- Update Fixed Assets Sys. and maintain files of Fixed Assets.
- Insuring that the Contracting System is updated on the appropriate time and follow up with FO at the governorate level.
- Prepare Initial financial analysis of data & preparation of the project basic data (plans, cost, budget, actual ... etc).
- Prepare The Financial Monitoring Reports and Cash Disbursements Plans.
- Assist Finance Officer in dealing with the external auditors.
- Assessment of FMs capacities at the governorates level in term of reporting.
- Assist Finance Officer in maintaining overall integrity of financial statements and accounting records.
- Assist Finance Officer in developing, proposing, implementing & supporting changes or improvements to financial policies & procedures.
- Any other tasks as required by the project Financial Officer and the Project Director.

### Qualifications:

- A minimum of Bachelor's degree in Accounting or Business Administration with major in accounting and finance.
- Minimum of 5 years of professional experience in a financial management and accounting position, preferably in the private sector.
- Familiarity with the government's and IDA's financial management requirement is a plus.
- Experience in the use of accounting programs and software.
- Proficiency in both Arabic and English.
- Good interpersonal and communication skills.

## Procurement Assistant (2 positions)

### Background

The Project Administration Unit (PAU) is responsible for administering program funds and ensures fiduciary responsibilities to facilitate and support the implementation of Basic Education Development Project (BEDP) and other subsequent projects.

### Objectives

BEDP is interested in hiring a consultant to assist the procurement unit, in processing all procurement activities in accordance with the procurement Guidelines of the World Bank/International Development Association (IDA) and also be familiar with the procurement procedures applicable for using the Government of Yemen (GOY) funds.

### Scope of Works

### The Consultant will work closely with:

- Staff of PAU, and if necessary with related field offices.
- He/She should be proficient regarding World Bank's /IDA's guidelines for the procurement under International Competitive Bidding (ICB), National competitive Bidding (NCB), Shopping and Direct purchase procedures as well as preparing bidding documents for the procurement of goods and works based on the sample Bidding Documents and other documents prepared by the World Bank.
- He/She should be able to apply World Bank/ IDA guidelines for hiring consultants and prepare the draft contracts based on sample contract documents prepared by the World Bank.
- He/She should fully understand the "Procurement Plan" prepared for BEDP and shall be able to update it as needed under the guidelines of the procurement officer.
- He/She will prepare procurement reports, documents for submission to the project director and as directed by the head of the procurement unit and project director, and also for getting clearance / No Objection for the World Bank /IDA's.
- He/She will work closely as a team player along with members of the procurement unit.
- He/She will perform any other duties assigned by the head of the procurement unit.

### Duration of Work

Finally the consulting assignment is planned for one year, with probation period of 4 months. The contract could be renewed subject to satisfactory performance.

### Qualification and Experience

- Formal academic qualifications (a minimum of a Bachelor degree in Administration, Engineering or equivalent).
- Strong writing and speaking skills in English and Arabic.
- Strong interpersonal and skills.
- Proactive personality
- Capability to use computers and software application.
- A minimum 3 years experience in business /procurement work would be desirable.

All Applications along with a detailed resume should be submitted (please indicate the position you are applying for) by Saturday April 9, 2008, to the following address:

Ministry of Education  
Basic Education Development Project  
Project Administration Unit -60 m Southern Rd. -Bait Meyad  
Tel: 01-619160, Fax: 01- 619219

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## Procurement Supervisor

### Your responsibilities:

- ▶ Maintains approved vendor/bidders list for materials/services
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- ▶ Evaluate Tenders and Quotations and recommend vendor for order/contract placement
- ▶ Supervises preparation of Purchase/Service Orders
- ▶ Advise Logistics Supervisor of any contractual conditions with vendors that could impact shipping of materials/ equipment
- ▶ Preparation of procurement documents prior to submission to the Operating Committee and PEPA for approval, P&L Manager to approve submission
- ▶ Follow up on approval of procurement documents with the Operating Committee and PEPA
- ▶ Be proactive, identify and bring to the attention of the P&L Manager, any potential problems which could delay purchase of materials/equipment and could have an adverse effect on Operations by non placement of orders/contracts
- ▶ Development of subordinates
- ▶ Conduct negotiations with vendors through to order/contract award
- ▶ Identify new sources of supply for materials and equipment
- ▶ Liaise and follow up with all vendors on contract performance
- ▶ Monitor the Procurement processes, to ensure cost effective and timely acquisition of equipment/materials and services for Operations
- ▶ Prepare reports and inform P&L Manager on procurement related activities
- ▶ Develop and maintain work schedules and personal resources planning for Procurement personnel

### Your profile:

- ▶ B.Sc Engineering or MBA with Finance/IT
- ▶ Minimum 10 years Oil and Gas industry experience in the field of Procurement and Logistics with E&P/Service Companies with 5 years in a supervisory position
- ▶ PC Literate in MS-Windows, MS-Office and Computerized Materials Management Systems ideally experienced with the Maximo System
- ▶ Fluent in Arabic and English, written and oral
- ▶ Proven ability to interact with people, clear fluent expressive use of verbal and written language to convey information and ideas.
- ▶ Proven track record in supervising all Procurement functions with experience in Logistic functions required to support Company Operations
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UNICEF regional director Sigrid Kaag to the Yemen Times:

# “I want to put Yemen in the spotlight”

**U**NICEF's regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, Sigrid Kaag, recently visited Yemen in an effort to mobilize and invigorate increased support from the nation's leaders for the rights of women and children.

She visited Sana'a governorate's Sanhan district and UNICEF projects in Aden, where she inaugurated the Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centers established with UNICEF support as part of community-based HIV/AIDS initiatives.

Yemeni authorities with whom Kaag met expressed their appreciation for UNICEF's role in Yemen and were touched by the sense of commitment and compassion she demonstrated.

Yemen Times Editor-in-Chief Nadia Al-Sakkaf interviewed Kaag during her visit.



Sigrid Kaag, UNICEF's MENA regional director: Yemen must learn from its achievements in order to speed its progress.



Children's education is a priority for UNICEF in Yemen, as educated girls have a better chance at growing up to become healthy and productive members of their society.

**Putting a human face on statistics**  
Sigrid Kaag had read about Yemen, talked with others who have been here and even seen it in the news – but nothing compares to seeing it for real. In this her first time to the country, she is visiting in her capacity as regional director to take a firsthand look of UNICEF's program of cooperation and hold intensive consultations with partners and stakeholders.

Although she was unable to generalize because she hadn't been able to see much of the country during her three-day visit, Kaag was touched by the humanity and warmth of the Yemeni people. She also was impressed at their immense identification with UNICEF.

"I saw that they realized that we mean what we say. Our credibility and genuine concern for women's and chil-

ren's welfare has brought UNICEF close to the community," she commented.

Meeting with people and observing projects in the field has given Kaag a better understanding of Yemen and its issues and how the organization's work is contributing to the development of women and children in Yemen.

"My visit was excellent and very constructive. I was moved by the hospitality and the openness of Yemeni people at all levels, right from the very top authorities to the local communities," Kaag commented.

She was even more impressed by the women she met, especially those in the field. Joined by a team of development partners, she visited a hamlet in Sanhan district on the outskirts of Sana'a where she mingled with

women and young girls participating in a literacy initiative as part of acceleration efforts in girls' education.

Women are the ones mobilizing the community, actually going from house to house to advocate women's literacy within the framework of UNICEF's project in the area.

"It was amazing to see how women in their 40s and 50s took pride that they already are in third grade," Kaag remarked, "I was humbled."

**Political leaders**

During her brief visit, Kaag met with numerous Yemeni officials, starting with the prime minister and then the ministers of education, finance, health, interior, justice and social affairs, among other officials.

She appreciated the fact that all were committed and understood the significance of the nation's challenges, describing many of the Yemeni leaders as "competent" and "positive."

"We talked about obvious issues, as well as sensitive ones like child smuggling, children in conflict, etc., but I pressed more on the causes of the problems Yemen is facing and they all boil down to poverty and illiteracy, so now, we must shift from acknowledging the problems and designing strategies to implementation," she noted.

Apparently, the main problem is in implementation, as most strategies are in place and Yemen's leaders realize the nation's priorities and fully acknowledge that these are the issues to tackle. The problem with execution lies in either capacity, the human force or funding.

UNICEF works within the framework of national strategies and in line with its own mandate. In Yemen, it's priorities are focused on mothers' and children's health, children's education, particularly for girls, water and sanitation and more recently, protection from abuse and neglect.

However, Yemen's health allocation in its national budget is only 4.6 percent, as compared to 18.4 percent for education, while the child protection allocation is negligible; therefore, much more attention must be attached to these issues in terms of budget and efforts.

**Millennium Development Goals**

Of all the MDGs, Yemen is closest to achieving the second one ensuring that all children complete primary school; however, there's a need to increase efforts to attract those with the necessary skills in order to catch up with the other goals.

As for how Yemen may be able to catch up, Kaag suggested that the nation could improve via social mobilization. "Yemen is a young state, so now that the strategies are in place, we need to mobilize civil society and communities to take ownership of their issues," she said.

Although Yemen faces obvious con-

straints regarding resources, a vast and varied terrain and limited capacities, Kaag noted that its resolve to achieve the MDGs is impressive; however, she believes it must come from the bottom up, at the grassroots level where citizens begin making different decisions in their daily lives, in order to effect change.

She noted that Yemen is a country with an interesting mix and numerous challenges preventing it from achieving the development goals. Yemen generally is grouped with Sudan and Djibouti in its development indicators, which are very low.

Now is the time to expand partner-

ships and replicate successful models in order to save time and effort. According to Kaag, while Yemen as a nation has policies that should be celebrated, at the same time, it must examine its achievements and attempt to replicate them nationwide.

Because UNICEF's role is to help Yemen with technical expertise and support, "I want to put Yemen in the spotlight, to advocate for this country's development struggle and highlight its continuous need to be supported," Kaag stated.

**Yemen in the region**

Including Yemen, Kaag is responsible

for 16 countries in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Although Yemen has the region's lowest indicators, Kaag feels that it contains a very interesting mix that makes it rich in its versatility. "With its language, religion and culture, Yemen is exemplary in the region – it's like a mosaic of the Middle East," she said.

She added that it is a nation with tremendous challenges whose people have the willingness to convert those challenges into opportunities, yet there's also a need to attract more investment to the country and develop the skills of its labor force



At an adult education class in Sanhan district, Sana'a governorate, Kaag celebrates with Yemeni women their commitment to learn how to read. Illiteracy is one of the primary reasons for Yemen's high maternal mortality rate of 365 deaths for every 100,000 live births, compared to the regional rate of 210 deaths.

Republic of Yemen Basic Data	
Country's Population (in millions)	21
Child population (millions, under 18 years)	11
USMR (per 1,000 live births), 2003*	102
IMR, 2003	76
Underweight (% mod & severe, 2003)	46
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births), 2003	365
Primary school enrolment (% net male/female, 2002/2003)	84/59
Primary school children reaching grade 5 (% 2001-2002)	76
Use of safe drinking water sources (% 2002)	69
Adult HIV prevalence rate (% end 2003)	<0.1
Child work (% 5-14 year-olds)	18%
GNI per capita (US\$)	570
One-year-olds immunized against DPT3, 2007	87
Exclusive breastfeeding, 2003	11.5 %
Low Birth Weight	31.9 % **
Early Marriages (20-24 years)	36.9 % **
Early Marriages (15-19 years)	16.6 % **
Female Genital Mutilation (15-19 years)	22.6 % **

\* Yemen Family Health Survey 2003  
\*\* Demographic Health Survey 1997

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# Civil community organizations and the absent role

By: Fayed Al-Bukhari

Yemen is experiencing a growing number of civil community organizations, which raises multiple questions and makes us question why the number of these NGOs continue to increase. According to a recent report released by the Development Sector at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, there are more than five thousand organizations nationwide, and this number seems to be very large in a country like Yemen, as opposed to the number of these organizations in the different European and American countries that doesn't exceed the range of hundreds in each country.

The score implies a persisting flaw in the regulations and laws governing the operations and activities of these organizations, as well as a weakness on the part of lawmakers and those in charge of granting permissions to these organizations to exercise business. In addition, the situation indicates that some incompetent individuals have either established NGOs or joined them. These individuals establish NGOs to make personal interests, and therefore they don't care about providing their communities even with the simplest kinds of services. Most of them are found interested in founding new NGOs in order to receive funds from international donors.

The worst thing is that some NGOs have deviated in their operations since

they turn to serve the interests of particular political parties, which is considered a legal violation, as well as a gap that makes the civil community lose its credibility and open the door for unpatriotic and malicious functions under the umbrella of NGOs and civil community activities.

In fact, there is a shortcoming and weakness on the part of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor that doesn't seriously monitor all the NGOs so that it can reward do-gooders and punish wrongdoers. But this doesn't mean that we should perform our duty in the required way only when there is oversight, reward and punishment. Rather, we have to feel responsible toward our society for the sake of which we established these organizations.

These days, our country is in an urgent need for joint efforts and cooperation in order to develop and prosper, and NGOs seem to be closer to citizens and their affairs. Citizens, however, don't need any NGOs to work in their environment and have a direct impact on their community.

I still remember that Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor for Social Development Sector and the direct official in charge of NGOs, Ali Saleh Abdullah said in an interview with Al-Methaq Weekly a few days ago that "Many parties started to exercise business through civil community organizations, which is by itself a dangerous indicator that these organizations have deviated from their right goals and turned to do other jobs

that are non of their business."

I also remember that Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Dr. Amatarzaq Hummad said at a civil function that she and the ministry's staff are facing great challenges and difficulties because of the high number of requests for permissions to establish new NGOs. These requesters believe that NGOs can be an income source, and not an instrument to help develop their societies.

This resulted in the relevant ministry facing an actual dilemma due to the increased number of requests submitted by individuals having strong desires to establish new NGOs. And as soon as these individuals obtain permissions to establish NGOs, they claim the ministry to release budgets for the operations of their organizations as of the second day, as if the ministry is a bank or a financial institution. They don't know that they themselves have to provide financial resources for the operations and activities of their organizations prior to requesting permission from this ministry.

In order to ensure survival and continuity of their organizations, the founders should have their own financial resources and not expect funds from international donors since these organizations may not provide funds regularly.

The Minister of Social Affairs & Labor's statements reminded me of the respected T.V Director Dr. Fadhel Al-Ulifi in his famous dramatic serial "Ken Meni" when he embodied the

negative picture of civil community organizations in the country. He tried to reproach greedy people, who establish ghost NGOs with the intention of getting funds from international donors.

Through his serial, Al-Ulifi tried to get closer to the absent role of these organizations since they don't care about effective community involvement and appropriate action to serve their societies as much as they care for obtaining funds from international donors.

Statistics show that the number of NGOs in Yemen until June, 2005, came to 4830 including 98 working in the human rights area. The number of woman organizations reaches 325. However, politically oriented organizations do not play the role they are supposed to play. They do not, for example, provide visions and thoughts to enrich the process of reform. Such organizations in Yemen have the custom of "courting the authority." They sometimes adopt suggestions just to make certain profits or get some gains from the authority.

If Yemen's NGOs, currently numbering up more than five thousand, work seriously and honestly according to their designed objectives, via which they obtained work permits, these organizations, notably the ones concentrating on charitable works, may do a lot of things for their community, as well as win support and appreciation of the community members.

I reiterate, "Had these organizations

worked seriously and honestly within their local communities, we would have never found any poor or needy people, or even idle youths." Such a large and unexpected number of NGOs can ensure creating job opportunities for nearly three-fourths of the unemployed in Yemen. But, what these organizations have in their agendas is far away from what is being achieved or done in real-life situation.

The role of NGOs in Yemen is still being absent. And, if this role is not quite absent, these organizations may

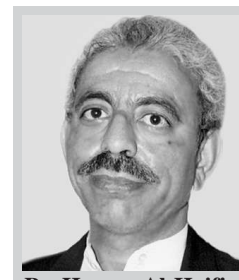
be lacking real programs and plans so that their activities can proceed to the community's advantage. This is what made us highlight the necessary role that should be played by Yemen's NGOs since we care much about building and developing our community. Having attained prosperity, our community will be able to reach numerous achievements that are hardly made by such a large number of NGOs nationwide.

Source: Al-Thawra State-Run Daily

## COMMON SENSE

### Back home: Rolling back the political clock!

Continuing from where one left off last week, it seemed that the Civil War of 1994 came not so much as to instill unification, but rather to bring about an environment of hatred, animosity and at best mistrust among the various racial, social and to a certain degree ethnic affiliations that make up the social fabric of Yemeni society. This is a far cry from the spirit of jubilation, great anticipation and cohesiveness of emotions demonstrated after the signing of the Unification Agreement of November 30, 1989. For sure, if there was a major cause for the



By: Hassan Al-Haifi

latter, the democracy that accompanied the unity of Yemen then was certainly at the top of the list. Surely people of both the North and the South of Yemen then had been suffering unjustifiably from oppression, political tyranny and a gross misrepresentation of sound governance in their "eastern" and "western" leanings of the Cold War delineations then. The democracy and political pluralism of the post unification period to many opened a new era of political and cultural dynamics that would launch the country into a new era of rapid progress and prosperity that simply was impermissible under the totalitarian and dictatorial regimes of the south and north respectively.

When the evil forces that thrived under the previous regimes saw their days in power numbered as could only be expected in a democratic environ, they both resorted to re-impose their will again on the people of Yemen. Oh sure, the major political factions still held the helms of power and authority and moreover still held control of the resources of the land. This was the major drawback to the ability of the political grassroots that matter in a democratic society to influence the course of events in those crisis filled days. People of reason tried, within the limited spate of free expression that existed in the transitional period, to bring the elements that were then rapidly railroading the country into an inevitable showdown into remembering that they are ill serving the interests of their countrymen. These screamers, who could not be heard, well knew that there was no hope for the people of Yemen, no matter who won an ideological war, the ideologies of which had no more substance in the new Global Order that was shaping up then. Again the people's choices and interests were thrown out the window.

What transpired after the war? With the balance of power that prevailed in the Transitional Period eliminated, it was obvious that the victors in the war were bound to be driven by the arrogance of the sweet taste of victory, who saw this as an omen that meant that their people's will did not really matter anymore! This ugly feeling that comes from a "winner take all" attitude meant, for all intents and purposes, that the people of Yemen should forget about any hopes and aspirations that were naively sitting in the back of their minds. The military and tribal centers of power saw their victory of 1994 as proof that they had control of the destiny of their people and let no one be fooled by the façade of democracy and political pluralism that was still portrayed as the "irreversible" course of the regime. The latter became the biggest lie of the New Millennium.

Since the end of the War of 1994, a rapid return to political repression and the quelling of free expression became the real strives of the elements that insisted on silencing any mouth that sought to bring back some sense into governance. As time progressed, one could not help recall the number of mouths that were silenced and the many more, who were viewed as potentially being viable opposition leaders, many of whom were eliminated in one way or another (most of which were ascribed to "fate", "accidents" and of course technical reasons). Then there were the hundreds and thousands, who became the victims of legal and security apparatuses and that either saw their fatality, torture and imprisonment and sometimes all three combined! All of this meant that the regime had only one chore in mind as it sought to tighten its absolute authority and political prevalence in the country. It was to ensure that no one even try to question the regime in any of its evil doings, in any sphere of power, political, economic or social. The Yemeni people in BOTH the North and South have become the victims and subjects of the most notoriously repressive regime in all of the Arab World without any rivals, if not in the entire world! Sa'ada and the recent disturbances in the southern provinces attest to the harmony of the repression witnessed in all parts of the "Republic of Yemen". This is not merely a "southern" issue, but rather a fall into one of the traps of the regime in its continuous drive to "divide and rule". The oppression is real, mean and standardized throughout the country.

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

## What is correct in the political equations?

By: Zaid Al-Shami

Our country's pressing problem worsens and keeps on complicating until it may become very difficult to resolve. In the meantime, the dire economic situations help the current unrest and outrage become sharper and sharper. Petitions, appeals and complaints receive no responses while corruption and nepotism prevail the everyday life in Yemen.

All these problems and others threaten security, stability and unity of the nation. What we see in the horizon is anonymous because everyone looks at the standing issues and then assesses them from his/her own viewpoint and in line with his/her personal interest. As all Yemeni people don't know

or project how consequences of these problems will look like, nor are they prepared enough to positively deal with any subsequent developments, I think that it is time to return to the judgment of logic and reason, and admit these problems so that we can suggest workable solutions to them.

The riskiest thing that has just floated up in Yemen today is the threat posed to the Yemeni unity. Unity is the noble goal that has been sought by Yemeni people in the north and south throughout the times of fragmentation until they ultimately reached such a noble goal nearly 17 years ago.

Calls for secession that continue to grow arouse regret and sorrow nationwide since they reflect a state of misery and frustration among Yemeni people without an exception. These calls are symptomatic of dire situations and

lack of justice and equality. It is usual for investigators of secession to exploit the current circumstances – described as the worst ever seen in the history of unified Yemen – and escalating protests over unmet demands to make the wound more painful. Even worse, the policies and plans adopted by the authority – labeled as poor and unworkable – help investigators of secession continue the march toward achieving their malicious objectives.

There is a huge confusion of concepts that needs to be reviewed in order not to allow the turmoil to worsen. Insisting on the survival of corruption, connecting unity with such a destructive phenomenon and accusing those advocating the relevant agencies, organizations and parties to fight corruption of being secessionists or defectors is unacceptable. The behavior

demonstrated by those who believe that Yemen can not get rid of the current standoff unless South Yemen is separated from the North is unacceptable too.

In addition, labeling those adhering to the national unity and caring for its survival as backers of continued corruption and oppression is an incorrect evaluation.

Those remaining adherent to the unity are not part of the standing authority and those claiming their constitutional rights are not secessionists.

The correct equation is that unity must survive and we must protect it by establishing equality, doing justice for the oppressed citizens, enabling them practice their legal rights, and penalizing corrupt individuals.

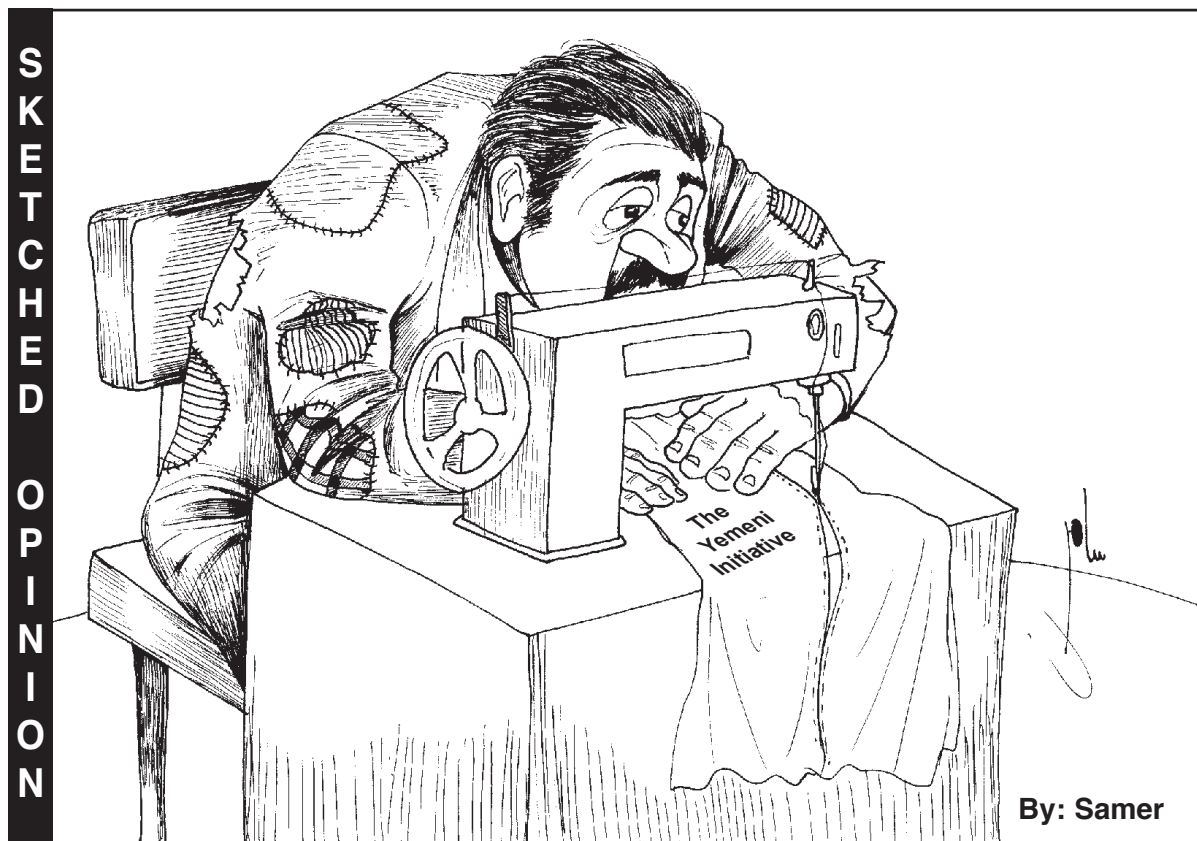
The call for reforming the dire situations must remain under the unity, corruption must be combated under the unity, and oppressed citizens must receive fair and just treatment under the unity.

On the other hand, the strong faith that secession may help end sufferings of citizens in the south is nothing more than an illusion or search for the unknown.

Neither fragmentation nor defection was once a source of power. Now, we are living in a world moving toward togetherness and integration of any similar elements, thanks to the strong faith that togetherness and integration help create common interests and produce strong institutions.

Neglecting the standing turmoil or not interacting with it is not the sought-after solution. And, the government's repeated attacks of Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) and harassments of Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) are not in favor of the unity. Such acts only help encourage calls for secession.

Zaid Al-Shami is a Parliament Member from the Islah Party  
Source: Al-Sahwa Weekly



By: Samer

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Fax: +967 (1) 268-276

P.O. Box 2579, Sana'a, Yemen

E-mail: yteditor@gmail.com

Letters: yteditor@gmail.com

Advertisement: ads@yementimes.com

Publisher & Editor-in-Chief  
Nadia Abdulaziz Al-Sakkaf

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Editorial Staff

Mojjalli, Almgidat Thabet, Hamed

### Offices

#### Aden Bureau:

Ridhwan Alawi Ahmad  
Tel: +967 (2) 347-057, 346596  
Fax: +967 (2) 347056  
Email: ytaden@y.net.ye

#### Taiz Bureau:

Imad Ahmed Abdullah  
Tel: +967 (4) 217-156,  
Telefax: +967 (4) 217157  
P.O.Box: 5086, Taiz  
Email: yttaiz@y.net.ye

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# U.S., Yemen - strange bedfellows in the war on terror

By: Mohammed Al-Asaadi,  
The Media Line

Despite their joint battle against terrorism, relations between the United States and Yemen reached a nadir earlier this month when a Yemeni state security court released on bail an FBI-wanted Al-Qa'ida operative.

Jabir Al-Bana, a Yemeni-U.S. terror suspect, who was sentenced to 10 years by a Yemeni court for his connection with terrorism, was released on commercial bail on March 9.

He was captured in Yemen in January 2004, tried and convicted, but managed to escape from a prison run by national intelligence in January 2006 with 23 other Al-Qa'ida detainees. Al-Bana surrendered to the authorities last December after negotiation and guaranteeing his right to appeal the initial ruling.

A criminal complaint was filed against Al-Bana, a member of the

"Lackawanna Six," in Lackawanna in New York in May 2003. Al-Bana, who worked as a salesman and taxi driver in the U.S., was alleged to have provided material support to Al-Qa'ida. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Al-Bana attended a training camp run by Al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan in 2003.

In his second public appearance in the court, Al-Bana refused to speak to the media. However, he shouted out in the courtroom: "This is an unfair verdict. It's an American sentence. Yemen is an agent of the U.S."

Washington and its embassy in 'Sana expressed disappointment over Al-Bana's release, which came as a response to American pressure on the Yemeni government to extradite Jamal Al-Badawi, a Yemeni national convicted and sentenced to death for plotting and taking part in the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000.

Al-Badawi also escaped with Al-Bana and other Al-Qa'ida members in 2006 but surrendered to the authorities in October 2007. He pledged

allegiance to the Yemeni laws and constitution, and was put under effective house arrest.

The U.S., which lost 17 sailors in the attack on the Cole, criticized the decision not to send Al-Badawi back to jail. A spokesman for the U.S. National Security Council described Yemen's move as "deeply disappointing... This action is inconsistent with a deepening of our bilateral counter-terrorism cooperation. We have communicated our displeasure to Yemeni officials."

A high-profile official at the Yemeni Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation also criticized his government for taking such action.

"This [action] will cost Yemen a lot. We lost another opportunity with the Millennium Challenge Corporation. It is unfortunate, but we don't lose hope and wish development aid will not be associated with security."

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Board of Directors reinstated the eligibility of Yemen for participation in MCC's Threshold Program in February 2007.

Since its suspension in 2005, Yemen has undertaken a series of impressive reforms that enabled it to apply for MCC funding. "The Government of Yemen has made a number of important reform commitments," a statement by the corporation said then.

Yemen was eligible for Threshold Program assistance in 2004, but its eligibility was suspended by the MCC board in November 2005 following a consistent pattern of deterioration in Yemen's policy performance on the selection criteria. As Yemen was ready to apply for a Threshold Program Agreement with an assistance package of \$20.8 million, the Al-Badawi crisis put the whole program on hold.

Though Yemen later denied Al-Badawi's release, asserting he was in custody, critics slammed Yemen severely for taking that action. The U.S. officially requested Al-Badawi's extradition. Media reports in local Yemeni papers described the turmoil in Yemeni-American relations as the toughest since 2000 when cooperation first started. Local columnist

Muhammad Al-Qadhi said there was a clear tension in the Yemeni-American relations.

"It shows that there's a serious problem," Al-Qadhi said. "It is boiling."

"Yemen wanted to send a message to the U.S. showing off its capabilities in taking a decision individually in a bi-laterally coordinated issue. Despite the fact that the Yemeni government knows very well that Al-Bana is wanted by the U.S., its response to the American pressure to extradite Al-Badawi was badly handled."

"It is a stupid mistake," Al-Qadhi continued. "Is Yemen a super power to challenge the U.S.? Maybe it behaved with the U.S. in this matter as it behaves with a tribal sheikh."

An official Yemeni source said his country had made a remarkable achievement through negotiating with and rehabilitating fugitive Al-Qa'ida leaders and their militants.

"Our strategy is to fight terrorism," said Yemen's Interior Minister Rashad Al-'Alimi in response to the U.S. reaction. "However, we need a space

to use different tactics. Our friends should appreciate this."

Most officials contacted were reluctant to comment due to the sensitivity of the issue. An official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, said this was an election year in the U.S. and Republicans were playing the terrorism card to the full.

American diplomats in 'Sana and Yemenis in Washington refrained from commenting to The Media Line. However, a Yemeni diplomat in DC said on condition of anonymity that any turbulence between 'Sana and Washington would only serve the extremists.

"We are all in the same boat," he said.

The government of Yemen is in a difficult place and would like to get out of the dark tunnel as soon as it can. Meanwhile, the U.S. is insistent that Al-Badawi, who is said to have American blood on his hands, be extradited. Requests have been turned down several times by Yemeni officials as they violate its constitution.

## Controversy over Hamas-Fatah agreement

By: Yaniv Berman  
The Media Line

After a long weekend of discussions and crises between delegations from Hamas and Fatah, the two parties have signed the 'Sana Announcement, calling to resume their dialogue. Only few hours passed, however, before it was revealed that the agreement might be void of substance, due to internal

conflicts within Fatah itself.

The 'Sana Announcement called to resume dialogue on the basis of the Yemeni initiative, according to which the situation should return to the Gaza of last June, before Hamas took over the Gaza Strip. Immediately after the announcement, Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud 'Abbas' office issued a statement that effectively annulled the 'Sana declaration.

"While the Palestinian leadership expresses its appreciation for these

efforts, we hereby state that any future resumption of dialogue must aspire to implement the Yemeni initiative, including all its articles. The future dialogue must not treat this initiative as a mere framework for discussions, as this will not achieve any results. The articles of the Yemeni initiative are clear and we want them to be implemented, not [only] discussed," read the statement.

Sources in 'Abbas' office told the local Palestinian media that Fatah's

representative to the talks, 'Azzam Al-Ahmad, did not consult with 'Abbas over the final formula of the 'Sana Announcement, and that therefore he was unauthorized to sign it.

In an interview with Al-Jazeera, Al-Ahmad said he was in close contact with 'Abbas throughout the talks.

The principles of the 'Sana statement call for returning control of the Gaza Strip to Fatah, forming a unity government that will function until early elections for the presidency

and parliament are held and reforming the Palestinian security forces in a way that would make them independent of factional affiliation.

'Abbas stressed he would not agree to resuming negotiations with Hamas unless these preconditions were met. Hamas officials told The Media Line this was unacceptable. "We have said from the beginning... that we do not mind reversing the situation, but that means everything... it's a package deal, [including] a unity government

headed by Isma'il Haniyya," Dr. Ahmad Yousuf, a close adviser to Isma'il Haniyya, told The Media Line.

Hamas, for its part, was satisfied with the 'Sana Announcement.

Mousa Abu Marzouq, who headed Hamas' delegation, said the dialogue would resume after the Damascus conference of the Arab League on March 29. He said Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah 'Salih would carry the initiative to the Arab summit for endorsement.

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# Rural - Urban Explosion and Yemen's Housing Crisis

By: Yemen Times Staff

Yemen is an overwhelmingly rural country where 70 percent of the people still reside in rural areas. However, significant population growth and the migration from rural areas to urban centers is putting tremendous stress on Yemen's cities, where demand for services, employment, and primarily housing has caused a housing crisis, pushing the prices of real estate and rents through the roof. In this report we investigate the causes of the phenomenon as well as what the government is doing to improve the situation.

## Economic Hardships

Perhaps the prime factor in motivating people to migrate from rural areas to urban centers is the search for employment. Historically, almost all of Yemen's rural residents were dependent on agriculture to sustain their livelihoods, however, the decreasing economic returns of agriculture – with the exception of qat cultivation – has pushed many to seek other sources of income. The prime factor in decreasing the economic returns of agriculture is due to the increased costs of water and irrigation, in addition to market forces, for example importing wheat from the international market during the last two decades seemed economically viable from buying homegrown wheat, therefore forcing the local farmer to compete with large scale producers, forcing this farmer to buy wheat from the urban center instead of selling his surplus there.

Furthermore, the population growth has also decreased the economic returns of agriculture per capita, thereby reducing the prospects of younger members of the family to find economic opportunity in urban centers. Therefore we find significant numbers of young migrant men who left their villages and migrated to the cities in search of employment.

## Migrant Youth

Large numbers of male youth migrants leave their villages and families behind every year in search of economic opportunity in the nearest urban center, the prime employer for this youth is the construction sector, giving them daily wages ranging between 3 – 5 dollars per day. This very little wage is barely enough to cover food expenses, mind you rental. Therefore, several youth tend to rent an apartment where four or five share a room. However, the majority of youth complain that many landlords refuse to



Only few people can afford to construct their own property, and the majority of that constructs the buildings do so in such a manner to maximize the returns on the property.

accommodate the youth due to the risks accompanying including non-payment of rents, neighbors complaints of theft, burglary, and noise which usually accompany youth residents.

Even full-time migrant university students have been affected by the same issues, where the limited university housing facilities force many to find housing and accommodation outside, finding themselves forced to pay double the actual cost of housing within the university, especially given the high inflation and the accompanying continued increase in rent costs.

## Instable rent prices

The trend continues across the sector to reach other segments of the society including working class professionals and dual income families, where the unregulated accommodation market makes tenants vulnerable to the mood swings of landlords and house owners who continue to raise the cost of rent regularly due to the high demand on accommodation. There are many cases documenting where tenants with limited income find themselves having to move from one location to another several times a year, a relocation process costing them time and money.

The population growth, the influx of migrants, in addition to the limited availability of housing are the three prime factors that contribute to the increasing costs of rent. However, a fourth factor might as well be relevant which is the home owner's costs and investment in real estate, especially since the prices of real estate continue to increase, home owners feel that they should receive a steady percentage of return on the value of their property.

**Costs of construction and real estate** Furthermore, another factor contributing to the problem is the increasing costs of real estate and construction, which resemble a truly fundamental issue concerning expanding investments in real estate. Even for many government employees who get awarded land to construct their homes, they find themselves unable to raise the funds needed for construction in the light of the increasing prices of steel, cement, and other construction materials.

Therefore, only a minority of people who have the resources to expand their real estate property can do so, on the

expense of the majority which is unable to own its independent real estate and therefore graduate from having to suffer the wrath of rents and renting.

## Government Strategy

The government of Yemen is aware of the problem, as it is evident through the increasing pressures on urban infrastructure such as power, water, and sewage systems. The continued increases in urban population has had its effect on government planning, and demanded serious forward thinking policies from the part of the government in order to accommodate the increases in population.

Another strategy is to improve infrastructure services at rural areas in order to reduce the momentum of migration, with a hope that access to transportation through constructing feeder roads, and the availability of energy will help entrepreneurship and enterprising in rural areas, resulting in diversifying the rural economy away from agriculture, as an attempt to deal with the root cause of migration from rural areas to urban centers.

## Business In Brief

### PM: We are keen on improving the investment climate

Prime Minister Mujawar has emphasized that the government is very keen on improving the investment climate in Yemen, in order to attract more investors into Yemen's promising sectors such as Tourism. He stated that while overseeing preparations for the Mukalla investment conference scheduled for next week.

### Exports of Yemeni honey exceed 5,000 tonnes annually

Minister of Agriculture Mansour Al-Hawshabi has stated that Yemeni exports of honey has exceeded 5,000 tonnes per year, which is an important indicator that the Yemeni honey is popular and is an important pillar to the agricultural economy. He also stated that the ministry plans to give additional support to the honey production sector in order to boost its growth.

### Ministry of Fisheries to evaluate its activities

Following a decline in fisheries production, the minister of fisheries Mahmoud Saghiri stated that the ministry is examining its executive offices and will hold internal monitoring and evaluation of activities in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the ministry in undertaking its

operations, with specific emphasis on the operations of field offices in coastal areas.

### Sana'a Mayor: We must boost local revenue generation


Mayor of the Sana'a Capital Secretariat Yahya Al-Shoa'aibi stated that his office must boost local revenue generation in order to finance the on-going projects in Sana'a. He stated that local councils have been given the authority to use a part of local revenue to finance community and other needed projects in the city, and therefore should take advantage of this authority.

### Two investment agreements signed for US\$ 500 million

An agreement between the General Investment Authority and the Emirates investment group has been signed last week for around US\$ 500 million, to construct two residential and commercial neighborhoods in Sana'a.

### Yemen Post Authority grows by 19% in 2007

The Yemen Post Authority annual report stated that the authority's financial transactions during 2007 has increased by 62 million Riyals (19%), where majority of the growth was from the express mail services which has increased by over 50%.



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## Cocaine wars in a land of beauty

By: Rajendra K. Aneja  
rkaneja@emirates.net.ae

“People must think we're a wretched country because we're destroying the world by supplying cocaine, yes?” Christina asked, looking into my eyes. There was intense pathos in her eyes when she posed her query.

Although she was right, she was a colleague, an incredibly beautiful Colombian girl. The gods would never forgive anyone for breaking the heart of such a stunning girl with moist eyes, so I lied. “Christina, everybody knows that few Colombians are involved in drugs and that cocaine comes from Bolivia and Brazil.”

From the sixth century onward, the Inca peoples of South America's Andes Mountains used coca leaves as a stimulant to overcome exhaustion, hunger and thirst. African slaves brought to Latin America weren't treated too kindly by their Spanish masters; thus, both natives and slaves blunted their hunger by chewing the leaf. While the leaf didn't fill their bellies, it did give them a high swoon.

However, fate took over in the intervening years to seek its vengeance as the natives mastered growing the magical leaves in massive quantities. A mafia cartel then scattered the scourge like a powder across the globe.

“See, there's a cocaine plant!” Christina exclaimed as we worked the retail outlets in a premium Cartagena neighborhood. “But this is a residential area,” I protested in shocked disbelief. “It sometimes grows in small gardens,” she shrugged.

I stood transfixed, staring at a solitary plant in a pretty garden outside a dainty lace-curtained window. So, I reflected, this is the innocuous little weed causing catastrophic havoc and death and driving a billion dollar global industry!

The leaf also is grown commercially, hidden by the foliage of thick forests, in manicured fields guarded by armed local militia. It is transported by mules, boats and airplanes. Concealed

factories convert the leaves into a white powder, which then travels to logistical centers, e.g., the slums of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

From there, it's funneled to distribution centers such as Miami and Bangkok and then on to retail markets in more than 200 countries. In the 1970s, Colombians like Lehder Rivas and Jorge Luis Ochoa Vásquez worked with the Medellín drug cartel to revolutionize cocaine transport from mules to massive airlifts.

Colombia produces 80 percent of the world's cocaine powder worth \$60 billion annually. This exceeds the turnover of many multinational corporations – such as Unilever and Procter and Gamble put together – worldwide! Profits fund hostage-taking rebels and paramilitaries, while the forests hold 700 kidnapped hostages, some for up to nine years, including a female presidential candidate.

Cartel bosses like Rivas created his own Latino Nationalist Party operating its own Quindio Libre newspaper, while Pablo Escobar Gaviria gave cash to the poor, built houses in slums, constructed sports stadiums and was even elected congressman!

The Cali cocaine cartel operated in and then subsequently moved to elegant Medellín. The cartel is the world's largest unregistered multinational corporation, with an octopus's grip on every aspect from cultivation in the field and processing into powder to logistics, wholesale and retail. It is incredibly lucrative: profit margins are 60 percent, business is cash-only and there are no bad debts because no one risks owing the cartel money!

No government can contain this cartel because it can kill or kidnap anyone anywhere. No one is safe from its bullets; even presidents, judges and police die or vanish within hours of opposing the cartel. Its directors live in massive villas in Medellín with 50- to 80-foot walls and guns circumventing the parameters. I gradually learned to recognize such homes – and I stayed far, far away!

Compared to the Medellín cartel in terms of reach and terror, Al-Qaeda is a bunch of trainees!

Approximately 2.2 million hectares of Colombian forest have been torched to grow coca, while the United States has attempted to eradicate the crop via aerial spraying.

Colombia's Vice President Francisco Calderon – himself a hostage for eight months – launched the “Cocaine is violence” campaign, which is true. As I said to him on a BBC program, cocaine is death for those who consume it.

Governments may destroy cocaine fields and dismantle factories, but there are more fields, more factories and other countries. The war on drugs, which annually kills thousands worldwide, has forced a million Colombians off their land.

### There are two ways to eradicate cocaine:

1. Educate cocaine users about the havoc it wreaks in families. Additionally, give youth a purpose in life because if they have a purpose to live for, they'll stop those habits that can kill. When consumers no longer desire a product, it automatically dies.

2. Cocaine farmers should be given incentives to grow alternative crops such as sugar cane, tobacco or coffee because cocaine generates 300 percent more than other cash crops, so the desire must be there. Also, convert cocaine fields into factories.

While cocaine hasn't been decimated in the past 90 years and it may not be eradicated for another 100 years; nevertheless, the battle must be fought – and won, even if purely by attrition.

It's a shame that a country with such beautiful mountains, valleys, rivers, forests, youth, girls, music, salsa, climate, warmth, hospitality, “feijao” (beans) and pizzerias is christened as the motherland of cocaine.

Christina, I'm sorry I lied to you, but you can't blame me because you were the most gorgeous Colombian girl I had ever met! Perhaps you knew that I was lying...

## Through The Mind's Eye

By: Maged Thabet Al-kholidy  
maged\_thabet@hotmail.com



## Mother's Day or Every Day?

Last Friday was so-called Mother's Day. A mother is supposed to be the dearest person to her daughters and sons. However, some people, especially children and teens, wait for the occasion of Mother's Day to express feelings of love and affection towards their mums. That makes mothers happy, though it is their right to expect such appreciation throughout the year.

On an occasion like this, I wonder if one day out of the year is enough for mothers, and what does Islam instruct us to do?

Regarding the relations of sons and daughters with their mothers, Islam is clear. The prophet Mohammed (pbuh) reaffirms the respect and obedience that everyone should pay to their mothers. He (pbuh) repeats the words, “your mother, your mother and your mother,” when an Arabian asked him about one's dearest person.

Actually, the prophet's Hadith is a lesson to all Muslims. All of us must keep in mind that mothers are the dearest and closest people to us. Such moral and religious principles, however, have been destroyed by Western ideas that have invaded our Islamic culture. These ideas not only enter into our fashions or habits but also our personal relations with close relatives like mothers.

Only one day is for the mother,

while the other 364 days of the year are for something else; this is what a holiday like Mother's Day implies. Tracing back the origin of this custom reveals that we, as Arabs and Muslims, have adopted it from westerners. As usual, it has been adopted blindly, without knowing its origin or the reasons behind.

Westerners may have the right to celebrate such an occasion, since they have the right to leave mothers, fathers, and the homes at the age of 18. Outside home, far away from family restrictions, they start their own lives – their own personal lives, as they proudly say.

“Mother's Day” is an alarm that reminds them that they have mothers and it is somehow a social duty to pay a short visit or to send a gift to their mums. This actually makes me curious to ask why don't they have another day for fathers, such as “Father's Day,” or to combine them into “Parents' Day” to save time?

This occasion is for Westerners. It has nevertheless become an indication of “modernity,” as some people claim in many Islamic societies; it is somehow acceptable. But it would be a catastrophe if we start following Westerners in ignoring mothers for the whole year except on “their day”. We have to be aware of such ideas, which invade and negatively affect our societies.

It doesn't matter much if we celebrate the day with our mothers. It is great, since mothers feel happy about it. But since a mother's satisfaction is a religious duty, why not to make the whole year for mothers?

As a lesson, every one of us should remember how much time and energy our mothers spend on our health, education, happiness, etc. They have never said or even thought to say that there should be children's day. So why do we now repay them with only one day per year?

Mothers devote their lives to their children. Even when such children grow up into grown men and women, they continue thinking, worrying and facilitating the lives of their sons and daughters. I think if one devotes his life to his mother, it would not be enough. So how can only one day like Mother's Day be enough?

Following other people's behaviors and customs must be limited to the religious boundaries of Islam and to the social norms we believe in. We can celebrate the Mother's Day, not once a year but constantly. This is what Islam orders and what society needs.

Maged Thabet Al-kholidy is a writer from Taiz, currently doing his M.A. at English Dep, Taiz Uni. He is an ex-editor of English Journal of the University.

## On the hills of my homeland

By: Nashwan A. Nosheer Al-Khawlani  
Senior, Ibb University  
English Department  
nashwan336@yahoo.com

Beyond my hills, it stands  
My eyes have no scene but her and I  
Behold! I say  
The unseen places, the untouched beauties  
Of the fascinating lady  
Whose evergreen eyes, glamour and glow  
I adore and it adores deeply in dreams  
Before it hears  
Something draws, attracts, lures  
Many a person to her  
The unknown voice says  
It is the beautiful oasis  
And no place for winter or naked trees  
We do not miss the spring  
So are the flowers  
Like the daughter of Suddat  
It looks  
It affords everything one needs  
So no one is sick of her

If there is such a one, he is sick of life  
It is Suddat's princess  
Whose fair and welcomed evergreen hands  
Of high-clouded hills, on which I still stand  
Seeing with my eyes the compassionate nature  
And the kindest creatures  
Of the fascinating lady  
That embraces each and every one  
Comes, admires, loves and adores, staying.  
To others, like an oasis it looks  
They come, both residents and foreigners,  
To enjoy the enchanting morning  
Of the beautiful spots  
They come for a walk or a wonder  
The homely atmosphere, it wears them  
Not feeling homesick  
No one comes, but will get a walk back  
I travel to unseen scenes  
Feeling exile from home  
But traveling to her home from home  
I feel

At night, the moonlight talking  
And my eyes with the stars of the darkest sky  
Or rather, it is of the brocaded jewel  
Of the fascinating lady  
Whose traditions, customs, roots and letters  
I have addressed since my infancy.  
Through our mutual silence  
We feel that she hears us and smiles  
As all lovely things dance everywhere  
To those who stand, seeing  
Its ineffable beauty,  
Smelling the most purified air  
And I think it is the perfume of Arabs  
That is like a mélange of different flowers  
Of a worldly spring  
I have lived so long unfeeling  
As I feel now like a king  
O, my dearest lady,  
The honey of millions,  
You afford the precious unique things  
Of life to me  
Although I have nothing in return  
But a heart full of love for you,  
My lady, my lovely Ibb.

## Whisper

By: Fuad Noman  
fn\_0012000@yahoo.com

The tunes of your soul's melody  
Letting my joy sing your lullaby  
Raising the rate of my heart's song  
As all babies, I smile and enjoy  
Without end  
For your love, I long  
Let me be his bodyguard  
To make sure how my dream is kept  
Save me  
To be with you only alone  
With your unique waltz  
The beats of my heart go up and down  
Let me hug your heart's response  
To feel my real soul's bond  
That's a gift of my God  
Sent by His light  
I am created for love  
Against pain I have to fight  
Before the sunrise, my soul starts to shine

Because your love is an ageless prime  
When your soul's influence penetrates mine  
My thin bones become strong and fine  
Between lovers is just a transparent line  
Every dark night  
Before I close my eyes  
Through those distant waves  
Hearing your call and whisper  
Gazing at the night's vesper  
Creating many ways to soar  
To increase my love's share  
When I arrive at your pleasant place  
I will water down my veiled cry  
I will touch your fair hair  
I will wipe off your innocent tear  
I will minimize your black fear  
Your soul I will possess and wear  
Our love is still weaving our sun's scarf  
To be pure  
As the light of moon in each other's half  
When I wake up

Trying to get my soul's jots  
Praying for God and your eyes  
To be safe as primal love  
Thinking of joining your soul's club  
By great will,  
I will win the world's love cup  
By all colors  
On every white and blackboard  
Through the beams of the moon  
By the river of my blood  
On the leaves of my soul  
On gold and diamond  
Your soul's tranquility  
I've adored  
Your love's demarche be full grown  
Without your love  
How could it be my life?  
If my love survived alive  
I would be always born  
Only for you  
My happy heart would be your home  
To save you from harm  
And any angry storm

## Advice of coal

By: Ghaleb Hassan Al-Ahlasi  
ghalebalahasi@yahoo.com  
ghalebalahasi@hotmail.com

"can I help you?" the imam asked the one standing before him without higher his head.

"yes," the middle-aged brown skin man answered in a highly respect voice. "there is a sort of a problem I need to ask you about."

"will," the imam turned a round and his face of peace faced the light. He was seventy with a very white beard and very sharp eyes shining with wisdom, brightness and spontaneity. "I'm hearing you."

The asker sat down thanking the imam and started with clear his throat "it's not about me... it's about my cousin. He is thirty years old." After a short silence he continued "will, I must start from his tens. He was a very religious man who had never done a sin. A boy if you had seen him you would had assured he is an angel."

"will," the imam interrupted "I could see what you mean. You see it's about the pray time so keep talking and summarize."The imam said when seeing his guest censuring sights.

"Yes, you're Eminence. He just turned upside down. One day he became another person. Never pray and start doing dad things... he just...just turned to an evil. We all thought he defect from Islam."

"Will, it couldn't be just like that." the imam said "there must be a reason"

"Nothing. Nothing had changed around him."

"Maybe he is hiding something. Why don't you ask him or advise him."

"We did your eminence. We have done everything. We use every possible way and took him to listen to most preachers and religion scientists around the country but no use. Even hell can't bring him back."

"hell will bring him back, my son." "we have try every thing, sir." "yes but you haven't put him in the hell." The imam said with a confidence smile.

the imam said "hi Omar, what are you doing here?" the asker asked the guest

"oh hi. How are you?" "always thanking Allah. Do you have a question like me."

"no I'm not. I just came to invite the imam to my brothers wedding this Tuesday."

"do you know each other." The imam asked

"yes. We are from the same village." "will, that's great. You are invited to the wedding, aren't you?" he asked the asker

"Yes of course." "will, ok tell you father I'm coming." He told the inviter then saw him off.

"see my son." He turned back to the asker . you should come and bring your cousin to that's wedding. When you see me act like we haven't met and try to introduce him to me without his knowledge. maybe I could bring him back as he used to be."

"ok, as you say." The asker stood up and return back nervosa and confused.

It wasn't a very big wedding, the groom wasn't more than twenty five. At the head of the divan was setting the imam smoking his favorite thing (Madaah) and telling some jokes. When seeing him one would think he was the groom's father because of his cheeriness which ended when he saw the asker and his cousin and replaced by a surprising. He invited the tow to set near to him and he started asking the cousin questions like "do you pray the five praying?" and so on. The cousin answered him inclining his head for ten or some more questions then he interrupted him with a little anger "what's with you and those questions, are you testing me."

"no but I think I have saw you in my dream last night."

"how? Have we met before?" "I don't think so and that's what surprises me."

"will?" the asker interrupted "what did your eminence see on that dream."

"will, I... I well tell you latter." The imam answered confused

when he saw the ironical resolution shining from his eyes. He started after smoking from his Madaah "last night I dreamt I was in the heaven rounded with it's all beneficences and angels were doing there best for me and my wife. You can't imagine what a place I was in, I can't even describe it for you."

"any way," he said after a short silence "an angel came to me and asked if I wanted any thing and I said just one thing...(Madaah) . you know how much I love it. before I finished my sentence it was before me but no coal. I asked him some and you know I always like to choose my own coal. He said he will go to the hell to bring me some but I determined to go with him. We went to the hell's door..." a phone ring interrupted him, he looked around to see whose phone was that to relieves it was his own. He stood up and went out for a while then return back to his seat.

"where did we stop?" he asked after sitting straight

"at the door of the hell." The cousin said ironically

"oh yes. I went to the hill for some coal and..." he mixed scariness and seriousness by his tone and sights "you can't imagine how horrible was it. The sounds of pain and cry mixed with the smell of put, blood and grilled bodies were.... Were really ... I don't know what to said. I thought I was tortured being there. " he started describing all he knew about the hell and it's torture then for while he stopped looking over their faces as the was imagining then he continued "that was me outside, what about them inside the hill. Any why.. the angel knocked on the door and a very ferocious angel opened, they talked for a while then the ferocious one asked me

"how do you like the coal to be?" "fresh." I answered full of fright

"like that?" he handed me some but they weren't very fresh

"no, more than that." I said handed them back

"will, on that case you have to wait until this man's legs get charred."

I looked over to see whose legs will I smoke and I saw our friend here." He pointed at the cousin.

"will, if you say so." The imam said



عندما تتضح الرؤيا ..  
فأعلم انها طبعت بمطابع يمن تايمز

مطابع مؤسسة صحفية يمن تايمز للصحافة  
و الطباعة والنشر

شارع عدد ٥٤٤ خلف مبنى السفارة النمساوية  
صنعاء - الجمهورية اليمنية  
تلفون: ٠١٦-٢٦٤٣١٢/٢  
فاكس: ٠١٦-٢٦٤٣١٢  
ص.ب: ٢٦٤٣١٢ صنعاء اليمن

• للبيع: سيارة B.M.W ٣٢٠ - موبيل ٩٠ -  
السعر مناسب - الحالة جيدة  
للتواصل: ٧٧٧٤٤٦٦٠

• **كمبيوتر، اثاث، ادوات كهربائية،  
تلفونات، و اشياء اخرى**

• مطلوب شراء جهاز كمبيوتر لاب توب جديد أو  
مستخدم للتواصل: ٧٧٧٣١٧٥٧

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المكلا: ٣٠٩١٩٠ - الجديدة: ٢١٩٦٤٢

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**مستشفيات**  
مستشفى الثورة : ٠١/٢٤٩٦٧٠/١٢  
المستشفى الجمهوري : ٠١-٢٦٤٣١٨/٧  
مستشفى حدة الأهلي : ٠١-٤١٣٩٨١  
المستشفى الألماني الحديث : ٠١-٦٠٠٠٠/٧٦٠٠٠٠  
فاكس: ٤١٨١١١١  
E-mail: felixpene@hotmail.com

**فنادق**  
فندق فرساي : ٠١-٤٢٥٧٧/١٢  
فندق شيراتون : ٠١-٣٣٧٥٠  
فندق موفينيك : ٠١-٥٤٦٦٦٦  
فندق تاج سبا : ٠١-٣٣٣٣٣٣  
فندق ريلكس ان : ٠١-٤٤٤٨٧١  
فندق وأجنحة الخليج السياحي : ٠١-٦٠٣٣٥٠-٦٠٣٣٥٠

**معاهد**  
معهد بالي ت: ٤٤٨-٣٩-٤٤٨٢ ٣/٤-٤٤٨-٣٩  
معهد اللغة الألمانية ت: ٢٠٠٩٤٥  
المعهد البريطاني للغات والكمبيوتر ت: ٣١٦٣٣٣  
فاكس: ٥١٤٧٥٥  
معهد كاروكوس ت: ٥٢٤٤٤/٥  
معهد أليكس ت: ٤٤٨٣٣-٢٤-٥١-٦١٢٢  
فاكس: ٦٣٥٧٧٧

**شركات للتأمين**  
الوطنية للتأمين ت: ٢٧٧١٢/٢٧٧١٣  
مأرب للتأمين صنعاء ت: ٢٠٦١٢٨/٨١٣  
الشركة اليمنية الإسلامية للتأمين وإعادة التأمين صنعاء ت: ٢٨٤١٣٢  
عدن ت: ٢٤٤٣٨٠  
تقر ت: ٢٥٨٨١١  
شركة اليمن للتأمين صنعاء ت: ٢٧٣٨٠٦/٢٧٣٩٦/٤٣  
عدن ت: ٢٤٧١١٧  
تقر ت: ٢٥٠٢٥٠

**مراكز تدريب وتعليم الكمبيوتر**  
أبتك لتعليم الكمبيوتر (مركز على الانترنت، مناهج، تجارة إلكترونية) شهادة ايزو ١.  
صنعاء ت: ٠١-٤٢٨٣٠٥  
فاكس: ٠١-٤٠٧٤٩١  
عدن ت: ٢٠٠٣٣٧١٩٩  
تقر ت: ٤٠٢٥٠-٢٤٣٠  
المكلا ت: ٥٠٢٠٧٤٩٢

**مدارس**  
مدرسة رينيو ت: ٤١٤٠٠٣٧/٤٢٤-٤٢٣  
مدارس صنعاء الدولية ت: ٣٧٠١٩١/٢  
فاكس: ٣٧٠١٩٣  
مدرسة التريكة الدولية ت: ٤٤٨٣٨٥/٩  
مدرسة المعاهد اليمنية ت: ٢٠٦١٥١

**سفرات**  
السيم للسفرات ت: ٣٧٠٧٥٠  
العالمية للسفرات والسياحة ت: ٤٤١٥٨٩/٦٠

**مطاعم**  
مطعم ومخازن الشيباني (باسم محمد عبده الشيباني)  
تلفون: ٥٠٢٩٠ - ٢٦٦٢٧٥ - فاكس: ٢٦٧٦١٩

هل تبحث عن التميز؟

**الشربا**  
للطباعة والإعلان

البحر - صنعاء - ص.ب: ١٢٥٢٥  
شارع بغداد جوار معهد التدريب المهني والفني  
تلفون: ١-٥٣٥٣٥٣-٥٠٩٦٦٦ - فاكس: ٥٠٩٦٦٦-١-٥٣٥٣٥٣

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فاكس: ٢٦٧٦١٩٩  
ص.ب: ٥٤٦٥  
Email: shaibani@yemen.net.ye

**باحثون عن وظيفة**

• علي محمد - مبرمج كمبيوتر  
• جامعة عدن - دبلوم عامين  
• مصمم ومدير قواعد بيانات  
• لست سنوات - محاسب  
• لمدة أربع سنوات - مسئول إداري (قسم استحقاقات)  
• لمدة عامين ونصف - خبرة في المبيعات وبرامج المخازن والمشتريات ونقاط البيع  
• لمدة عامين ونصف - دورات في الشؤون الإدارية - يبحث عن عمل لفترة المسائية فقط  
• ٤٩-٧٧٧٢٢٧٠  
• أروى منصور - دبلوم فني إدارة تنمية تخصص (برمجة حاسوب) - خبرة سنتين في مجال السكرتارية - خبرة في اللغة الإنجليزية - مديرة في مجال التسويق في شركة ماليزية - حاصلة على شهادة في النظام المحاسبي يمن سوفت - ترغب في العمل لفترة واحدة فقط في محافظة تعز  
• ٧٣٣٠٤٠٥٦٣  
• كمال إسماعيل - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - خبرة في التجارة والإدارة والتدريس - يرغب في العمل في أي مجال مناسب  
• ٧١٩٤٣٩٣٣  
• بكالوريوس علوم وهندسة حاسوب - دورات في اللغة الإنجليزية - خبرة في تقنية المعلومات - خبرة في الصيانة والبرمجة - يرغب في العمل في مجال تخصصه  
• ٧٧٧٢٢٤١١٥ - ٧٧١٨١٨٤٢٠  
• مدرس علوم (أحياء - كيمياء) - سوداني الجنسية - خبرة في التدريس لأكثر من ١٤ سنة

**عقارات**

• للإيجار: شقة دور ثاني جديدة ، بالقرب من جولة بيت بوس، ٣ غرف وحمامين ومطبخ وحوش للسيارات ٣٠٠٠ ألف ريال  
للتواصل: ٧٧٧٥٠٧٥٠  
• للبيع: فيلا دور واحد جديدة - في حي الإسكان منطقة الأصبحي قريبة من سوق المقالع - مساحة الأرضية ٧ لين حر ، ٥ غرف ، حمامين ومطبخ وموقف لسيارة.  
سعر البيع: ٢٠ مليون ريال (قابل للتفاوض)  
للتواصل: ٧٣٣٨٠٢٨٥٥  
• للبيع: أرضية على طريق عدن لحج بجانب مدينة أمين مقبل السياحية على الشارع العام - المساحة ١٠٥٠٠ مترمربع.  
للتواصل: ٧٧٧٧٩٥٠٥  
• للبيع: عمارة كاملة التشطيب - مكونة من

**كوبون للإعلانات الشخصية المجانية (كل الاعلانات الشخصية بدون أي مقابل)**

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**تفاصيل الاعلان:**

**عنوان التواصل:**

قص هذا الكوبون وارسله إلى صحيفة يمن تايمز على فاكس ٢٦٨٢٧٦ او على صندوق بريد ٢٥٧٩ - صنعاء لمزيد من المعلومات اتصل ب (ت ٢/٣/٢٦٨٦٦١)



## Taiz Zoo, a unique stronghold for the Arabian leopard

By: Lucy Vigne  
and Esomond Martin  
For Yemen Times

For many years, there was a collection of animals outside the former Imam's Palace in Taiz. It consisted of mainly lions kept in tiny dark enclosures, the offspring of a pair of lions given to Yemen's last imam by Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie in 1950. In 1998, at the request of Taiz Governor Mohammed Al-Hijri, this collection received a new location, the Taiz Zoo.

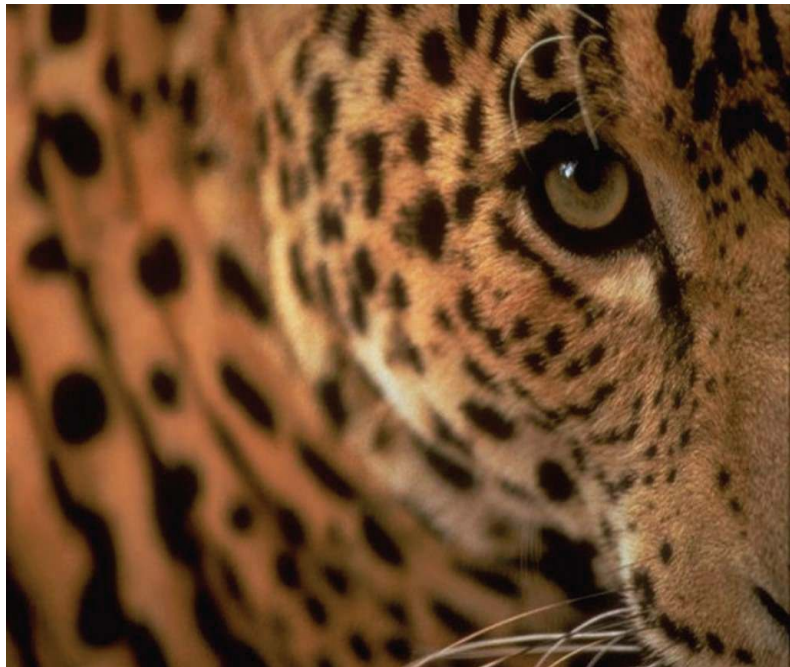
A grassy, insect-infested area was chosen to construct the zoo on the outskirts of the city. It cost YR 33 million (\$250,000), including an extension constructed in 2002. The new zoo site covers 10,000 square meters and has spaced to expand.

Taiz governorate's local council oversees the zoo through the Improvement and Cleaning Fund. The zoo's monthly budget is YR 3.5 million (\$17,500), YR 1.2 million of which is for salaries and incentives for the 72 all-male employees, while the rest is for food and medicine.

The zoo is very popular, receiving many visitors, mostly on Fridays and during holidays.

The entry fee for Yemenis is YR 20 for children, YR 5 for adults and YR 150 for non-Yemenis. All funds go to the Improvement and Cleaning Fund, which in turn pays the zoo's budget. Taiz Zoo is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. A variety of animals can be seen, particularly those species indigenous to Yemen.

The zoo holds 22 of the rare Arabian subspecies of leopard, the largest number in captivity in the world. There



Taiz zoo holds 22 of the rare Arabian subspecies of leopard

are thought to be perhaps only 200 left in the wild in Arabia. Four of the zoo's leopards were captured wild in Yemen while the remainder of the Arabian leopards were born and successfully reared at the zoo.

A stud book is kept; however, none have yet been exchanged or transferred to other zoos.

Because wild mother leopards used to eat their cubs after birth, so in 2000, zoo staff adapted a cage (the type used to transport leopards), raising it off the ground and putting wide bars at its base through which the cubs can be removed. Once a pregnant female stops eating, usually a week before giving birth, she is placed in the cage within her enclosure.

During this time, five staff members

attend to her needs, some even staying with her in the enclosure day and night. Immediately after the cubs are born, staff remove them safely through the bars during the daytime.

A whelping bitch then is brought in to feed the cubs.

This unique system has allowed a number of cubs to survive to adulthood.

Two captive-born leopards now are breeding and feeding their cubs unassisted. These cubs, now pre-adults, are wild and unapproachable and technically could be released into the wild.

The old zoo at the palace contained 10 lions when it closed down: Taiz governorate gave four to Sana'a Zoo and six were transferred to the new zoo. The numbers in Taiz now have built up

to 31. Although one male born at the old zoo has fathered all of the offspring, there has been no sterilization of males.

Zoo staff hope there will be no more breeding due to fighting among the younger lions. Those that fight are kept away from each other.

One pre-adult cheetah from Africa was brought to the zoo via Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in November 2006.

The zoo also currently contains one tortoise and 20 terrapins.

All of the snakes at Taiz Zoo died because the funds their keeper used to pay children to collect lizards to feed them stopped and the keeper then left in dismay. A well-run and financed reptile house is needed and once this is built, the new keeper should visit Sana'a Zoo to learn how to feed snakes without relying on food/animals caught in the wild.

A veterinarian visits Taiz Zoo three hours every afternoon assisted by the zoo's dedicated full-time zoologist Mohammed Al-Shaifi. They have a small clinic with only a microscope and a centrifuge, but no laboratory or operating theater, so operations take place on the rough concrete ground of the clinic.

Due to limited medical facilities and drugs, it's not surprising that the death rate for many animals is high. Additionally, because there's no incubator, many small mammals die of cold and wet due to poor caging and limited medical care, so turnover is rapid.

### Animal food and water

Taiz Zoo requires a steady funding source for food and a larger budget to feed its growing animal population. For example, lions eat 100 kilograms of meat a day, while leopards and wolves

require 60 kilograms per day. Donkey meat usually is provided, but sometimes beef, lamb or camel meat is used.

Because funds sometimes are lacking, zoo staff fear that the facility easily could collapse if food supplies can't be regularly purchased. For this reason, the animals are fed mainly cheap vegetables (carrots, cabbages, tomatoes, green peppers, potatoes and onions), but they need more fruit.

As is the case with the whole of Taiz governorate, the zoo also suffers a water shortage problem. Staff would like a dam built on the grounds to collect rainwater. There's no working vehicle at the zoo to transport food and water to the animals, so a pick-up truck is much needed. Currently, wheelbarrows are used for all transport, but these are slow, laborious and unsuitable for very large or heavy items.

### Promotion needed

Although Taiz Zoo is described in both Arabic and English in the city's tourism brochure, it attracts very few Western tourists, despite the chance to see the rare Arabian leopard and other native animals.

Taiz needs to better advertise the zoo, for example, at hotels, because tourists very well may donate to it if they saw its dire needs. In order to improve its attraction, sections of the zoo could concentrate on Yemeni species for foreign visitors so they could learn about local animals that they are unlikely to see otherwise.

Although originally intended in the zoo's plan, there is no education center, which is needed to teach Yemenis about wildlife and conservation and to help them appreciate their wildlife heritage in one of the Arabian Peninsula's richest remaining regions for wildlife.



lions eat 100 kilograms of meat a day.

## Odd News

### Hundreds of visitors stranded on London Eye



LONDON (Reuters) — Four hundred people were trapped on the London Eye for more than an hour while engineers fixed a mechanical fault, a spokeswoman for the riverside tourist attraction said on Tuesday.

Sightseers were suspended up to 450 feet above the ground on Monday night as workmen repaired one of the four huge tires that turn the observation wheel.

Staff spoke to visitors over an intercom system fitted in each of the 32 glass pods. They were offered water, blankets and glucose tablets stored in "comfort packs."

"It stopped for a brief period while we rectified it and then we got all the guests off," said a London Eye spokeswoman. "We had full communication with them throughout and offered them a refund afterwards."

The wheel, which can carry 800 passengers during each 30-minute revolution, reopened at 10 a.m. on Tuesday.

Since it opened in 2000, the attraction has become one of London's best-known landmarks, with about 3.5 million visitors each year.

### Russian farmer sues space agency for falling rocket

BARNAUL, Russia (Reuters) — A shepherd is suing Russia's space agency for compensation after he said a 10-foot-long chunk of metal from a space rocket fell into his yard, just missing his outdoor toilet.

Boris Urmatov, who is asking for 1 million roubles (\$42,000) from the Roskosmos agency, lives in a small village that lies underneath the flight path of rockets taking off from the Baikonur launchpad Russia leases in nearby Kazakhstan.

"Something woke him up in the night,

like something exploded. Since he's visually handicapped he didn't notice the fallen rocket parts," Urmatov's sister Marina told Reuters from the village of Kyrlyk, in Russia's Altai region.

"But in the morning in front of the shepherd he saw this enormous metal casing, as smooth as an egg," she said by telephone from the village, which is 2,175 miles east of Moscow. "It nearly crushed the outhouse."

She said her brother was seeking damages to compensate him for the stress he suffered.

Residents in the neighboring village of Ust-Kan said rocket pieces regularly rain down on their area. Parts of the surrounding countryside are designated special zones where people may not go during the launches.

"Sometimes it's smooth metal casings, sometimes it's bolts. I remember something like an engine fell once," said Anatoly Kazakov, an Ust-Kan resident.

### "THEY FLY, THEY FALL"

Roskosmos said it regularly warns residents when a launch is scheduled, and in a history stretching back over 50 years and 400 rockets, only a few space-bound rocket parts have fallen outside designated areas.

"Technologically speaking, these parts are supposed to fall off during a launch. They fly, they fall, they fly, they fall. It's how they work," said Roskosmos spokesman Alexander Vorobyov.

He said Roskosmos regularly sends out an investigation team to check on reports of damage from rocket parts, but it could only pay compensation if a court rules for damages.

"If a court determines that, yes, those are rocket parts, they fell on his land, then for sure he will be compensated. No question about it. We live in a civilized, law-abiding country," Vorobyov said.

Izvestia newspaper said Roskosmos had only once paid out compensation over rocket debris to a private individual — 10,000 roubles in 2001 — when a piece fell on his yard as he was outside chopping wood.

"What is abnormal is when somebody gets greedy, and it turns out the parts did not fall on his land, but that they were dragged there. Those moments are not good," Vorobyov said.

"But those are individual instances. We in no way refuse to pay out compensation. It just has to go through the court system."

### Millions of bees loose on Calif. highway

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Millions of swarming honey bees are on the loose after a truck carrying crates of the insects flipped over on a California highway.

The California Highway Patrol says 8-to-12 million bees escaped Sunday from the crates in which they were stored and swarmed over an area of Highway 99 and stung officers, firefighters and tow truck drivers trying to clear the accident.

CHP Officer Michael Bradley says a tractor trailer flipped over while entering the highway on its way to Yakima, Wash. The flatbed was carrying bee crates each filled with up to 30,000 bees.

Bradley says several beekeepers driving by the accident stopped to assist in the bee wrangling.

The bees had been used in the San Joaquin Valley to pollinate crops.

### Why does the Kremlin want 3,200 female white mice?

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Wanted: 3,200 white mice. Must be female. No more than 18 grams.

Purchaser: the Kremlin security service.

So why does the Kremlin guard, which is made up of former spies and elite troops who protect President Vladimir Putin, want to buy so many female white mice?

"Everyone is wondering what they are for. But if they were ordered then that means they are needed," an official from the service said with a gruff chuckle.

He refused to speculate about whether the mice could be used to feed to the falcons which are kept in the Kremlin, the seat of Russia's rulers, to scare off crows.

"There are more important things to think about," he said.

Some Russian media have also speculated the mice could play a role in testing toxic substances or indicating the presence of dangerous gases.

Documents posted on the official government tender Web Site on Friday showed the Kremlin guard has found a supplier and will pay 475,776 roubles (10,040 pounds) for the mice.

**HORIZON AGENCIES & COMMERCIAL SERVICES (HACS)**  
 P.O. Box : 15408 Sana'a, Republic of Yemen  
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