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Sodium 15 mg	1%
Total Carbohydrate 24 g	8%

# Saleh calls for dialogue with opposition

By: Mohammed Bin Sallam

SANA'A, Feb. 22 — President Ali Abdullah Saleh called on the leadership of the General People's Congress (GPC) and the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) last week to conduct a dialogue about the parliamentary elections within the framework of the constitution and law.

According to the online website 26September.net which reported the news, the president's call to the GPC and JMP for this dialogue came from his position as "a president for all Yemenis." The call stressed the importance of "tackling all issues that concern the country through dialogue that achieves understanding and reconciliation as well as meets the supreme interest of the country."

The contradictory stand of Saleh came after the director of the American Democratic Institute, who visited Yemen a few days ago, confirmed that elections will be held in due time. In addition, sources from the GPC stated that the ruling party will conduct the elections alone. The sources further said that the president's call resulted from the stand of donor countries which apologized to Yemen for not participating in the third consultancy conference scheduled to be

held this week. The head of the Coordination Unit for Foreign Aid in the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Nabil Ali Shaiban, officially announced that the "agreement between the government and donors to adjourn the third consultancy conference came in appreciation for considerations relating to the coincidence of the conference timing with another international conference for donors to reconstruct Gaza." Shaiban noted that Ministers of Finances from the Gulf Countries will participate in this international conference.

In a release issued by their supreme council, the JMP held leaders of the ruling party responsible "for rendering the agreement that the JMP reached with the president during a meeting held last Friday a failure."

The JMP said that they agreed with the president during the meeting "to form a joint committee from the two sides to discuss the national necessities for justifications of adjourning elections and to suggest a timetable for carrying out the agreed-upon issues, including constitutional amendments."

The JMP release considered that voting on amendments of the election laws without agreement between all concerned sides violates the agreement made with the president. The agreement related to the importance of political reforms and accrediting the proportional list electoral system as an integrated system.

The release revealed that the agreement with the president included that "every side offers visions about reforms and then the issues that need amendments, including the proportional list, will be agreed upon." The JMP suggestion regarding adjourning elections stipulated that "the period of adjourning is determined according to the need of discussing the issues and procedures that were agreed upon," stressing that it is

necessary to finish discussing these issues so that the elections can be conducted based on a proportional list.

The release said that the GPC leaders refused the JMP suggestion in another meeting and insisted that elections should be conducted based on the effective law, whereas working through the proportional list "is adjourned to the next electoral course." The JMP refused this idea.

The JMP additionally refused allegations made by the ruling party stating that the JMP demanded adjourning elections for two years, as related by head of the GPC parliamentary bloc. The JMP pointed out that "what the ruling party circulates in this regard is baseless." The JMP refused altogether "any lateral step by the

ruling party, including re-voting on the election law amendment draft known as 'August 18 amendments.'

The JMP release considered that re-voting on these amendments without a national consensus "is an illegal act that fixes the exclusiveness that aims to change the electoral process for which only the ruling party will be held responsible."

The JMP expressed their appreciation for the efforts that Less Campbell, National Democratic Institute's Middle East and North Africa programs director, and Heather Therrien NDI country director of the in Yemen, exerted to facilitate removing those obstacles that hinder reaching a solution.

For his part, Mansour Al-Zandani, a

member of parliament from the Islah Party, suggested in press statements that the JMP conduct elections only in the constituencies that are represented by the JMP and maintain the other constituencies represented by the GPC as they are currently instead of conducting elections in all constituencies of the republic.

Newsyemen.net reported that Al-Zandani said that it is better for the GPC, which insists on conducting elections alone without the participation of partners in the political process, to conduct elections only in the constituencies that are currently represented by the JMP members. This would be in order to avoid spending money on elections from the public finance which currently suffers from a shortage of funds.

## Parliament revokes minimum age for marriage law

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, Feb. 22 — The law for defining the minimum age for marriage, which was passed a few days ago defining the minimum age at 17, has been returned to the jurisprudence legislation for discussion. The committee is responsible for ensuring that any proposed laws are in compliance with Islamic jurisprudence which is the base of all laws according to the Yemeni constitution.

The government's Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood had proposed a marriage law defining 18 as the minimum age for marriage more than one and a half years ago. When the story of Nujood Al-Ahdal, the girl who was forced into marriage at nine years of age, was highlighted in the media in July last year, the Women's National Committee again pushed for defining a minimum age for marriage. However it was only last week when the parliament finally voted on the law, passing it at 17 years old.

The number 17 came as a compromise between the proposed law from the government and the jurisprudence committee's recommendations of 15 years old as the minimum age for marriage for boys and girls.

According to MP Fuad Dahaba of the Justice and Endowment Committee at the Parliament, the voting process was confused. Many of the MPs did not know whether they were voting for the recommendations of the jurisprudence committee

or for the initial proposal of the government. Therefore, twenty Members of Parliament objected to the passing of the law at this age which contradicts the recommendations of the jurisprudence committee.

"What this committee recommends is the marriage law to be considered as a 'fatwa' [religious ruling] and not to be discussed unless under a religious basis. What the parliament did is ignore the recommendations of the concerned committee. This is procedurally incorrect, and therefore the call has been issued for re-opening the discussions," said MP Ghalib Al-Qurashi, head of the Justice Committee at the Parliament.

Currently the law has returned to the jurisprudence committee which will reissue its report and provide its input on which age or under what conditions a Yemeni boy or girl can be married. Mohammed Naser Al-Hazmi, a member of the media committee at the parliament and an outspoken conservative leader, commented that it should not be long before the committee returns it to the parliament for a second vote.

"This time the voting should be on 15 as a minimum age for marriage with conditions. This age was derived in connection to legislative references in the Islamic jurisprudence as it is seen as the agreed upon age for puberty. If the parliament again votes for 17, we will take this up to the Constitutional Court," Al-Hazmi warned.

He reiterated that he and the others

involved in the campaign against defining the minimum age for marriage at 17 are not promoting early marriage. "We are not telling Yemenis to marry your daughters and sons at 15; we are saying that this is not religiously correct to tie marriage to a certain age. It should be tied to certain physiological and mental requirements."

On the other hand, Yemeni women and child rights movements called on local and international organizations to stand by the law at its previously passed statement. This law was advocated for by three government bodies: the Ministry of Health within the context of the Safe Motherhood law relating to health risks of early pregnancy, by the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood and the government body responsible for women's affairs, and the Women's National Committee.

"It would be a scandal if we go back from our achievement just a few days after it was made. We need everyone to work together for the sake of women's

rights," said Rashida Al-Hamadani, chairperson of the WNC. Tens of thank you notes and appreciation letters were sent to the Parliament as expressions of gratitude for passing the law, which is now standing on shaky ground. The Women's National Committee, Yemeni Women's Union, Child Parliament, and several civil society organizations visited or called Speaker of Parliament Yahya Al-Raie to commend this positive step in women and child rights.

Members of the child parliament gave white roses to a committee of MPs headed by deputy speaker of parliament Mohammed Al-Shadadi during a meeting with women's organizations outside the Parliament earlier this week.

"We must not allow political agendas to compromise children's and women's rights," said Hooria Mashour, deputy chairperson of the WNC. She called on international and donor organizations to apply pressure on the Yemeni parliament and the president not to allow such an achievement to be destroyed.

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Ethiopian Ambassador Dr. Tawfik Abdullah to the Yemen Times

“Ethiopia’s relations with Yemen go back thousands of years”

The rich but under-explored history between Yemen and Ethiopia dates back to ancient times. Cultural relations between two countries can be traced back to the birth of the Aksum Kingdom in Ethiopia as an extension of the Sabaeen and Himiarite Kingdoms in Yemen. Modern political relations date back to the 1930s when the first bilateral agreement was signed, paving the way for diplomatic ties between both countries.

Currently, about 20,000 Yemenis live and work in Ethiopia. Similarly, an estimated 275,000 Ethiopians are officially registered as living in Yemen, where they work as technicians, drivers, technical experts, businessmen in both the governmental and private sectors. Geographical proximity and exchange migration have led to social, cultural, and economic similarities between the two countries.

Recently, Addis Ababa hosted the 12th African Union Summit, which twenty-two states attended. Dr. Tawfik Abdullah, Ethiopian Ambassador to Yemen, spoke to Khaled Al-Hilaly about bilateral and regional issues.



Dr. Tawfik Abdullah

What kind of activities do Yemenis carry out in Ethiopia? What facilities does the Ethiopian government offer them?

To begin with, the relationship between Yemen and Ethiopia is deep rooted and goes beyond thousands and thousands of years. There was a very large Yemeni community living throughout Ethiopia engaged in different trade and business. Their children attended the Ethiopian schools as native citizens. Currently there are less numbers of Yemenis who engaged in different sectors of investment. The Yemenis enjoy living and working in Ethiopia. There is a Yemeni Community School that was established over fourty years ago and is still active. Recently the Ethiopian government allotted a big piece of land for the expansion of this school in Addis Ababa.

What about Ethiopians in Yemen?

There are quite a large number of Ethiopians in Yemen and many are engaged in different sectors. There are also few number of students studying in different universities and colleges.

Why do many of the Ethiopians that come to Yemen have to be smuggled and not come via official means?

Many Ethiopians coming to Yemen are victims of “human trafficking” destined to the Gulf States in search of

better economic benefits. Human trafficking is a lucrative business and the dealers convince and brainwash economically impoverished citizens and dwellers for gorgeous economic gains. They smuggle them through the sea, with catastrophic tragedies at times, and never reach their destination.

Many come to claim political asylum, saying that they are escaping insecurity or other political reasons. What do you say?

Ethiopia is a federal state with over eighty nations and nationalities enjoying a wide range of democracy and self-administration. However diversified Ethiopia is, with its various nation and nationalities, it is very much united as never before. There is no room for suppression and oppression in Ethiopia. It will not be astonishing or come a surprise if some of those claiming political asylum are using this as a pretext to gain privileges and special treatment; otherwise their claims and allegations cannot be substantiated.

What are examples of how the African Union is successfully reducing conflicts in the African continent?

The African Union (AU) has regional organizations such as The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and The Southern African Development

Community (SADC) among others, with its own summits in which the organizations resolve conflicts and disputes. The AU covers issues relating to peace and the Security Council also engages in resolving disputes and conflicts. Thus all the approaches of the AU and other regional organizations engage in maintaining peaceful co-existence between and among African countries, and resolve disputes and conflicts should they occur.

Would you highlight the Somalia conflict? What are you expecting from Sheikh Ahmed, the new Somali President?

Somalia’s transitional government was established in Kenya in 2004 under the auspices of the AU and the UN. There was commitment from the international community and other countries to support the weak transitional government in establishing and structuring itself. However, few countries lived up to their commitment and the transitional government was brought back to Somalia from Kenya after two years in exile there. Initially the Transitional Government was based in Juhar and later in Baidowa. Very few countries engaged in providing crucially needed assistance to the Transitional Government, which helped the War Lords and Islamic Courts Union (ICU) to gain the upper hand. The Transitional Government was at the

verge of collapse when they asked for assistance from the Ethiopian Government. The ICU had seized and controlled Mogadishu and repeatedly claimed war “Jihad” on Ethiopia and also engaged in terrorist activities in Ethiopia. The call for assistance from the Transitional Government of Somalia and the immediate threat of war on Ethiopia by the ICU was the reason for Ethiopia to get involved in Somalia. The Ethiopian forces swept away the ICU and brought temporary peace and security in Somalia while dealing a big blow to the ICU.

The Transitional Government should have built upon the temporary peace and security achieved by the Ethiopian force. Unfortunately, the leaders of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia were busy in a power struggle among themselves and were after individual benefits that let down the prevailing peace and security. It should be noted here that it is the Somalis themselves that could bring, maintain, and sustain peace and stability in Somalia. The AU, IGAD, etc. thus can only have a supporting role. Ethiopia has committed itself and its resources to achieve these goals; it has trained tens of thousands of police forces and civil servants. The international communities, the UN, the EU, Arab League and the AU, with the exception of a few countries, were very reluctant to help in bringing and maintaining peace in Somalia.

Somalia was abandoned and little attention was given. Ethiopia bears the burden mostly alone and it cannot and must not bear all the burdens by itself. That is why we pulled out of Somalia. We had achieved our objectives; the Somalia issue is not Ethiopia’s issue only. The Djibouti agreement led to the formation of expanding the parliament and participation of opposition parties and groups, and even individuals. It laid the base for establishing a broad-based government of unity in the interest of building Somalia again. That is how President Sheikh Sherif was elected. It is upon all countries and especially organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Arab League and the AU to support the current broad based government to stand on its own two feet.

How has the global financial crisis affected Africa, specifically Ethiopia?

It is sure that the global financial crisis has a negative effect on developing countries, including Ethiopia. But what affects us the most is the global economic crisis. First, the price of many commodities, raw materials, and the agricultural products has fallen so there is less revenue from exports. Secondly, remittance income from natives in foreign countries has decreased as there are huge lay-offs of employees. And thirdly, financial aid and loans for developing countries has decreased. These are the main negative effects of the current global economic crisis affecting the developing countries.

Tell me about the Sana’a Forum summit that recently took place in Khartoum.

At the end of 2008 the Sana’a Forum for cooperation held its summit in Khartoum, Sudan. It should be recalled that the Forum was established in Yemen in 2002 and included countries of the South Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. The Forum has achieved tangible results in the political, economical, social, and cultural fields. The Summit in Khartoum appreciated the achievements and pledged for better achievements especially in the economic trade and investment sectors.

Recently, nine countries signed an agreement in Djibouti to cooperate in fighting piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. Do you expect that this agreement will help reduce piracy?

The previous Djibouti agreement and the late “Regional Maritime Security Conference” held in Sana’a will help in minimizing the piracy and will allow safer passage of ships through this very important sea trade route. However, the root cause of the piracy in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden is the political, social, and economical problems in Somalia. The ultimate solution and remedy for the piracy is solving the problem in Somalia. The regional countries, the international community, the AU, the EU, the Arab League, and the UN should coordinate their efforts to bring a stable functional government in Somalia. The Somalis should sort out and solve their problems; they are the only ones who could bring peace and stability in Somalia. The others can only assist and extend help, but it is only the Somalis that can

and should bring about this change. Having said this, I want to stress the fact that piracy should be dealt with and there should be free and safe passage for ships, but we should not be obsessed with this and drift into a corner; we have to be engaged in resolving the current chaos in Somalia.

Does the embassy support the Yemeni-Ethiopian friendship association?

The Yemeni-Ethiopian Friendship Association was established a long time ago. It includes members from Yemenis of Ethiopian origins and those Yemenis who studied or grew up in Ethiopia. The Association still exists and activating it will be one of our missions in the near future.

Is there anything you would like to add?

Given this opportunity, I would like to inform to all that Ethiopia has the largest livestock capabilities in Africa. Fishery and forestry resources are also significant. Considerable opportunities exist for new private investment in the production and processing of agricultural products. In addition, there are good prospects for producing cotton and investment opportunities are potentially attractive for modern commercial livestock breeding, the production and processing of meat, milk, and eggs. Investment opportunities of significant potential are also available in other areas as well.

With some 3.3 million beehives, Ethiopia is the leading honey and beeswax producing and exporting nation in Africa. This offers excellent prospects for private investment in apiculture.

Major manufacturing opportunities offering attractive potential benefits to prospective investors exist in the textile and garment, food and beverages, leather and electronic, building materials and non-metallic mineral, and metallic industrial sub-sectors as well.

Given its unique cultural heritage, magnificent scenery, pleasant climate, rich flora and fauna, important archaeological sites, friendly and hospitable people, and the recent growth in the inflow of tourists, Ethiopia’s potential puts it among the leading tourist destination in Africa. There are, therefore, great opportunities for private investment in hotels, lodges and international restaurants.

Their News

British Council organizes higher education training

The British Council, in cooperation with the Evaluation & Development Department in Aden University, will organize training on Programme Specifications and Self-Evaluation for Higher Education Institutions.

The training will take place between 23 and 25 Feb. 2009 in Aden, and will be facilitated by Professor David Wilkinson, Ex-Head of Professional Development Cranfield University and a fellow of higher education, and Professor Abdullateef Al-Hakimi, a consultant in Education for Sana’a University and Ex-Dean of the Faculty of Education in the United Arab Emirates University. The event will be attended by 35 academics from all the colleges in Aden University and will be held at Mercure Hotel in Aden.

The workshop aims at equipping the participants with the principles and practices of self-evaluation processes and the mechanisms of creating programme specifications. Both Professors will focus on how to develop smart learning outcomes and aims for academic programmes, how to assess these learning outcomes and what are the pragmatic steps to start internal audits and external reviews to set up an effective self-evaluation system in higher education institu-



tions. Prof. Wilkinson will share practices from the UK and from his experience of other countries while Prof. Al-Hakimi will tailor this knowledge to the needs of the local universities enriching the event with his remarkable experience during leading the faculty of Education in the UAE University, the leading university in quality assurance in the Middle East.

Throughout the workshop, participants will be encouraged to consider the state of affairs in their own Colleges in the light of the topics discussed and to share their perceptions with the other members of the group. They will eventually be encouraged to draft action plans and to design systems for their own institutions.

The British Council has been extensively involved in developing quality assurance in higher education in the Gulf, Iraq and Yemen, and this workshop is considered the second one of a series of workshops and events planned to help developing quality assurance systems for different universities in different cities of Yemen.

MTN hands Toyota FJ car to winner



MTN congratulates Saleh Hassan Abdul Wel of Sana’a, winner of the last award, Toyota FJ model 2008, of recharge-and-win offer. The withdrawal process was carried out in presence of a supervisory committee constituted from many people. It includes a number of journalists representing a number of public and private mass media, lawyer of the company and representative of the company’s internal monitoring. This is a tradition that MTN followed in the past draw processes to ensure trans-

parency and assert its credibility. Walid Akkawi marketing director of MTN said the company will carry out a number of social, humanitarian services in health, sports and education. “2009 will witness larger coverage of the network’s services and facilities in addition to the latest communication technology,” he said. The number of MTN subscribers has reached by end of 2009 one million and 900 thousand customers.

OFFTEC in Yemen



Yemen Payments and Cards (SabaCard) organized a presentation for the solutions and services offered by OFFTEC Jordan in Sheba Tent-Taj Sheba Hotel-Sana’a from 9:30 until 12.00 noon in Saturday 22/2/2009. SabaCard is a sister company of Al-Rowaishan Group and was capable during the last three years to achieve pioneering accomplishments in the field of payments and cards in the Yemeni Market and with the goal of maintaining SabaCard’s specialty and excellence, Yemen International Technology company was founded to be specialized in Information Technology within Al-Rowaishan Group. During this event, Yemen International Technology (YIT) Company was declared. YIT is a sister company of the Al-Rowaishan Group and it will be specialized in IT Solutions mainly systems, software, and Hardware for all business sectors in a comprehensive and integrated way, high professionalism, and efficiency. YIT represents a number of international and regional companies in Yemen, including OFFTEC.

OFFTEC is known as pioneering company in the Middle East in the following fields of technology and integrated solutions: Banking Technologies, Security Solutions for Protecting Information Networks, Office Equipments, Security Protections, Office Solutions, Smart Cards Solutions, IT infrastructure Solutions, Applied Solutions. OFFTEC started business in AL-Quds city since 1910 and then in Jordan since 1947. OFFTEC Company is the primary agent for a number of specialized international companies in IT, systems of sorting and counting cash notes, systems of document mail dispatching, protected safes against fire, and specialized OFFTEC programs these companies include: AQUIS, Kern, Sigma, Talaris, Firelock, Datacard, e-Exam, SF+, Steelcase and others. The General Manager of SabaCard and YIT, Mr. Hani Adris, said that our goal is to position YIT as a leader in IT for all business sectors in the local market.



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# Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan to Yemen Times: “Building confidence is key to a country’s development”

**A**li Babacan was born in Ankara in 1967. He graduated first in the Class of 1985 from TED Ankara High School. In 1989, he received a Bachelor of Science Degree (BS) in Industrial Engineering from the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, where he ranked first among the graduates of that year.

In 1990, he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and attended the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where he received his Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Marketing, Organizational Behavior, and International Business in 1992.

From 1992 to 1994, he worked at a Chicago-based company providing financial consulting services to top executives of major banks in the United States.

Subsequently, he returned to Ankara to run his family business from 1994 until 2002.

In 2001, he became a Founding Member and Board Member of the Justice and Development Party (AKP).

During the general elections held in November 2002, he was elected to Parliament and was appointed as the Minister of State in charge of Economy, a cabinet position he retained throughout the 58th and 59th Governments of the Republic of Turkey until August 2007.

In addition to his tenure as Minister of State in charge of Economy, on June 3, 2005, he was appointed as Chief Negotiator in Turkey’s accession negotiations with the European Union. At the general elections held on July 22, 2007 he was re-elected to the Parliament. On August 29, 2007, he was appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the 60th Government of the Republic of Turkey. He is married with two children.

Nadia Al-sakkaf interviewed Babacan on his visit to Yemen.



Ali Babacan

Turkey’s economy has been growing rapidly, making it the sixth European economic power and predicted in 2009 to become the 15<sup>th</sup> largest globally. How did this happen? And how can Yemen learn from Turkey’s economic success story?

I [Ali Babacan] was the minister of finance in the years between 2002 and 2007, and so I can tell you candidly that it was a difficult mission. In the early years of this millennium Turkey had large public debts and the banking sector was weak. We have very little oil and no gas, so we realized that we had to grow the industrial and service sectors.

First, we made large economic reforms in public finance, in the banking sector, and most importantly, we made Turkey an easy place to invest. We simplified the rules, but we applied them all. Gradually confidence started to build, and we doubled our foreign direct investments from one billion US dollars in 2002 to two billion in 2003. In 2005 the FDI grew to 10 billion; it grew to 20 billion in 2006, and 22 billion in 2007.

You can see that by making our investment environment friendly we

built long term confidence in the country’s economic environment, and today companies from all around the world come to invest in Turkey. Building confidence is key to a country’s development.

*Yemen is an influential country in the region, and has a lot to offer the Arab world.*

Second, we worked on developing the industrial sector. We focused on manufacturing and while in 2002 our exports value was 36 billion dollars, mostly raw materials and agricultural produce, in 2008 it reached 132 billion and included heavy machinery, vehicles, technical equipments, and the like.

Consequently, the GDP grew from 230 billion US dollars in 2002 to 750 billion in 2008.

If there is a straightforward formula on to how to build a strong economy, I would say there are three factors: political stability, a focus on macro economy, and the creation of an easy business environment for investors.

**How has the global financial crises affected Turkey’s economy?**

Turkey and Spain were the only two countries in Europe that did not need to support its banking sector in order for it to survive. The large scale reforms we conducted between 2003 and 2005 in Turkey’s banking sector years proved very useful and you could say they made our banking sector stronger and more capable of surviving the economic blows.

Our ambition is to make Turkey among the top ten world economic powers by 2023, and we have persistently created steps to reach this goal.

**Relations with Yemen**

We have excellent relations with Yemen and they are getting stronger. There is mutual respect and good feeling between the Turkish and Yemeni people, and this is a very important base upon which we can increase our political dialogue, trade exchange, cross investments, technical exchange, and other relations in other fields.

During my visit we discussed bilater-

al and regional issues, especially Gaza. We do realize the appreciation of many Arab and Islamic countries for our role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. And Erdogan’s stance in Davos is understood because we believe that military might is no solution. Over 1300 people were killed in the Gaza crisis, yet nothing has changed. The only way to solve the issue is through political dialogue.

This is my first visit to Yemen, although many Yemeni and Turkish high level officials have exchanged visits in the last few years.

We should have more regular visits and have frequent consultations on regional and bilateral issues.

Yemen is an influential country in the region, and has a lot to offer the Arab world.

**How do you see Yemen developing into an economic power?**

Yemen has much potential that it should invest in. The location is very strategic and can be used to improve Yemen’s economic conditions significantly. Additionally, Yemen has a huge base of human resources which should be

invested in. I also think that Yemen should invest in its noble culture; there is an element of trust in the Yemeni people that is kind and hard to find.

It is very important to simplify rules, especially for investment. Not only that, but it is important to have written rules for the practice of investment. In other words, in order to create confidence in any country’s system, what is written must be implemented and what is implemented must be written.

**Turkey has recently been very active in the Islamic world and the Middle East, sometimes even overshadowing countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Iran. Is this the new direction for Turkey – leading the Islamic world rather than being part of the European Union?**

Turkey is a part of NATO and is a country listed for European Union candidacy. It is also a Mediterranean country and our aim is to build closer relations with our neighboring countries. Turkey’s foreign policy is to talk to all and to open communication channels for peace and mutual interest.

Our intention is not to overshadow any other country; in fact, we work with all. With regards to the Syrian-Israeli conflict, we have played a mediation role. We also hold talks with all the Palestinian groups.

*If there is a straight forward formula on to how to build a strong economy, I would say there are three factors: political stability, a focus on macro economy, and the creation of an easy business environment for investors.*

**The ruling party of Turkey, a secular country, is one whose ideology is defined as through Islamism and economic liberalism. Is there a conflict here? How does an Islamic party, the AK party, lead a secular country?**

The AK party has a conservative democratic ideology. It is sensitive about ethnicities and vocal about these concepts. Turkey’s secular system means that the state is at equal distance from all religions and all sects. It allows for religious

freedoms. We built a system that respects all faiths of the people. And as a political party we have our own fundamentals which are respected. Candidates are voted for by the people; we are a political party elected by the people and so we are in power because the majority of the Turkish people chose us.

**What about the claims that although Turkey defines itself as a democratic country, it oppresses its Armenian and Kurdish minorities?**

I cannot deny that we had problems five or six years ago as you mentioned, but we worked on these issues. We even changed the constitution to allow more freedom and more representations of all sects in Turkish society. Years ago it was forbidden to have songs or even CDs in the Kurdish language, but now there is a Kurdish TV channel. Today we have more than 400 TV stations and 1100 radio channels, so today you can see the extent of freedom of expression we developed.

Throughout the last few years we carried out huge reforms, not just in our economy but political reforms in developing democracy and implementing the law for all without discrimination.

**The municipality elections are set for March 29. How does the AK Party reply to accusations of corruption by Deniz Baykal of the Republican People’s Party (CH Party)?**

Polls so far show good results for us, and if the elections were to take place today I could tell you that we will win, but the thing with politics is that you can never take anything for granted.

You must realize that this is a time of political campaigning so such accusations are expected. My response to this is that we have courts in Turkey and if anyone has evidence of any of those accusations they can easily file a case in court. In Turkey, even mayors do not have immunity from the law and courts are independent of any political influence.

But of course those who accuse the AK party of such misdeeds will not use the legal channels because their accusations are baseless. If there was any truth to this we would be the first people to take action, but then again my response is that the courts are there to put such accusations in perspective.



Turkish FM with his wife in a tourist visit to Dar AL-Hajar, Sana’a. Photos courtesy of Fatih Ugurlu



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# Guess what's lurking in your food

By: Salma Ismail

Strolling down the chaotic aisles of her local grocery store in Sana'a, Nabila is busy removing items that her three children have discreetly sneaked in to her shopping cart. "We're not buying junk food," she tells them, returning them one by one to the shelves.

But little does she know that many of the items she chooses to keep in the cart are actually "junk food" too. With some brands not writing all ingredients of their food labels and limited consumer awareness, her choices are limited to her motherly intuition.

High fructose corn syrup, also called isoglucose, is a thick liquid that lurks in all sorts of items at your local grocery store's shelves and many fast food menus. You can find it in yoghurts, ketchup, cereals, pancake syrup, ice-cream, soft drinks, cookies, canned soup and fruit juices, among many other items.

## How high fructose corn syrup is made

High fructose corn syrup is made from corn kernels. But that's just the beginning of the process. Actual syrup production necessitates a whole string of industrial processes including high-velocity spinning and the introduction of three different enzymes to incite molecular rearrangements.

The enzymes turn most of the glucose molecules in corn into fructose, which makes the substance sweeter. This 90 percent fructose syrup mixture is then combined with regular 100 percent glucose corn syrup, to get the desired balance of glucose and fructose, somewhere between equal quantities of both to a ratio of 80 to 20 percent. The final product is a clear thick liquid that is sweeter than sugar.

## Why high fructose corn syrup is good

It's good because it makes everything



Some food labels list high fructose corn syrup in their ingredients. Other do not.

taste good, but all this may come at the price of your health. Not only is high fructose corn syrup sweeter and easier to blend into beverages than table sugar, but it's also a great preservative so it can be used in processed foods to extend their shelf life.

High fructose corn syrup is easier to transport and more economical in countries where the price of sugar are twice the global price, such as the United States and Canada. The syrup can be 20 to 70 percent cheaper than sugar.

In 1983, a beverage analyst estimated that by switching to high-fructose corn syrup, Coca-Cola gained a cost advantage of USD 70 million a year over Pepsi and its bottlers. A year later, Pepsi followed in Coke's footsteps and also began using the artificial sweetener.

## Why high fructose corn syrup is bad

First of all, high fructose corn syrup does not exist in nature. A product of the complex process described above, it is genetically modified.

In 1982, when the artificial sweetener was introduced into the American food supply, children for the first time began getting type II diabetes and obesity rates soared. In at least one study,

the syrup has been linked to both.

The syrup also has been shown to interfere with people's metabolism so that a person feels hungrier than they really are. This is because high fructose corn syrup also limits the secretion of leptin into the body's system. Leptin is a hormone that signals to the brain when you are full and, without it, the amount of food you consume is not controlled. In parallel to this, the manufactured sweetener also encourages the production of ghrelin, a hormone responsible for controlling appetite, sending your appetite into over-drive.

The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition in 2004 published a study noting that the rise in high fructose corn syrup consumption paralleled the rise in obesity rates in the U.S. and hypothesized that the way fructose is metabolized could be uniquely fattening. The authors later said that their study was meant to inspire further study, not to be a definitive declaration.

Because there are no enzymes to digest high fructose corn syrup, it is metabolized by the liver. The pancreas to release insulin the way it normally does for sugar, so fructose converts to fat more readily than any other sugar. An overworked liver produces signifi-



But there's another reason to avoid high fructose corn syrup. Consumers may think that fructose is healthier than sugar because they associate it with fruit, but a team of investigators at the United States Department of Agriculture discovered this to be untrue. A study they conducted proved a fructose diet to lead to many more health problems than a glucose diet.

## Mercury in high fructose corn syrup

Researchers have discovered low levels of the toxic element mercury in high fructose corn syrup, according to the Environmental Health journal. The research was based on a limited test of only 20 samples of corn syrup, but mercury was found in nine of them.

How did the metal get in there? In making high fructose corn syrup, caustic soda is one of the ingredients used to separate corn starch from the corn kernel. According to one theory, caustic soda produced in industrial chlorine plants can be contaminated with mercury, then passed on to the high fructose corn syrup and those who eat it.

Mercury is toxic in all its forms. Given how much high-fructose corn syrup is consumed by children on ice cream and pancakes, it could be a significant source of mercury never before considered.

## Back to basics

Until further research can prove or disprove that high fructose corn syrup is the devil's candy, going back to basics and embracing all natural organic foods is a must. Consumers should read food labels as if they were health warnings.

Artificial sweeteners are not used in locally manufactured products, but high fructose corn syrup is present in imported goods sold in the local markets.

"Artificial sweeteners are not healthy for the human diet as they cause cancerous build-ups," said Saleh Al-Ghaylan, nutritionist at the Consumers Protection Association of Yemen.

## 4U

Concerned consumers should read the ingredients on food labels.

For any enquiries related to food health, you can call Yemen's Consumers Protection Association on 1- 500 711.

## Recipes

### How to make homemade chocolate syrup

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup unsweetened cocoa
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups cold water
- 1 tablespoon vanilla

#### Steps

Whisk together cocoa, sugar, salt and cold water. Cook over medium-low heat, whisking to combine, until thickened.

Let cool.

Add vanilla.

Store in the refrigerator.

### How to make homemade ketchup

#### Ingredients

- 1 can tomato paste
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon cloves
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar

#### Steps

In a large bowl, combine the ingredients together and stir the mixture until it is of uniform consistency.

## Sana'a Water and Sanitation Local Corporation Project Management Unit (PMU)

Sana'a Sanitation Networks Project  
Invitation for the Pre-Qualification of Bidders  
For the Construction of Sana'a Sanitation Networks Project  
Phase IV

¥ The Sana'a Water and Sanitation Local Corporation (SWSLC), Project Management Unit (PMU), has received a loan from the Arab Fund to finance the implementation the remaining of Sana'a Sanitation Networks Project. Therefore, SWSLC-PMU invites interested bidders experienced in the construction of sewerage networks, to apply for pre-qualification, which is open to local and international firms and voluntarily formed joint ventures between two firms of more.

¥ The project includes supply and construct uPVC and GRP sewerage networks pipes with diameters ranging from 160mm to 1500mm. The total length of the Sanitation networks is expected to be about 800km.

¥ Eligible contractors of first class grade according to top classification in their countries with sound experience in sewerage networks construction may obtain the pre-qualification documents from SWSLC-PMU, Republic of Yemen Sana'a, at the address noted below, starting from the date of publishing this notice at newspapers. The documents will be available for non-refundable fees of fifty US Dollars (US\$50).

¥ The application must be submitted in sealed envelopes, and clearly stated on the envelop □Application for Pre-Qualification for the Construction of Sana'a Sanitation Networks project-Phase IV□, also the name of company and address including Tel. and Fax No. Should be stated clearly. The application will not be accepted under any circumstances latter than date 30/3/2009 12.00 noon local time

Sana'a Water and Sanitation Local Corporation  
Project Management Unit  
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Project Director  
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## Al-Mihdhar remembered

Compiled by: Ismail Al-Ghabri

**H**ussein Abu Bakr Al-Mihdhar was a well-known lyrical poet, composer and parliamentarian. Born in 1931 in Ash Shihr in Hadramout, he was raised in a high-ranking Sufi family. His grandfathers were renowned public poets at a time when Hadrami poetry was famous all over the Gulf.

Al-Mihdhar expressed the sentiments of ordinary Yemeni people, tackling different aspects of their life. He wrote of love, wisdom and love of his nation and, although his poetry followed the local Hadrami style, he won the admiration of Yemenis throughout the country. His

choice of words, literary images, structure and style were all unique, and he greatly enriched the country's literary production with an exquisite collection of poems and songs.

Al-Mihdhar, who is considered the father of the Hadrami arts, dedicated many of his poetry and songs to various towns in Yemen, including Al-Shihr, Al-Taweela, Al-Mukalla, Tarim, Al-Safra, Al-Qatn, and Du'an. By including all these towns in songs, he ensured that the whole country remained united to the tune of traditional Hadrami music. Famous singer Abu Bakr Salem Balfaqih sang his lyrics which remain popular to this day.

Al-Mihdhar traveled between the different towns of Hadramout, notably to participate in "daan" sessions, a uniquely

Hadrami tradition in which a poet improvises verses then sung back to him, sometimes in a poetry duel with another poet.

He preserved the ancient traditions of Hadramout in his music. For example, the Hadrami people are famous for the visits they pay to the tombs of saints on several occasions during which they socialize and sing in processions. These and others were included in his songs.

His verses are permeated with wisdom. His song couplets often end with good advice. "Adhere firmly to honesty," he would write, or "Abandon and do not water the one that has no sense of honor."

His poetry is symbolic and politically involved to varying degrees. A voice for the people, he spoke of a desire for a unified Yemen before unification in May



1990. Both in his poetry and life's work, Al-Mihdhar tackled a number of issues dear to all.

### One night in Al-Taweela

One night in Al-Taweela,  
 More romantic than those of the Arabian nights  
 To the truck driver: "please, slow down"  
 Al-Qarn, it is that I wish to have home

No resemblance of the joy I had that night  
 She is too precious to give up for all pearls  
 Al-Qarn, it is that I wish to have home

The top sights of the city have arisen  
 Women are spreading the word, revealing the secret  
 And fear's gone  
 Al-Qarn, it is that I wish to have home  
 Stop and relax your heart  
 Before, you get too old to enjoy the scenery of the sweeties

Al-Qarn, it is that I wish to have home  
 Had your eye seen what mine saw of her beauty  
 You would be tempted to seduction  
 Al-Qarn, it is that I wish to have home

Puzzling when she speaks  
 Her height shapes perfect  
 Her eyes are arrows which, if casted  
 Never miss the target  
 Al-Qarn, it is that I wish to have home

They have proved successful in romance talks  
 Chuckling one's balance  
 Allowing love to go all over the body  
 Al-Qarn, it is that I wish to have home

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