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**Inside:**  **2** Former Dutch hostages: "The real problem in Yemen is corruption, not security."  
 **5** Al-Rabahi: "The Ministry of Public Health and Population should purchase drugs from local manufacturers."  
 **8** Bassam and Yemen's struggling economy

## Mother executed with her children's approval

By: Kawkab Al-Thaibani  
 For the Yemen Times

SANA'A, April 22 — Seven children went with their grandfather on Sunday to the Central Prison in Sana'a where their mother Aisha Al-Hamzi had been held for seven years. They went to give their approval for her execution by firing squad.

Aisha Al-Hamzi was charged with killing her husband, Yahya Al-Sharif, in 2002. She said she did it because he was abusing their daughter.

Two of her children watched the execution while the rest stayed in the car, in the prison's yard. She had four girls and three boys aged between eight and 25. Her little girls put their fingers in their ears as the four bullets were shot into

their mother's body ending her life.

Yemen Times called the number of Abdullah al-Sharif, her eldest son. He was angry at the media. "We insist on her death because of the press who ruined our reputation," he said. "If our demands were not just, the execution would not have taken place."

Despite pleas by international organizations including Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International to Yemen's officials to stop the execution, it was carried out. A letter was sent from HRW to President Ali Abdullah Saleh urging him to stop Aisha's execution a few days before it happened. The letter indicated that the legal proceedings in Aisha's trial were seriously flawed.

Al-Hamzi had been awaiting her death since 2003 when the Primary Court of the South East of Sana'a passed the verdict of death sentence in 2003. The verdict was ratified by the Appellate Court in 2007. The Supreme Court approved the previous sentences.

Aisha alleged that the murder was in self-defence that whereas her children and her husband's family claimed that she killed their father because he intended to marry another woman.

Her seven children are the plaintiffs, and they refused to drop the case or to pardon their mother. They insisted on her death because she "ruined their reputation" when she claimed that their father was an abuser. In her will, Aisha donated a quarter of her wealth for charitable acts, and some cash to her cousins because they tried to help her in her case.

Aisha claimed that the father was abusing the daughter at the time of the



Aisha Al-Hamzi

crime. They argued and, in the heat of the moment, Aisha picked up a rifle which was ready to shoot, and killed the father. Her daughter confessed to being abused by her father, according to the preliminary investigation, but she later withdrew her statements.

According to the defence team from HOOD, a Yemeni human rights organization, the legal procedures questioned whether there had been sufficient legal defence at the beginning of the case, as the dead body of the husband was buried immediately the next day without being subject to autopsy to verify Aisha's allegations. Furthermore, she received poor defence, as the lawyer was appointed by the court at the primary stage and reported to be absent during the court sessions.

Legally, no one has the right to pardon Al-Hamzi except her children and her father in law. Even the President of Yemen is not entitled to issue pardon in personal cases.

In Islamic Sharia, and thus the



Yemeni women condemned to death are less often pardoned than men.

Yemeni law, the murderer should be killed when the relatives of the murdered demand it, although it is urged and preferable to give pardon. The people who are entitled to seek the death penalty are the children and parents of the murderer, and it is enough if one of them pardons the killer for the death sentence to be dropped.

Abdul-Rahman Barman, one of her defence lawyers and a member of HOOD, said that Aisha's case is not the first in which a mother is sentenced to death by their own children. He knew of four similar cases in which children had demanded the death of their mother.

He said he supported her case both

because she had poor legal defence and to advocate for the concept of pardon for a woman. Usually, only men are pardoned.

Fouad Dahaba, an MP and Islamic speaker, said that he was willing to intervene to help for conciliation.

He stressed that, although the concept of claiming execution is present in Islam, pardon is urged. "The Holy Quran says, 'The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree); but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah.'"

Dahaba added that Yemeni society tends to make women responsible for

all the mistakes in the country: "Calling for death to women when men are pardoned is an indication of foolish traditions."

Barman said there is gender-based discrimination when it comes to dispensing the death penalty in Yemen. He cited a number of cases in which the family forced the children to ask for their mother's death, when the total opposite would have happened, had it come to the father.

Tribal pressure in seeking the death penalty for women can limit the chances of pardon. Barman added: "I am sure that, if Aisha were the father, she would have been pardoned."

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### International Bank of Yemen bringing Wall Street to Yemen

# Vice-director of Yemen Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Union Dr. Ehsan Hussein Al-Rabahi to the Yemen Times: "The Ministry of Public Health and Population should purchase drugs from local manufacturers."

**F**ounded in 2003, the Yemen Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Union (YPMU) is a non-profit union that strives to protect the Yemeni market from second-rate medicine and improve medical care nationwide. The union's founder Dr. Ehsan Hussein Al-Rabahi has been working on the project since 1999. He graduated with a BA in Medicine and Surgery from the University of Medicine in Moscow, Russia, in 1986. Vice-director of Yemen Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Union Dr. Ehsan Hussein Al-Rabahi spoke to Ismail Al-Ghabri of the Yemen Times on challenges and opportunities in the country's pharmaceutical industry.



Dr. Ehsan Hussein Al-Rabahi



Yemeni drugs are not expensive in comparison with lower-quality imported drugs, says Al-Rabahi.

## What are the strategic objectives of the union?

The main objective is to create national pharmaceutical awareness to eradicate phenomenon of smuggling and counterfeiting drugs.

The union aims to achieve a national strategy for drug security in Yemen and improve the overall health situation of Yemeni citizens. It works on providing the necessary high quality at a suitable price through local drug manufacturers.

It also aims to enhance relations with colleges of pharmacology, research centers and regional and international organizations specialized in this field. The union also aims to produce drugs to combat endemic diseases.

## As the vice-director of the YPMU, how do you assess the drug market and counterfeiting in Yemen?

To face the violations committed against the drug market by counterfeiting or the supply of poor quality drugs from anonymous sources, I believe that many procedures should be taken, including forbidding drugs that are not licensed and registered by the right corporations.

These bodies should combat drug smuggling and impose sanctions against those who are involved in such a phenomenon. That is the main tool for fighting counterfeited drugs that are dangerous to people's health.

Drugs that carry similar trademarks or brand names should not be registered. This is to ensure the rights of manufacturers and consumers. Consumers can make better-informed choices when there is no confusion between original and imitation items.

## How do you assess the quality of a manufactured drug?

As you know, the good manufacture product (G.M.P) and drug market in Yemen have witnessed notable development due to continuous increase in the development of health services

which currently cover most governorates, districts and villages of Yemen.

Determining the most important initiatives to develop the local market in the future consists in increasing local high quality specialized pharmaceutical manufacturers and competition between these manufacturers under the umbrella of the union.

## Has the union held workshops to combat drug smuggling and counterfeiting?

The union held the first national scientific symposium to eradicate these in May 2005 at the University of Sana'a.

## What are your efforts with regards to protecting the environment?

The role of the union and manufacturers is active in advocating for the right systems to eradicate non-poisoning waste in scientific ways to serve public welfare.

## Have any of the manufacturers who are union members obtained the international quality certification?

Yes. Sheba Pharmaceutical Company obtained the ISO quality certification in 2000.

Other manufacturers attained international certificates and certificates from the World Health Organization (WHO).

Without the high quality of manufacturing drug in Yemen, these manufacturers wouldn't have attained such certificates of quality under the openness of markets. Therefore, there is strong competition that leaves no scope for poor products.

## How do you view the investment laws and dumping policy in Yemen?

[Dumping is used to refer to a manufacturer selling his product in another country at a lower price than it charges in its home market or below the cost of production.]

We have reservations about these laws as they are very old. Bureaucracy hampers investment and the manufacturing of low-cost drugs. We are in need of a longer grace period in Yemen and rare specializations. Investment laws in Yemen need to be reconsidered to facilitate investment opportunities.

In addition, we have noticed that a dumping policy in the Yemeni market. This has created disagreement with official bodies who promised to protect local products, but have done nothing so far.

## What are the major obstacles that you face?

Major obstacles include dealing with the official bodies, particularly tax and customs authorities. The first are bent

of exploitation and the second on routine.

Customs authorities do not consider people's living standards. They allow drugs of poor quality to enter the market and create unfair competition. As I mentioned earlier, the phenomenon of dumping has spread in the market, and pharmacists in Yemen care only about swift profits with little regard to the productive efforts of Yemeni drug manufacturers.

Moreover, no deterring measures have been taken by the Customs Authority to eradicate the smuggling that so affects the economy, development and human beings.

The Ministry of Public Health and Population should purchase drugs from the local manufacturers. Unfortunately, the ministry buys expired drugs, and pays little attention to the safe drugs manufactured locally. It should be more careful and should protect citizens

against poor-quality and imitation drugs.

## How do you assess the price of drugs in Yemen?

The price of drugs in Yemen is suitable. Drugs are affordable to the average citizen. In addition, drug prices are determined by the General Pharmaceutical Corporation. In my opinion, Yemeni drugs are not expensive in comparison with lower-quality imported drugs.

## Invitation for Bids

Tender Advertisement no. (12) 2009 for 2nd Time (One Envelope System - Technical + Financial)

The Yemen Gulf of Aden Ports Corporation — Port of Aden here announces its desire to invite bidders to Tender no. (12) for supplying One No. New survey Boat for Port of Aden which will be financed from Government sources.

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The deadline for selling BDs will be on 26 MAY 2009

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- 2- Valid tax certificate (A foreign bidder who is not already doing business in Yemen may provide a copy of the appropriate VAT registration document from his home country.)
- 3- Valid Insurance Certificate. (Insurance certificate is required only from firms with employees in Yemen who are entitled to benefits from the Public Enterprise for Social Security in Yemen)
- 4- Valid registration and classification certificate. (In the event of an award of contract if the successful firm is not already registered it will be required to evidence registration with the concerned Entity in Yemen as a requirement for contract effectiveness.)

- A foreign bidder may provide the equivalent documents indicated in 2, 3 and 4 from its country of registration as appropriate.
- The Deadline for submission and bids opening will be Sunday at 11:00 Am on 09 MAY 2009. Bids received after this deadline will be returned unopened.
- Bid Opening will take place at the Office Chairman Executive — Headquarters and at the same time mentioned above, in presence of bidders or their authorized representatives.
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# China's recovery and global growth

By: Martin Feldstein

AMBRIDGE – China is likely to be the first of the major economies to recover from the current global downturn

Its pace of expansion may not reach the double-digit rates of recent years, but China in 2010 will probably grow more rapidly than any country in Europe or in the western hemisphere.

But, even as China recovers from its current slowdown, it is not likely to provide a similar boost to all of its trading partners. That lack of spillover will reflect the recovery's focus on expansion of domestic demand.

There is no doubt that China currently is suffering from the global collapse in demand for a wide range of manufactured products. The sharp drop in retail sales in the United States and Europe means fewer orders for

the goods produced in Chinese factories.

And, while the Chinese yuan has remained more or less unchanged relative to the US dollar in the past year, the dollar's sharp appreciation relative to the euro and other currencies caused the overall trade-weighted value of the yuan to rise. This further depressed Chinese exports.

The resulting layoffs of Chinese factory workers has caused second-round declines in local demand for Chinese goods and services, as Chinese households cut back on their spending. Small firms that exported 100% of their production have been forced to close. Millions of low-skilled workers who left farms in China's interior to work in coastal manufacturing centers are now being forced to return to their villages. The

families benefiting from their remittances will now be forced to cut their consumption as well.

The Chinese authorities are determined to reverse the resulting decline in growth in order to reemploy those who have lost their jobs and to create employment for the millions of young people who join the labor force each year. Failure to do so would not only create hardship for the millions of unemployed, but would also threaten political stability, which depends on the expectation of continuing economic prosperity.

The government's initial policies aimed at raising aggregate demand focused on major infrastructure spending, including roads and mass transit. But the more significant strategy is to alter government policies in ways that will lead to higher spending by Chinese

consumers, and that raise the level of those government outlays, like health care, which directly benefit Chinese households.

Spending by China's consumers has lagged behind the Chinese economy's overall rate of growth for many years. This reflects the declining share of wages in total GDP and the rising share of savings relative to household incomes. To raise consumer spending, the Chinese government must reverse both of these trends.

Although private enterprises are the fastest growing part of the Chinese economy, enterprises that are partially or fully owned by the state continue to be major employers.

The government can directly affect wage levels in these firms, thereby altering the general wage level in the economy.

The high saving rate of Chinese

households reflects both the normal high rate of saving among younger generations and the fact that older generations had very little income – and therefore did very little saving – when they were young. The aggregate saving rate of the household sector reflects the difference between the saving of the savers and the dissaving of the dissavers. Since the saving of younger savers is now high and the dissaving of the older dissavers is low, the net saving rate is high.

Young people have many reasons to save.

The public pension system is unreliable, there is little health insurance available to pay for the high cost of Western-style care, parents must pay tuition for their children's schooling, there is little credit available for purchases of consumer durable, and buying an apartment

requires a large down-payment.

I believe that the government will act on all of these reasons for high saving, making credit more widely available, introducing a health insurance system, and relaxing some of the down-payment requirements.

Premier Wen Jiabao made clear in his recent remarks to the People's Congress that he will do what it takes to stimulate demand in order to ensure strong growth in China. I have little doubt about his willingness and ability to do so.

*Martin Feldstein, a professor of economics at Harvard, was formerly Chairman of President Ronald Reagan's Council of Economic Advisors and President of the National Bureau for Economic Research. Copyright: Project Syndicate*

# The ghosts of summits past

By: Harold James

PRINCETON – The world is confronted by a dramatic financial crisis that many policymakers believe is more severe than the interwar Great Depression. Before 2008, experts said that a new Great Depression was impossible because of the strength and the depth of the cooperative mechanisms set up at the end of World War II.

The G-20 summit has thus created enormous expectations that internationalism may once again overcome a plethora of economic problems. Unfortunately, the magnitude of the expectations alone suggests that disappointment is almost certain.

The symbolism of the location is unfortunate, as it carries a reminiscence of the main abortive attempt to manage the world economy during the Great Depression. The 1933 World Economic Conference also met in London, at the Geological Museum, with an even broader range

of participants from 66 countries. The participants at the 2009 summit may not visit the Geological Museum, but they will have to deal with the specter of conferences past, for the failure in 1933 offers important lessons for our current leaders. First, as with the G-20 summit, everyone expected the London Conference to fail. The plenary meeting was paralyzed by the way in which the preparatory commissions had worked. Monetary experts argued that an agreement on currency stabilization would be highly desirable, but that it required a prior agreement on the dismantling of trade barriers – all the high tariffs and quotas that had been introduced in the course of the depression.

Trade experts met in parallel and made the mirror image of this argument. They agreed that protectionism was obviously a vice, but thought that it was a necessary one that could not be addressed without monetary stability.

Only leadership by a determined great power, prepared to sacrifice its

particular national interests in order to break the resulting impasse, might conceivably have saved the meeting. But such leadership was as unlikely then as it is now.

Indeed, the second lesson of the London Conference of 1933 consists in governments' unwillingness in times of great economic difficulty to make sacrifices that might entail a short-term cost. Even if the result would have been longer-term stability, the immediate political consequences were too unpleasant. In adverse economic circumstances, governments felt vulnerable and unsure, and they could not afford to alienate public support.

Finally, faced by a realization of inevitable failure, participants look for a scapegoat. The 1933 Conference looked like a classic detective novel in which every party had a reason to be a suspect. Britain and France had turned away from internationalism, adopting trade systems known as "Imperial Preference," which favored their vast overseas empires. Germany's

president had just appointed Adolf Hitler's radical and aggressive government. The German delegation was led by Alfred Hugenberg, who was not a Nazi but wanted to show that he was an even more implacable nationalist than Hitler himself. The Japanese government had just sent troops into Manchuria.

Of all the major powers in London, the United States looked the most reasonable and internationalist by far. It had a new, charismatic president, who was known as an Anglophile and a cosmopolitan spirit. Franklin Roosevelt was already taking vigorous action against the depression, and was trying to reorder the failed US banking system.

Roosevelt did not know what line to take at the conference, and his stream of advisers offered inconsistent counsel. At last, he lost patience and announced that for the moment the US had no intention of stabilizing the dollar. This message, delivered on July 3, 1933, was known as "the bombshell." Roosevelt talked about

the need to restore "the sound internal economic system of a nation" and condemned the "old fetishes of so-called international bankers."

Everyone pretended to be shocked at the failure of internationalism. But, at the same time, they were delighted to have found someone who could be blamed for the failure of the conference.

In 2009, we face a similar set of circumstances. The lines of conflict have been clearly drawn in advance. The US wants the world to embark on macroeconomic stimulus programs, and thinks that the complicated task of reinventing and reordering financial supervision and regulation can wait. Many European countries cannot afford a stimulus package, owing to overstretched public finances, and instead want to make progress on the international regulation of banking.

The alibis for failure are also already prepared. The new summit is unlikely to produce either a coordinated stimulus package or a detailed blueprint for a foolproof

system of financial regulation. Throughout the meeting, participants will be waiting for the moment when one of the leaders (maybe Angela Merkel) loses patience and makes the obvious and true remark that the process is a waste of effort. Then everyone will denounce this honest politician for having wrecked internationalism.

In the 1930's, it was the autocratic and belligerent governments of Germany and Japan that could derive the most capital from the failure of the London conference. Failure at today's London conference is also likely to be used as a rhetorical weapon against the large Western governments, and to provide a rationale for implementing new forms of state capitalism.

*Harold James is Professor of history and international affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University and professor of history at the European University Institute, Florence. Copyright: Project Syndicate*

# When India votes

By: Shashi Tharoor

KERALA, INDIA – Beginning this month, the largest exercise of the democratic franchise in history will take place, as India n voters head to the polls to elect a new national parliament.

They have done this 14 times since India gained its independence. Each time India has voted has been the world's largest exercise in electoral democracy. India's growing population keeps breaking its own record.

This time, the electorate includes 714 million voters, an increase of 43 million over the previous general election in 2004. Votes will be cast in 828,804 polling stations scattered throughout the country for over 5000 candidates from seven national political parties and several state and other parties.

The process involves four million electoral officials and 6.1 million police and civilian personnel.

The numbers involved are so huge that the elections will be staggered over five phases, ending only on May 13, with electoral and security personnel being moved from state to state as polling is concluded in each place.

Despite the phased voting, the counting takes place nationwide immediately after the last phase, and the results of the elections everywhere will be announced on May 16. A new parliament will be convened on June 2 to elect a national government to succeed the outgoing administration of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

India's elections, conducted by the autonomous (and all-powerful) Election Commission of India, are an extraordinary event, and not just

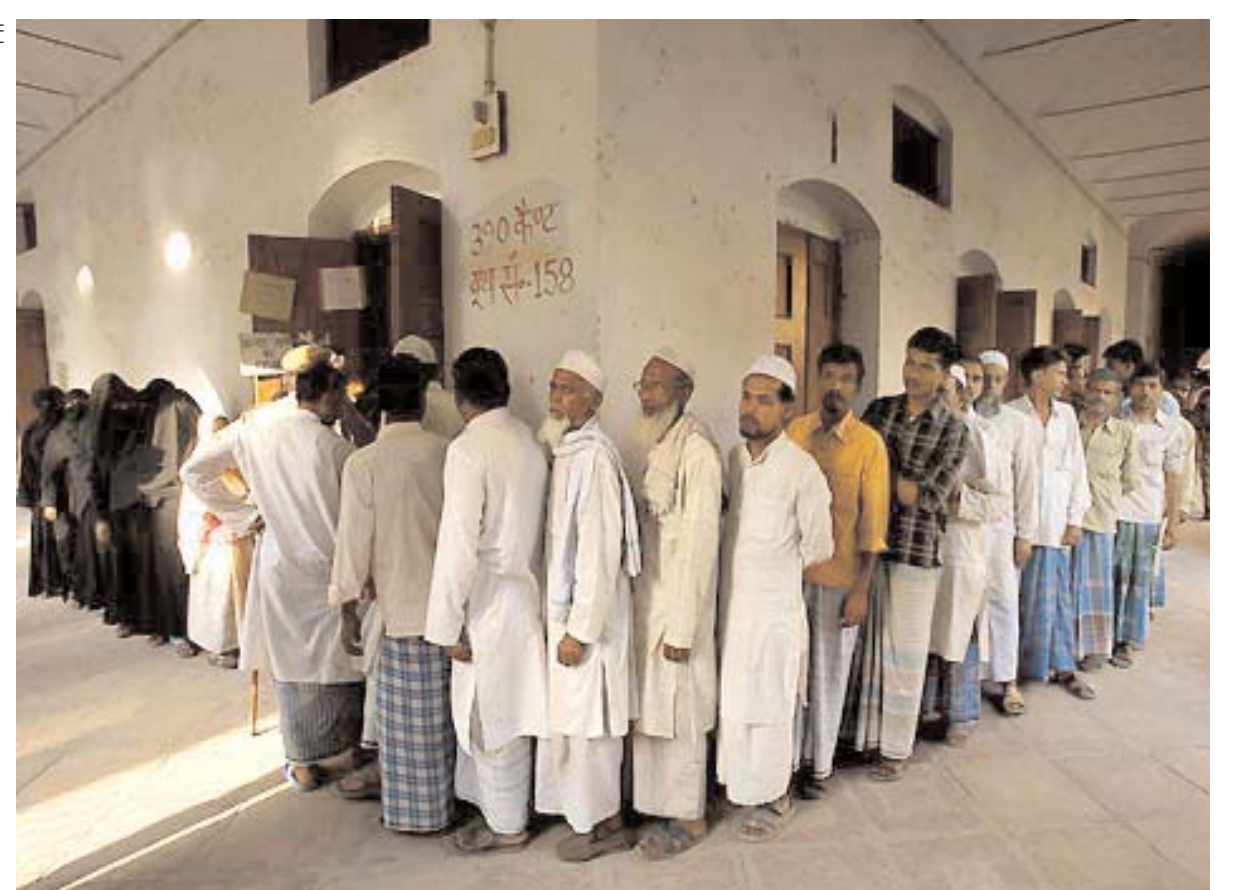
because of their sheer scale. It takes the felling of a sizeable forest to furnish enough paper for 714 million ballots, and every election has at least one story of officers battling through snow or jungle, or traveling by elephant and camel, to ensure that the democratic wishes of remote constituents are duly recorded. (There is even one polling booth for a single voter, who lives too far from civilization to travel to another polling station.)

Nor is any Indian election complete without the media publishing at least one picture of a female voter whose enthusiasm for the suffrage is undimmed by the fact that she is old, blind, crippled, toothless, purdah-clad, or any combination of the above.

The exotica do not end there. Because so many voters are illiterate, India invented the party symbol, so that voters who cannot read the name of their candidate can vote for him or her anyway by recognizing the symbol under which they campaigned. Symbols range from the open palm of the ruling Indian National Congress to the lotus of the Bharatiya Janata Party and variants of the hammer and sickle for India's profusion of Communist parties.

Independent candidates can choose from an assortment of alternatives, ranging from a cricket bat to images of various large animals. (Small ones were removed from the list when one candidate, running against another whose symbol was a parrot, wrung the neck of a live parrot at a public meeting to signify what he would do to his rival.)

India was also the first country to use an indelible stain on the voter's fingernail to signify that he has already cast his ballot. At every election, someone "discovers" a new chemical that will remove the stain and permit one to vote twice, though this is unlikely to make a great difference in



constituencies the size of India's, where each MP represents more than two million people. Likewise, some distinguished voter invariably claims that his name is missing from the rolls, or that someone has already cast his vote (but usually not both).

In any case, India's elections have a reputation for honesty.

In this election, as in previous ones, votes will be cast on electronic voting machines invented in India, which combine the virtues of simplicity, reliability, and ruggedness. The electoral rolls carry photographs of every individual voter, as does each voter's identity card.

The elections have also been increasingly free of violence.

There was a time when, in certain parts of India, workers could stuff ballot boxes for a candidate and political parties could "capture" polling booths. Electronic voting machines and strict security arrangements have largely eliminated that possibility. It has been some time since there were reports of the occasional election worker, candidate, or voter being assaulted, kidnapped, or shot. Nothing (short of the death of a major contender) interrupts the franchise.

Elections are an enduring spectacle of free India, and give foreign journalists the opportunity to remind the world that India is the world's largest democracy. Indeed, Indians

now take for granted that elections will take place, that they will be free and fair, and that they will result in actual transfers of power.

There are few developing countries in the world where this is true, and fewer still where poverty and illiteracy are both rife.

That may be the real miracle of what will occur in India over the next few weeks.

*Shashi Tharoor, a former UN Under-Secretary General, is the Congress Party candidate for Parliament from Thiruvananthapuram in India's southwestern state of Kerala. Copyright: Project Syndicate, www.project-syndicate.org*



India was among the first countries to use indelible ink on the voter's fingernail to signify that he/she had voted

# Bassam and Yemen's struggling economy

By: Ali Saeed

**B**assam is a 19 year-old Yemeni from the Ibb governorate. He finished secondary school last year, excelling in his science classes. He wanted to study medicine at Sana'a University to become a doctor, but living standards quashed his dreams. Instead of attending lectures, Bassam now works in a car mechanic's workshop.

Around 16 million people in Yemen - more than 80 percent of the population - live on an income of less than USD 2 a day. Although national income per capita recently increased, this is not best way to measure income levels, and it was recently discovered that Yemen's wealthiest control up to 90 percent of the national income.

Because he does not come from a wealthy family, Bassam had to draw a line through his aspirations of completing higher education to become a bread winner for his family, just to help make ends meet.

"Had I been to the university, I would be looking clean and wearing nice clothes," he said gloomily. "But now I'm wearing a torn and dirty uniform that looks disgusting to others."

Not having a degree from university has narrowed his employment opportunities, but he thinks that, even a university degree would not have made much of a difference as unemployment rates range from 45 to 61.1 percent, depending on definitions and methods of calculation.

Bassam's salary at the mechanic workshop is YR 20,000, or USD 100 a month. Although he spends more than half his salary every month on daily expenses, he is planning to marry as soon as possible and buy a house in Sana'a.

Such low salaries are the norm in Yemen, a country considered to be have one of the lowest economic growth rates in the world. Although the official economic growth rate for 2008 stood at 4.3 percent, economists think that this rate is exaggerated because others economic indicators do not agree.

Bassam saves around YR 5,000 every



Grade-A student Bassam (right) had to abandon his dreams of becoming a doctor to work as a car mechanic because of the country's dire economic situation.

month. These days, weddings cost around YR one million. If wedding expenses remain the same as they are now, Bassam needs around 16 and half years to be able to pay for the wedding with his monthly savings of YR 5,000.

Bassam has stopped thinking about buying a house in Sana'a because he has to be true to himself: "I have to be realistic about my plans in Yemen. Otherwise I would be doing the equivalent of trying to sow wheat in the sea."

The government reported an inflation rate of 17.5 percent last year alone, but Dr. Mohammed Jubran, professor of economics at Sana'a University doubts this percentage is accurate since it depends on desk research and old surveys, and not on realistic and recent studies.

"All of us, even those who have no

idea about economics, know that prices rose in 2007 and 2008 between 150 and 250 percent. According to this, the government estimation of inflation is wrong," said the professor.

This means that a plot of land that used to cost YR 5 million will now between YR 10 million and 15 million after inflation.

A 44 square meter plot of land, called a 'libna' in Sana'a, costs around YR 15 million on Taiz Street, and even a libna in Artel in the outskirts of Sana'a city costs around YR 5 million. These prices make home ownership a distant dream for most Yemenis like Bassam.

In his village, Bassam's family lives without electricity. Although up to 91 percent of Yemenis in urban areas have access to electricity, only 25 percent of Yemenis in rural areas do. As 75 percent

of Yemen's population lives in the countryside, this means that only about 56 percent of Yemenis have access to electricity.

"I'm wondering where the London donors' conference and the developmental and social projects that our government pledged to be done went," questioned Bassam.

Economists replied to Bassam that the Yemeni government has not invested most of these loans and donations, and in particular utilized less than 50 percent of external loans. Interest rates on external loans do not exceed 5 percent a year, whereas the interest rate for internal loans is more than 14 percent a year.

"There is misdistribution of expenditures in the public sector and its activities," explained Dr. Mohammed Jubran,



On a salary of YR20,000 a month, a young Yemeni would have to save up for over 16 years to get married.

professor of economics at Sana'a University.

"For instance, the government spends twice as much on security as it does on the health sector," he said. "Total social expenditure in 2007 reached 19 percent, whereas security and defense expenditure reached 22 percent during the same period."

Bassam thinks that the government collects huge amounts of money from customs fees but, like many other Yemenis, question where this money - which in 2007 alone reached YR 447,395 million - goes.

In addition, imposed profit taxes on foreign companies in Yemen were estimated at USD 688 million in 2006 and USD 751 million in 2007. These amounts of money were not registered in government accounts at the Ministry

of Finance, but submitted as cash to the Ministry of Oil.

When a member of Bassam's family falls sick, there is no doctor in the health center in their village to go to. They have two alternatives: either to go Ibb city or Sana'a city. In both cases, his family ends up spending its money on travel expenses, not medicine.

"Employment distribution in the government is does not comply with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) since 2007, and around 100 deputy ministers have been designated to positions that have no actual function except to gain cars, furniture, and other possessions," explained the economist. "At the same time, only 40 physicians were designated across the country to achieve the MDGs, which is impossible."

## EXPRESSION OF INTERSET FOR GROUND HANDLING SERVICES CONCESSION AT ADEN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The Civil Aviation And Meteorology Authority (CAMA) Of the Republic of Yemen hereby announces its desire to invite International Ground Handling Companies to indicate their interest in providing their services for Aden International Airport for seven years term.

Interested Companies shall provide evidence of their ability and qualifications to carry out the whole of the above services especially:

- General information and experience of the Company, previous projects it was involved in, work experience in similar conditions, reference, etc.
- Specific experience of the Company in the field of the assignment in minimum one International airport in the last five years, main task of the company and years of experience in the required services.
- Ability to provide sufficient equipment and facilities to efficiently carry out the whole of the above services.
- Qualifications of key personnel and availability of required skills to carry out the required services.
- Minimum annual turnover of the company shall be not less than US Dollars three million.
- A firm may associate to enhance its qualification.

Short listed companies will be invited to submit their proposals.

A successful company will be selected using Quality based selection method which is explained in the Bidding documents.

The deadline for receiving two copies of EOI from each company shall be 9 June 2009.

Interested companies may obtain further information between 07:00 am and 10:00 am GMT, Saturday to Wednesday via the following:

Mr. Hamed Ahmed Farag.

Chairman, civil Aviation and Meteorology Authority

P.O. Box: 1042

Sana'a

Republic Of Yemen

Tel.: ++ 9671- 27 47 17, 27 47 14, 48 61 73

Fax.: ++ 9671- 27 47 18, 27 26 45

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# Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW) A turning point in charitable work

Establishment of the Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW) in early nineties of the last century constituted a turning point in the way of charitable work in Yemen. This is through the leading role that it played to achieve sustainable development, help the needy and alleviate poverty in cooperation with partners from donor organizations and corporations, benefactors and donors. This, in turn, created and outstanding the wide presence of the CSSW in all fields of charitable work, which enabled it to gain the trust and support of benefactors inside and outside the country. Every benefactor and supporter of the charity found that their support turned to programs, projects and humanitarian services full of everlasting charity that is never detached from them during their life and after the die.

Undoubtedly, the CSSW is considered the first in offering institutional charity as it offers its services in accordance with criteria and well-studied plans that meet the needs of the society and contribute to achieving sustainable development and combating poverty.

Due to the expansion of the CSSW's unremitting work and development as its branches amounted to 23 in addition to 236 committees deployed in all governorates of the republic, it outlined its strategic plan to enhance its leading role as a non-governmental organization that copes with the priorities and policies and the effective laws within its partnership with donors to achieve development in the society. What confirms the significance that the CSSW ranked on its voluntary work is that it has become a consultant member in the UN Economic and Social Council and a member of the UN Public Information Management of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). In addition, the CSSW has been recently granted the international standards certificate: ISO 9001, 2008 by the largest German



*Undoubtedly, the CSSW is considered the first in offering institutional charity as it offers its services in accordance with criteria and well-studied plans that meet the needs of the society and contribute to achieving sustainable development and combating poverty.*

granting companies (TUV). In this context, Dr. Abdul Majeed Farhan, Secretary General of the CSSW, said that ISO certificate crowned the society's efforts and commitments to apply system of the world quality management through applying standard criteria in its administrative dealings and commitment to institutionalization principle in all its dealings based on its aims to achieve excellence in offering different voluntary works. He made clear that the ISO certificate will encourage and drive the CSSW to develop and improve its performance, which the society made as a slogan of 2009 following 2008 which was the year of excellence and innovation. He pointed out that the CSSW is preparing to hold the ceremony of receiving the ISO certificate on the 23rd of the current month under the auspices of official bodies. Many social personalities, donors, and businessmen inside and outside the country will attend the occasion.

Concerning the works and projects of the CSSW, Farhan said that the society has become an institution of wide spread and service. It offers its services in all governorates and districts of the republic. He pointed out that it is currently sponsoring over 25 thousand male and female orphans and over seven thousand families as well as operates 27 medical centers offering primary health care services. He pointed out that the CSSW has unprecedented programs and projects in the health and development field the most important of which are Al-Amal Neuro and Psychiatric Hospital with a capacity of 200 beds and Dar Al-Shafaqah for admitting renal failure and cancer patients with a capacity of 50 beds in its first phase. In addition, the CSSW is carrying out the onco cerciasis control program in five governorates in addition to projects of reproductive health, family planning, establishing surgery



The organization's leadership talks to official health representatives.

camp and medical caravans in the deprived areas. The society is also carrying out the project of alternatives to child labor through education and sustainable service (Access Plus) in partnership with CHF International Organization and

support of the U.S. Ministry of Labor.

In the construction field, Farhan said that the CSSW has constructed until the end of 2008, 160 development institution in the different governorates of the republic. These

institutions included building houses for the poor families, building and furnishing mosques, establishing health centers and units, rehabilitating and training centers in Sana'a and a number of governorates in the republic.



Income generating projects - fishing boat.



Income generating projects - transport cars.



V. P. Shunt operation.



Second group wedding - Dhamar.



Workshop for training female leaders in reproductive health and social marketing - project in cooperation with the organization.



Charitable sewing project in the family development sector in Hodaida



Training center for orphans in Taiz.

## Labor office in Shabwa – Personal Experience

Rashad Almagrebi  
RashadHSE@gmail.com  
HSE officer

Two years ago, I applied for a job as a health, safety and environment (HSE) officer in a French company called 'Amecsipie' in Shabwa. Two weeks later, the HSE office called me for an interview. I headed the next day from Taiz to Shabwa. I was interviewed by the HSE manager who was of British descent. I passed the interview with flying colors and thought that there would be no other problems. The manager kindly told me to go and get some rest until tomorrow.

Later that day, I was surprised to hear some news from a friend of mine. He said that the labor office might create problems for me. I said, "I passed the interview and the test as well. What could be next?" He jokingly told me, "You are not a Yemeni here." I was shocked and did not know what to say. My friend then said, "When somebody comes from the north of Yemen, he faces a lot of difficulties in getting a job. The labor office first has to look for any other qualified candidates, and if there are any others to be found, the candidates from north will be denied.

Mostly they use vitamins W and B (mediation and money) around here," he added.

A day later, I went to the HSE office and met the manager there. The manager himself went to meet the people in charge of the labor office, most of who were from Shabwa. I followed him to the labor office. A tough quarrel took place between the two sides. The labor office said, "This guy has to be suspended for two weeks until we find another qualified employee." Two weeks passed and the matter was still unsolved. My friends told me to give some money to the labor office so that they might sign the papers for me, but I strongly refused. The next day I was called by the manager to come and start my work. I asked the manager how the problem was solved.

He said, "They did not find any other HSE experts and that's why they accepted you." I was really disappointed, even though I got the job. The problem isn't the job but the discrimination that people in the labor office follow.

Two months later I was transferred from Shabwa-Ataq to the Shabwa-Balhaf site to work as a security and HSE officer. I found another type of discrimination there. The labor office claimed that 80 percent of the employment should be in the favor of Shabwa

people. They might have the right to this make kind of law, but they do not actually follow it in practice. They apply this procedure only to those poor workers who do not have vitamins W or B – mediation or money. Another thing, which is worse than all of the above facts, is that there are no such obstacles for the workers who come from other countries. A foreign laborer, and not necessarily a skillful laborer, comes and works in Yemen without any problem. But if one wants to hire a Yemeni worker, one needs first to get an agreement from the labor office. You might have to bribe someone to get them to do this, or they might not accept the worker. In addition, a lot of papers have to be signed to issue an ID card for a Yemeni worker while it is very easy for a foreign worker to get a similar ID card. After all that, the Yemeni worker gets the lowest salary in the company. In spite of this salary discrepancy, most companies tend to hire foreign workers rather than Yemeni ones even though there are hundreds of Yemeni workers at the gate of the companies.

These facts show us how discriminatory the people in charge of the labor office are. We appeal to our government to take this matter into account and to force the labor office to drop such clearly discriminating procedures.

## First love

By: Ahmed Ibrahim Al Hasan  
ahamed\_alhasn@hotmail.com

The majority of people believe that their first love is the only love, and if this love ends, they consider it the end of their life. In fact, their lives will continue, but with closed and dead hearts.

What about you? Do you believe in that? I know that is difficult to be free from the memories of your loved one. You will continue to experience these memories all the days of your life. But the most important thing you should

know is that the pain associated with these memories will decrease over time and will be remembered less and less till a moment comes when, except for the occasional flashback, you feel that you are almost back to your old life again. So don't trap yourself in the blind idea that you will never forget and will never be able to live. Just try to involve yourself in interesting activities and always look forward.

I want you to remember two rules. The first rule is that God who brought this loved one to you can always bring another love. The second rule is that when God takes something from you, he always compensates you with some-

thing much better than what you lost. Mahmoud Darwish, the famous Palestinian poet, said exactly what I mean: "Unfortunately I escaped from death by love several times, but fortunately I am still alive and have a heart to experience love again"

Finally, I want to say that the end of love is not the end of life. Just look to the future, there is another one coming to you, and believe me that you will experience love again. If and when this occurs, please don't repeat your previous mistakes.

Pray constantly for God to bless your love again and maintain it for the rest of your life.

## Response to article: Man isn't born for bread alone

Dear Hanan Al-Shibami,  
By: Micah Brown  
micah.s.brown@gmail.com

I applaud your skills in writing the recent article "Man is not born for bread alone" in the Yemen Times. However, it grieves me that Islam is based on the works of man and not the grace of God. When the prophet Moses gave the commandments to the Israelites, they were laws that man could not possibly achieve by works and striving.

They were literally impossible, for if a

man falls in one sin, it is the same as if he has broken all of God's commands. Because of this, God's laws are not meant to give men a standard to live by, but rather to show us that we cannot do them without the help, grace, and mercy of God. I believe that He sent His son, Essa, as the savior for the world, that by His bloodshed for us, we can now believe in Him and have a relationship with God, and by Him we are saved. This gives us so much freedom! It frees us from the burden of trying so hard to live up to a standard when we know we will eventually fail. As you said in your article, no one is

perfect, and that is precisely why we need a perfect God to forgive us and allow us to be covered by His grace, not by our works. I hope this makes sense, and it is my opinion that this is truth. I respect Islam, but I believe it is a religion of captivity, in which men are enslaved by their own self-striving and endless toil for a God who has already forgiven them, if only they would trust in Him to do work in them rather than try to save themselves by their effort! Peace to you, and thank you for listening. I would love to hear your opinion as well. Sincerely,

## The forgotten tribes of Oromo in Somalia

By: Abas Eenow  
Activist for the Oromo-Somalis  
abas.freedomfighter.eenow28@gmail.com

Long time ago, most of the current Somali territories in the horn of Africa belonged to the larger Cushitic nationality of Oromo known by the Somalis as Galla and others. For hundreds of years, until the end of the 19th century, the nomadic

Somali tribes have invaded and forcefully occupied parts of the present state of Somalia which was populated by non-ethnic Somali ethnic groups.

During their expansion, the Somali pastoral warriors have evicted the majority of the Oromo and other non Somali tribes from their land and forced those who remained to be assimilated. In the course of these campaigns, Oromo tribes such as

Boran, Rendile and others have been dislodged from their territories of origin inside Somalia and these communities are found in Kenya & Ethiopia. In fact large number of them such as Wa Boni and Gaalobore have been partially integrated and have taken nominal Somali tribal names although still considered inferior to noble Somali tribes. Most of them live among the Digil & Mirifle tribe of the South.

But Oromos who declined to convert and refused to become clients to the Somalis tribesman were subjected to aggression and discrimination like Ribo (raybo), Wardey (Waradaya) in the South and Lo'jir in the North.

If you go back to the oral history of the Somali people, you will understand that Hargeeysa (North) and Garbohareey (South) are actually Oromo names and literally Galkacyo means, "Where the Oromo has been kicked out"

Overall, the Somali war of "Force

occupation" has been stopped by the British colonial administration in the late of the 19th century after the British has realized that the wandering warlike tribes would cross over the Tana river in Kenya and into great lake region.

After the Somali civil, the Somali tribes of Oromo origin who were unarmed were robbed, raped and killed in wanton. In regards to the minority groups in the failed state of Somalia a lot of reports have been written over the plight and the suffering of ethnic clans but, unfortunately, the Somali tribes of Oromo origin such as Ribo, Wardeey and others have not been mentioned.

Therefore, as there is no hope that a democratic state will come out of Somalia in the foreseeable future, we demand from human rights organizations to correct their mistakes so that, at least, the rights of these communities are recognized by international organizations.

## Through The Mind's Eye

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



## Street children: Is there a serious solution?

Recent statistics have shown that about 35,000 children between the age of 12 and 14 use the streets as a workplace and sometimes as a home. There, in the street, they feed and educate themselves, inasmuch as is possible. They learn the morals, customs and habits surrounding them there. The environment they are exposed to promises them only a dull future.

The phenomenon must be taken seriously. We must find out its reasons and offer radical solutions before the situation deteriorates.

Of course, life is full of difficulties that force such children to take to the streets. Some of them are responsible for their families. Others are asked by parents to go out in search of work, any way to collect money, whatever it is. Some children leave home to escape family problems, while some have their own dreams and ambitions which, they think, will be achieved this way.

In an interview published in Al-Jumhuriya, a 14 year-old child said that he came from the village with friends in search of work to collect money for his mother and four sisters after his father's death.

Two brothers of the age of 12 said that they clean cars to finance their father's daily qat and cigarettes, while a little girl of the same age said that she roams in the streets to escape her father and mother's daily arguments.

Another 10 year-old child takes to working and, sometimes begging, in streets as the only way to fulfill his ambition of "buying a new suit or new toy."

In view of the dire circumstances that make these children escape from their homes and schools, they must not be blamed. Rather, the families should try to offer solutions to their children to ensure they have a prosperous future, before they become involved in crime or unlawful acts.

Society itself plays a role as well, and must be blamed. We are used to seeing children begging in the streets. Some people do not respond, while others help them with money. In the two cases, such children are encouraged to continue begging since society does not reject their behavior.

There might be other solutions, and every one of us should find a possible solution to the crucial problem so that we make our society better.

It also seems to me that the authorities also contribute to the spreading of this human catastrophe.

The lack of efforts of its part contributes to the increase in the number of street children in Yemen. The government must fight such cases, not by preventing children from staying in the street, but in analyzing the reasons for their being there and offering suitable solutions to them. If the government cannot stop this phenomenon, who can?

The ill-effects of having children living and working in the street are obvious. These children will, of course, be the targets of crimes. It is rare to find street children who are not either the victims of others, or the criminals themselves. Better put, "They are the victims of today and the criminals of tomorrow."

But it would be silly to call them criminals in the future, because they grew up as victims.

Such predictions should encourage families, society and the government to cooperate with each other to find a radical solution to this social problem that promises more broken families and a crime-oriented society.

Maged Thabet Al-Kholidy is a contributing opinions writer from Taiz. He holds a Master Degree of Arts in English and is the former editor of Taiz University's English language magazine.

## The dark in the morning

By: Yasser alwaheezi

She walks to school everyday since the blockade on Gaza by the Israeli government under the collusion of Arab countries.

There is no gasoline or diesel so no busses and no electricity in her house. She studies and writes her homework before the darkness of night comes.

Today she got up early, ate breakfast, and looked out the window. Oh, what a morning! she said, taking her books after putting on her school uniform, and left her house.

It's early, but the morning is very beautiful. Let me enjoy this atmosphere and breathe the fresh breezes, she said, and kept walking.

She was thinking about last night when her dad entered her room and told her about her their visitor who came to ask for her hand in marriage. Her dad wants the answer within three days. What she's going to say?

What about her education? It's the last year of high school before going off to college, so how can she get married?

She will finish high school and get married directly!!

It's a problem for her, but what's wrong? she asked herself and answered, you can resume your education in the new house of your husband. But what about your husband? Maybe he is a good choice. He is kindly and is a lieutenant in the Palestinian armed forces with a good position. He's going to help you to complete your education.

Suddenly she heard a noise; it was an army plane. A few seconds later an explosion rocked the earth in front of her. Then she doesn't see anything. It's

like the dark. What's the matter? She doesn't know.

A few minutes later she is in another world. She saw group of people; one of them keeps looking at her. Who is this man? Maybe I saw him before, she said, but who is he? The man separated from the group and walked towards her and shook her hand. Then she recognized him. He was her fiancé. How are you? How did you get here? the man asked. I don't know, she answered.

Ok don't worry, you'll be safe. Come with me to see this land and go shopping here. Should we buy a lot of things for the marriage?

She went with him but heard some people quickly talking. One of them said it was an Israeli bomb, another asked how many people are killed? One said I found a girl, she's still alive but injured, is her situation serious? I think so but take her to the emergency room.

What are they saying? she asked. Leave them, just walk, the man said. They went together to the market. I can't walk, my feet are tired, she said. The man helped her, then she looked to her right and saw a jewelry shop. Let us take a look, she said, then entered the shop.

I like this wristwatch, what does it cost? It's golden, it costs one thousand Euros.

But it's very expensive, she said, but the man paid the price and said everything is cheap for you, just wear it.

Oh it's beautiful! she said. But the woman wearing it is more beautiful, the man said. She wanted to put it in the box for the party, but she couldn't remove it. The man came to help her, suddenly she heard someone saying remove her hand or she's going to die. Who is this? she asked, and then

looked out but there is nobody, don't worry, the man said and tried to remove the watch but he couldn't, so he left it in her hand.

They went but she feels a pain in her hand, maybe because the watch is heavy or because it's the first time she is wearing a watch.

After a few minutes of walking they arrived to the shoes' store. She chose a pair and put them on. After that she wanted to remove them but she has the same problem, she can't take off her shoes. While she was trying to remove it she heard a man say to lift up her leg. Then she stopped and said, this sounds like the same man at the previous shop, let's go dear, I am afraid. Don't worry, the man said, we're going to leave this area.

A few minutes after they left the market she was looking behind her and thinking about the man. Who and where was he?

After that she found herself alone in the desert. She looked at right and left but nobody is there. Suddenly she can't move, what's the matter? She then tried to move her leg, but she heard her dad say, Don't move baby you're going to hurt yourself.

She opened her eyes and said, Dad, where I am? In the hospital. What happened? You are one of the victims of the Gaza attack.

She wanted to see the watch but she doesn't have a hand. Then she looked at her leg to see the shoes but her leg was also gone. She screamed and said, Please Dad, kill me, I can't live this life. Her father cried and then tried to stop her when she wanted hurt herself.

A few minutes later she calmed down and quietly asked, Where is my fiancé?

He was killed during the attack.

## Someone had said my village was an Al-Qaida base

By: FM Shah  
lion.of.khyber@gmail.com

Someone had said my village was an Al-Qaeda base  
Without hesitation the Americans bombed the place  
So willing they are to believe such baseless, bought lies  
Now half my village lies dead while the other half cries

For US Blood Dollars, puppets like Zardari, Mush and Karzai always lie.  
For US War for Terror so many of my Muslims fellows have died  
The Americans said they were sorry, that it was all a mistake  
But how much more "collateral damage" can we expect to take  
How can I forgive the Americans the deaths of my loved ones  
I wept as I saw my neighbors bury their

daughters and sons  
It seems as if this "war for terror" is never going to end  
And sadly every day we are killed by a so called "friend"  
We all wonder what new horrors for us, tomorrow has in store  
Since we (250 millions) are caught in endless war for terror on US  
Blood Dollars for resources and trade routes

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**البنوك**

بنك اليمن والخليج ت: ٦٦٠٨٢٤، فاكس: ٦٦٠٨٢٤ - ١٦٠٨٢٢ - ٩٦٧  
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 بنك التضامن الإسلامي ت: ٧٦٦٦٦٦  
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 هيرتز لتأجير السيارات صنفا ت: ٠١-٤٤٠٣٠٩

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**شركات للتأمين**

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 مارب للتأمين صنفا ت: ٣٠٦١٩/١١/٣  
 الشركة اليمنية الإسلامية للتأمين وإعادة التأمين صنفا ت: ٣٨٤١٩٢

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**مدارس**

مدرسة رينبو ت: ٤١٤-٣٦/٤٤٤-٤٣٣  
 مدارس صنفا الدولية ت: ٣٧٠١٩١/٣، فاكس: ٣٧٠١٩٣  
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**مطاعم**

مطعم وخيخية الشيباني (باسم محمد عبده الشيباني) تلفون: ٢٦٦٢٣٥ - ٥٠٤٢٩٠ - فاكس: ٣٧٦١١٩

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**عقارات**

• مطلوب استئجار مبنى لا يقل عن ١٨ غرفة مع حوش كبير في حي حده أو الهلبي السياسي للتواصل: ٧٧٧٢٦٩٠٨٧

• للإيجار (للأجانب فقط) شقة ٣ غرف نوم - مفرج صالة تحتوي على غرفة طعام وغرفة جلوس - مطبخ أبيض - ٣ حمامات، الشقة آمنة جداً الإيجار: ١٥٠٠ دولار قابل للتفاوض

على العديد من الأنظمة المحاسبية - ديبلوم كمبيوتر - خبرة في التعامل البنكية الإلكترونية للتواصل: ٧٧٧٧٠٥٤٤٥ - ٧٠٠٧٧٤٣٩٧

• دورات حاسوب، ثانوية عامة، دورة في أساسيات التسويق، دورة تدريبية في مجال التسويق والإدارة وتنفيذ الأنشطة، دورة لغة إنجليزية، دورة حول التوثيق والإرشاف وأعمال السكرتارية، دورة في النظام المحاسبي المتكامل، دورة في مجال التقييم الرقفي بالمشاركة (PRA).

التواصل: ٧٣٥٤٠١٨٦٢ أو ٧٧٠٥٩٩٦٥٩

• يوسف أحمد قائد الشامي بكالوريوس كيمياء، جامعة تعز، دورة في مجال البترول (شركة أسبوت لتكرير البترول - أسبوت مصر) إجابة استخدام برامج Windows - micro soft office إجابة اللغة الإنجليزية كتابة ونطقاً - خبرة سنة واحدة كمراقب تأكيد الجودة في مصنع الإسفنج والبلاستيك - تعز عملت في مجال البحوث والترجمة (عربي إنجليزي والعكس) أرغب في العمل داخل الوطن أو خارجه للتواصل: ٧١٢٠٣٣١٠٣ - ٧١٢٠٩٦٩٦٩٦٩

• بكالوريوس علوم الحاسوب خبرة في الصيانة، شهادة خبرة معتمدة في الصيانة، خبرة في الشبكات، خبرة عامة في تقنية المعلومات، أرغب في العمل في مجال التخصص.

التواصل: ٧٧٧٢٢٤١١٥

**باحثون عن وظيفة**

• مطلوب للعمل طبيبات أسنان - خبرة لا تقل عن ٢ سنوات للتواصل: ٧٧٧١٠٦٦٦٦

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• جلال عبده مهيب - ديبلوم تقني بعد الثانوية - تكيف وتبريد - عمل لدى ورشة العريفي لخدمات التكيف والتبريد لمدة سنة - عمل في تركيبات التكيف المركزي في مستشفى الشرطة النموذجي - عمل لدى مكاتب ومستلمين أعمال في خدمات التركيب والصيانة - يرغب في العمل لدى أي شركة تحتاج لخدمات

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# Celebrating Jerusalem in Yemen

By: Nisreen Shadad  
For Yemen Times

In line with Jerusalem being the cultural capital of the Arab world this year and under the slogan 'Gaza is the start and Al-Aqsa is the aim', the Palestinian Women's Union in Yemen held its ninth festival for Palestinian children.

Despite a harsh context of closures, restrictions of movement and occupation, Palestinians are standing firm in celebrating the Arab cultural heritage of the holy city, in Palestine and in Yemen.

"This festival is larger than the previous ones because of the culture capital celebration," said Umm Omar, the representative of Palestinian women committee.

A large number of people, including political and religious leaders, attended. The festival was a celebration of Palestinian solidarity.

"This year, Palestine faces one of the wildest attacks, Israel aimed to destroy everything, our heritage, land and peoples," said Umm Omar. "But neither our children



nor women will surrender. Gaza taught the whole world a mythical steadfastness."

"In this festival we intend to reveal the type of education Israeli children are brought up with," she continued.

Nafisa Al-Jaeefi, the secretary general of

the High Council for Motherhood and Childhood declared death statistics included infants and children, "There are about 1,900,000 children under the age of 18 living in Palestine, according to 2007 statistics," said Al-Jaeefi.

Al-Jaeefi also spoke about the reality of education in Palestine. Despite the pitiful situation they live in, they are interested in women's education.

She criticized the attack of the international covenants and treaties: "The Palestinian child has the right to live in a safe environment."

Al-Jaeefi recommended continuing defending children's rights and supporting Palestinians morally and financially.

Palestinian children sang zealous songs, defending press freedom and thank the Al-Jazeera news channel for highlighting their situation and conveying it to the whole world.

A play about Jerusalem portrayed the type of education that Israeli children reportedly receive: "Our Lord orders us to kill Arabs," one of the children, playing the role of an Israeli child, said.

Another commented, "Palestine is ours—our role is to purify it and build the temple." At the end of the play the actors and actresses swear to dedicate their lives to achieve Israeli aims.

The festival ended with a message of peace. Little girls appeared wearing white dresses and carrying candles to spread hope in the hearts of the attendees.

Moneer Sa'ad, one of the doctors who traveled to Gaza during the attack said, "We aspire to liberate Jerusalem and hope to

pray there one day. This year, Israel prepared to destroy Al-Aqsa but they were defeated in Gaza, and God willing they will be defeated in the West Bank and Jerusalem too."

Sa'ad was surprised at their strength, "The secret behind their steadfastness is their faith. In the Al-Qassam Brigades [the military wing of Hamas], there are about 6000 mujahedeen who memorized the Quran by heart. You will never find an army in the whole world that can defeat those who keep the words of God in their hearts."

"Death and life for them are the same. They told me that they and their martyrs are alive for the sake of Allah. The concept of death is similar to the concept of life. We are ready to pay the price of dignity, but we are not ready to pay the price of humiliation," he added.

The doctor then related a story of courage and faith to those attending. The house of a little girl, Mariam Al-Garam, was destroyed in the attacks. She lost all members of her family. Wounded, she crawled for 400 meters until she reached a neighbor's house. She found no one, except some water.

She stayed there for two days. When the owner came to check his house, he saw surprised to find the little girl. The first thing she asked for was forgiveness, because she entered his house without permission and drank from their water.

Another story which was related by the doctor was that of a man who was killed by a gunshot wound. "I removed his jacket and found in his right pocket the Quran. There was another bullet embedded in the Quran. It settled on the verse, 'They are the youths that believe in God.'"

The year-long designation of cultural

capital of the Arab World is an honor and prestige for Arab cities. It rotates among Arab countries and it is usually a cause for celebration.

But in Jerusalem, Israeli occupation made the festivities difficult. Initially planned for early 2009, the celebration was postponed until the 21st of March, due to the recent Israeli aggression on Gaza that has

left Palestinians mourning.

The launching of the event occurred in Bethlehem, rather than Jerusalem, to bypass the Israeli occupation on the holy city, as the government did everything possible for Jerusalem not to celebrate its Arab heritage.

Damascus was the capital of Arab culture in 2008.

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