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Arab leaders head for Tunisia for the Arab Summit on Monday

Yemen's new initiative

BY MOHAMED BIN SALLAM
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The official media revealed last Friday the Yemeni initiative President Saleh will present during the Arab Summit in Tunisia. The initiative aims -according to its text- to regain security and stability in Iraq, to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and to establish peace in the region. The initiative proposes the formation of a three-party committee and to draw up a roadmap to regain the security and stability of Iraq. It demands dispatching an international force to separate the Palestinians and Israelis

based on 5 June 1967 borders. The initiative stipulates the holding of a regional peace conference, including Israel, after the declaration of the foundation of the Palestinian state, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the region and the Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands.

The text of the initiative:
First: Iraqi crisis

1- The formation of a three-party committee composed of the UN, Arab League and coalition forces representative with a representative of the Iraqi Governing

Council, concerned with draw up a roadmap, to include:

- a- Guarantee of unity of Iraq, confronting any secessionist disputes.
- b- Setting up a security plan to regain security and stability in Iraq and dispatch an international force to Iraq under the supervision of the UN and the Arab League.
- c- The withdrawal of occupation forces from Iraqi cities with the arrival of the international forces.
- d- The formation of a national assembly representing all ethnic groups to formulate the Iraqi constitution under the supervision

of the three-party committee and to hold elections after one year based on an election law banning any parties based on ethnic, religious or sectarian principles. The political parties will represent the spectrum of Iraqi people as to ensure the establishment of a democratic independent unified Iraq based on correct national grounds.
e- The reformation of the army and security forces without ethnic or religious allegiances, to be ready in two years time coinciding with the permanent withdrawal of occupation forces and remainder of international forces.

Continued on page 13



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To protest at the assassination of Sheikh Yassin

Massive rallies in Taiz

BY YEMEN TIMES
TAIZ BUREAU

On Saturday 27 March, angry citizens gathered from different neighborhoods of Taiz City at Martyr Square in protest to the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder and spiritual leader of the Islamic movement Hamas. The massive rallies chanted slogans like "God the Mighty", "No to the culture of humiliation and subservience", "Ahmed Yassin will be born again", "Victory and Liberation to Palestine and Iraq", "The trial of murderer Sharon by the international community", and "Yes to resistance and jihad".
A mass rally was then held at the square, attended by Governor of Taiz, Judge Ahmed Al-Hujry; representative of Hamas, Mr.



Demonstrators in Taiz protesting assassination of Sheikh Yassin. YT Taiz Photo

Jamal Essa; and several government officials in the city. Representatives of political parties and civil society organizations and schools delivered speeches condemning the assassination. The letter addressed to Arab leaders by the protesters and the letter of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, written before his martyrdom and has been planned to be addressed to the Arab Summit in Tunisia, were read at the rally.
The speeches emphasized the importance of supporting the legit-

imate resistance in Iraq and Palestine until the end of the occupations, reforming the Arab situation and bringing war criminals before the International Criminal Court to determine the punishment they deserve. The protesters' letter called on the Arab leaders, as stipulated by Qura'an and Islamic Legislation as their duties, for a clear decision in support of the resistance in Palestine and Iraq, the severance of diplomatic relations with the Zionist entity and the boycott of companies dealing with it.

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Warning to US citizens

BY PETER WILLEMS
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The day after Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was assassinated last week, the US State Department issued an announcement that there may be a threat of terrorist attacks on US citizens in the Middle East and North Africa.
"The Department of State is deeply concerned about the heightened threat of terrorist attacks against US citizens and interests abroad in the aftermath of the recent killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in Gaza," said the Worldwide Caution Public Announcement. "The Department is also concerned about the potential for demonstrations and violent actions against US citizens and interests overseas as a response to the killing."
The warning was based on Hamas statements soon after Yassin was killed. A statement from Izzedine Al-Qassam, the military wing of Hamas, put blame not only on Israel



A Yemeni security guard at the demonstration against the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin last Tuesday in Sana'a. (Yemen Times photo by Peter Willems)

but also the United States.
"The Zionists cannot have carried out this act without the approval of the US Administration, which carries the responsibility for this crime," said the Izzedine Al-Qassam statement. It also added, "All the Muslims of the world will be honored to join in on the retaliation for this crime."
The US government interpreted the message as Hamas is reaching out to militant groups operating internationally to target US interests and American citizens.
At the end of last week, Hamas, which was founded by Yassin in 1987 during the Palestinian intifada, announced that it will continue to focus on the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians and has no plans to target the United States.

Continued on page 13

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In Brief

Investment opportunities in telecommunications

The Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology has decided to expand the investment opportunities in GSM mobile telephone services by offering a tender allowing investment companies to invest in fields currently dominated by three companies of which one, TeleYemen, is a state-run company.

Based on this decision, the contract between the Ministry and GSM companies will expire in the middle of this year.

The Ministry is currently undertaking the restructuring and development of TeleYemen by the middle of June this year.

The decision to expand investment in GSM is a plus for the private sector since current private GSM companies' profits increased noticeably during the past two years, while TeleYemen has encountered a setback in profit due to the withdrawal of many subscribers to more developed modern mobile services.

Yemen participates in meetings of non-governmental consultative authorities

Dr. Hassan Qassen Khan, President of Behavior Science Division at Aden's faculty of Medicine and President of the Yemeni Psychological Association said that the participation of Yemen in the meetings of the Consultative Authority of Non-Government Organizations in Geneva during 2-5 April 2004 for the preparation of an international study for United Nations on violence against children, is on behalf of NGOs in the Middle East and North Africa.

Yemen was chosen from 101 international organizations in appreciation to the activities of Yemeni NGOs in defending child rights and for its success in cooperation with government authorities and international organizations.

Reduction of fatal traffic accidents

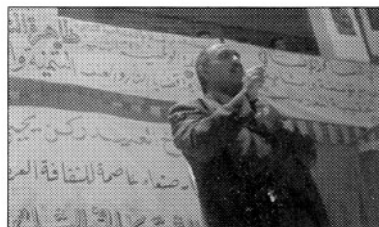
Traffic accidents during March claimed the lives of only 22 persons in 163 traffic accidents recorded by Traffic Police Department throughout the Republic, in comparison to 37 deaths in the same month of last year, it was announced last week.

Traffic accidents are the primary cause of tragedies for many families in Yemen.

Reacting to the President's call

On Thursday 25 March, Governor of Al-Beidha, Brig. Yahya Mohamed Al-Shami, Sheikhs and dignitaries, senior Government officials and nearly 10,000 citizens attended the opening

ceremony of the cultural week organized by Malah Youths Cultural and Sports Club in Rada'a, in cooperation with Dar Al-Sallam Organization for Combating Revenge and Violence. The



activities of the cultural week, held in reply to the President's call to put an end to revenge and under the slogan, "Together for a safe society with no grudges and revenges" consist of theatrical plays, fine arts exhibitions, folkloric songs and the distribution of leaflets related to increasing public awareness of the danger of revenge and misuse of weapons.

Yemeni-Chinese Higher Committee signs partnership agreements

By MAHYOUB AL-KAMALI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The Yemeni-Chinese Joint Higher Committee held a meeting in Peking Monday 24 March co-chaired by Yemen's Prime Minister Abdalqader Bajammal and President of the Chinese State Council Wen Jiabao. It is scheduled that the meetings would yield positive results regarding the conclusion of a number of agreements aimed at consolidation of cooperation between the two countries in development, investment and trade areas in addition to development of the Free Zone in Aden.

The agreements include areas of education, oil, electricity, training human resources, communications and discussion of helping Yemen in for

organisation of training courses in economic administration. The Chinese investments in Yemen are presently increasing and their value in this year amounted to \$150 million. China is also undertaking the implementation of a number of vital projects during the next months. Among these are projects for expanding the Jassua power generating station in Aden and investment project by the Overseas Company.

The Overseas Company invests in building a hospital in the capital Sana'a costing \$100 million and a \$ 50 million worth productive project in the Free Zone in Aden.

Peking meetings are also to contribute to deepening trade and economic cooperation in embodiment of what the joint higher committee has reached since its formation on 1987.

The total number of agreements concluded between Sana'a and Peking amounted to 79 agreements, minutes, and protocols, memoranda of understanding and executive programs covering various areas. Recently some 12 Chinese companies entered the Yemeni market for carrying out contracting and constructions works.

Yemen has also received loans and financial assistance from China to finance projects pertaining to industrial, trade, agricultural, health, arts, roads, and educational fields. The volume of the exchange of trade between the two countries in the past year amounted to one billion and 900 million dollars, out of which one billion and 545 million dollars the value of Chinese imports from Yemen, mainly oil.

Honoring Scout leaders

By FAHMIA AL-FOTIH
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

Under the title "Know each other, befriend and love each other" Mr. Abdualrahman Al-Akwa'a, the Minister of Youth and Sport, held on Wednesday 24 March a ceremony to honor Scout leaders on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Arab Scouts Association and also on the Brotherhood Day of the Arab Scouts (22 March).

Ali Al-Jarmozy, the Relations Officer at the Yemeni Scout Association, said "Today the Ministry of Youth and Sport honors the pioneer Scout leaders who have established the Scout Movement and played a key role in the Scout Movement in Yemen since sixties and seventies."

He added "It is an annual tradition. Today we going to honor 13 Scout leaders from different governorates, most of whom come from Aden in



which the earliest Scout Movement was established. We are holding social activities for 10 days"

Mr. Al-Akwa'a stressed the importance of renewing the base of the Scout Movement in Yemen and paying more attention to this important sector as it protects the youth from deviation and teaches them how to spend their time appropriately. "Involving youths in the

Scouts Movement helps them to build themselves and teaches them how to work independently. That helps them to be better citizens in the future"

He finally honored the 13 Scout leaders and wished them all success in their life.

He announced the naming of the hall after the late Mr. Saleh Sofan, one of the pioneer Scout leaders.

Mahboob Ali becomes member of NUJ

The Chairman of the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate (YJS) Mr. Mahboob Ali was awarded honorary membership of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) of the UK and Ireland during the Union's 2004 annual conference that took place in Liverpool from March 25 to 28.

This is the first time that an Arab personality has been awarded such membership, which was given in recognition of Mahboob Ali's role in promoting dialogue between East and West and linking journalists from the Arab world and Europe.

In a statement to Yemen Times, Mahboob Ali expressed his appreciation to the NUJ and said, "I feel honored to be the first Arab to become a member of this prestigious journalists union. This encourages me to bolster further Arab-European media relations in an effort to bring greater cultural understanding and cooperation in the journalistic field."

The Annual Delegate Meeting is the union's supreme decision-making body. Policy and activities are voted on by delegates from the NUJ's 150 branches.

Readers' Voice

Yemen Times features "Readers' Voice" a popular way for our readers to interact with us. This is your opportunity to have a say on world and local affairs.

This edition's question:

Do you have hope in the upcoming Arab summit in Tunis?

- Yes, I believe the upcoming summit will bring positive results
- No, I believe it will have no impact whatsoever
- No, on the contrary, it will cause more damage

last edition's question:

Do you think that Hamas will hit hard in revenge for Sheikh A. Yassin's assassination?

- Yes, and it is capable of doing so. 43%
- Yes, but not in the scale it had promised. 31%
- No, it is handicapped or too weak to do so. 16%
- No, because Israeli security has been enforced. 11%

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Education College students of Sana'a University visit Yemen Times

By NASRI AL-SAQQAF
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

On Wednesday 24 March 2004, nearly 150 students of the English Division, Faculty of Literature paid a visit to premises of Yemen Times and were received by Eng. Walid Abdul Azziz Al-Saqqaf, Editor-in-Chief and a number of members of staff of the newspaper.

The Editor-in-Chief briefed the students about Yemen Times Newspaper and the stages since its foundation until today, and replied to their questions about the role and subjects covered by the newspaper. He promised them to find a suitable solution to the early sell-out of issues of Yemen Times at bookstores near the university. The Editor-in-Chief pointed out the roles and responsibilities of publishing houses and the problems facing journalism in Yemen.

The students toured divisions of the newspaper and were acquainted with the printing shop affiliated to Yemen Times. The students confirmed to Yemen Times that Yemen Times Newspaper has been a major factor contributing to their study of the English Language and confirmed the importance of preserving this important pioneering establishment in Yemen.



Anti-violence workshop concluded

On Thursday 25 March 2004, at the Women Union Headquarter in Aden, the Workshop on Violence against Women was concluded. The workshop organized by British Oxfam in cooperation with heads of police stations, and the Prosecution and Judiciary Offices, aimed to increase legal awareness to combat violence against women. The two-day workshop resulted in a number of recommendations and suggestions confirming the importance of supporting women's issues and contin-

ued contact and coordination to resolve this problem through laying down working and coordination mechanisms among the related authorities.

The workshop recommended not to imprison women on the basis of suspicions or to inflict more sufferings on accused women, the importance of supervising women's jails by professional women police, activating the role of women in police stations and the presence of women social workers at police stations.

World Water Day marked Water crises

By FAHMIA AL-FOTH FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

Under the theme "Water and Disaster: be informed and be prepared". Yemen along with world countries celebrated World Water Day on Monday 22 March. The celebrations took place in the Police Officer Club.

In the ceremony Mr. Ahmed Sofan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning, stressed the importance of World Water Day as an essential step to stop and think about the hazards of water scarcity and vulnerability in Yemen, especially in the agriculture sector, which consumes a lot of water.

"Farmers have to realize that water is life's essence that should be carefully preserved. They should try using modern watering techniques that help to save water."

He called on the farmers to cooperate with the government in establishing water institutions to benefit from rainfall waters.

Mr. Mohammed Lutf Al-Eryani, the Minister of Water and Environment pointed out that the given information about water pointed out that the water crisis has apparently intensified.

Mr. Al-Eryani, emphasized the importance of working through a vivid strategy and goals that could contain

all the speedy changes in the economic and social fields and taking into account the increasing population growth that definitely requires a stronger water supply.

Salem Hassan Bashaib, the Head of National Water Resources Authority, (NWRA) delivered a speech in which he welcomed the attendees and said "This ceremony aims to remind the people and societies in the world about the necessity of saving water and being mindful of how to use it, as water is the most important element of life in general and for human life in particular."

He further explained "The water problem has been increasing year after year and we need to follow real policies through which we can administrate the water resources. A number of scientific studies have proved that many water resources in a various governorates are not good for human usage."

He continued "Through displaying these problems we want to remind our people that we are going to face a serious and real water crisis that the society and the next generation will suffer from if adequate and correct procedures are not taken right now. The governmental and non-governmental institutions should cooperate to find the suitable solutions."

In Brief

Efforts of President Saleh for conciliation continue

President Saleh continues to exert his good offices this week in order to complete the signing of the reconciliation document among the tribes of Marib that he proposed during his latest visit to the Governorate. Sources stated to Yemen Times that while some tribes are evading signing the document, some others have come to Sana'a upon the request of the President, following the reduction of the grace period for reconciliation from 5 to 2 and half years. President Saleh has previously issued a decision to form a National High Committee and affiliated branches to count and study revenge incidents and to find solutions to them.

The Conclusion of 3rd Conference on Women's Diseases

The Third Conference on Women's Diseases and Delivery and the Third Conference of the Yemeni Association for Child Medicine, held in Aden, were concluded on Wednesday 24 March.

The two conferences recommended the encouragement of natural feeding and the provision of information to women on the importance of natural feeding of infants. The attendants confirmed the importance of improving and providing quality health care to women and infants before pregnancy and during and after delivery in order to avoid and prevent complications, as well as to establish specialized health centers for the early detection of breast and uterus cancers.

600 weapons seized in Marib

A security source in Marib Governorate said this week that the security forces were able to close entrance points to Marib and to prevent the carrying of weapons inside the city. The number of weapons deposited at the security checkpoints reached 600. These measures are part of procedures to ease and prevent revenge cases, which commonly takes place in city streets and sometimes lead to military confrontation between tribesmen and security forces.

Inauguration of Aden International Book Exhibition

Governor of Aden, Dr. Yahya Al-Shaibi, inaugurated on Thursday 25 March 2004 the Aden International Book Exhibition, organized by Aden Corporation for Trade and Investment in cooperation with the office of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Aden. Mr. Nabil Ghanim, Director of the Corporation stated to Yemen Times that the book exhibition consists of thousands of book titles and is participated by publishing houses from Arab and friendly countries. The exhibition will continue until 5 April 2005.

The inauguration ceremony was also attended by a number of diplomats and businessmen in Aden and the heads of publishing corporations participating in the exhibition.

Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education and Parallel Education

Minister of Technical and Vocational Education, Dr. Ali Mansour Bin Sabaa, announced last week that the Ministry's parallel education system, adopted by the Ministry last year, is part of its plan to increase the capacity for graduates. Although it is equivalent to regular public education, it differs in implementation methods and the ratio of non-specialty subjects.

Imposter extorts money citizens as criminal investigation officer

YEMEN TIMES
TAIZ BUREAU

A criminal investigation officer impersonator was finally arrested in Osaifrah neighborhood, near the Hoban area, Taiz. The imposter used to pretend to be the officer on duty in the block. He would stop family cars under a gunpoint and ask for a marriage certificate, which is not normally carried in one's wallet or with car's registration papers. If the paper was not produced, he would threaten to take the victim to the Criminal Investigation Headquarters. The citizens would prefer not to create a scene with his wife, family or relatives, and instead would empty his pockets before being allowed to go. When his last victim decided to put an end to the career of the imposter, he wrote him a cheque, which would be cashed the next day. He notified the police, which in turn caught the imposter in action during the exchange the cheque for cash.

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YJS condemns A. Yassin assassination

Yemeni Journalist Syndicate (YJS) condemned the assassination of founder of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, orchestrated by the terrorist Sharon. The Journalists syndicate calls on the Arab leaders, meeting in Tunisia in few days for their regular Arab Summit, to adopt a unified Arab stance to boycott the Government of the Zionist entity. This terrorist state constantly proves its continuous enmity to stability, security and peace in the region and the world.

The Syndicate, in a letter of condolence to the Chief of the Palestinian Journalist Syndicate, Mr. Naeam Al-

Tobasi, expressed its deep condolence and solidarity with all the Palestinian people. It called on the Palestinians to unify their fronts and efforts to confront the enemy's plots, which would not be stopped at the assassination of the unarmed and paralyzed Sheikh Yassin. But it would not bend the determination of the Palestinian resistance in its legitimate struggle to liberate its country from the Zionists occupiers.

The Journalists Syndicate called on Yemeni journalists to express their solidarity with the Palestinian people and journalists, standing in the front

lines resisting the enemy, which would not hesitate to assassinate Palestinian journalists within its genocide campaign against the Palestinian people.

The Syndicate calls on the regional and international vocational organizations concerned with civil liberties and human rights to stand by the Palestinians facing genocide and discrimination at the hand of the Government of terrorist Sharon, which is a government that commits crimes against humanity on a daily basis and stands against the efforts to achieve just and real peace.

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The Government of the Republic of Turkey Offers 4 Scholarships for 2004-2005 Academic Year

The Government of Turkey is providing 4 scholarships to the Government of Yemen for the academic year of 2004-2005.

Two scholarships are reserved for candidates who are seeking doctorate degrees.

Two scholarships will be provided for research at graduate level.

Applicants must have good command of Turkish, English or French.

All applications must be submitted to both the Ministry of Education and the Turkish Embassy no later than June 15, 2004.

Additional information can be obtained from the Ministry of Education or the Turkish Embassy in Sana'a.

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The Big Middle East Project

The elimination of corrupted dictatorship regimes and the media promotion of it

By MOHAMED BIN SALLAM
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

With the unofficial announcement of the US Project, "The Big Middle East", the Arab regimes in particular have fallen undoubtedly between the anvil of people's demand for reforms and improvement of their living conditions and the hammer of the pressure to accept the US Project.

The US announcement of its coming project is no surprise to the world, but solely to the Arabs, may be since our problems have accumulated to the point it has become too difficult to get rid of them quickly. The Arab official response we hear these days implied that we have to treat our problems by ourselves and not to accept the US project. The Yemeni politicians see otherwise, since they believe that the Arab people demand salvation from injustice, subjugation, hunger, fear and ignorance and do not care whether the project was American or non-American.

It is time, if not too late, to build rooted reforms in Arab regimes, from politics to economics, from rights and freedoms to decision-making mechanisms. We do not think no one sees a contradiction between achieving reforms through local mechanism or within the frame of world-national partnership, especially since human rights issue has become a global issue, said Mr. Khalid Ibrahim Salman, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Thowry Newspaper.

Mr. Salman added that if dictators benefited from the US support for their regimes during the Cold War, why should not the citizen benefit from the support of any authority or international body to lay down a base for his

rights, to allow him genuinely to participate in political life. Although democracy is a national need and a universal humanitarian value, it cannot be imposed forcefully by an outside force, even if we see in rights and freedoms a world culture granting legitimacy to the demands of weak people. The regime that uses its might against its people and rejects equality or reconciliation and rebuilding of its internal system is a system unable to make any changes and reforms at the regional, Arab or continental levels. Thus, the critical Arab system is a reflection of individual countries' crises and the flagrant rupture of relations between the ruler and the people. These Systems could not produce a fair and democratic Arab system unless each system was just, democratic and transparent at the local national level. An unprejudiced system, which is opted to reform its chaotic internal situations, is required before the reform process can begin.

Expectations of Yemeni citizens:

Despite the crushing of Yemeni citizen by consecutive crises, he still recognizes, due to his simple spontaneity, the clear relation between bread and freedom, the dominance of political corruption and its other addenda and his generally deteriorating situation. Maybe the citizen does not philosophically break up the goals and aspirations of projects, but he realizes clearly that the country needs intrinsic changes, explained Mr. Salman.

The role of Political Parties in Reforms

The Editor-in-Chief of Al-Thowry Newspaper said that the political parties bare the responsibility to create a cultural and political movement required make a suitable atmosphere to absorb ideas of change through a

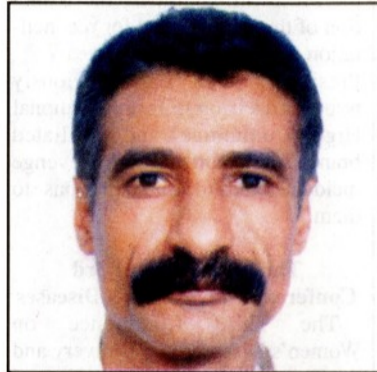


Mr. Bushra Mohamed Saleh

number of activities and reactions addressed to the regular citizen concerning change, enlightenment, rights and freedoms.

Mr. Salman, concluded his opinions on today's issues by saying that there is no way to resist democratic changes under the pretext of Yemen exceptionality and a conspiracy mentality after the world has become a small village, unless this particularity means to rulers total oppression, abrogation of human rights and remaining immortal rulers in the light of emergency conditions imposed for decades. This is of concern to the rulers only to prolong their authority and dominance, but for an ordinary citizen, changes are inevitable as long as they do not contradict sovereignty and independent national decisions. We simply cannot see a bright future without achieving a transparent and honest democratic life, as there is nothing more important in life than that. Otherwise, the future remains an obscure vision.

On the other hand, journalist Abdulrahman Bajash, Editing Director of the official Al-Thowra Newspaper, has a different view. He says, "Yemeni citizens react to the US reform project



Mr. Khalid Ibrahim Salman

with apathy for one important reason, the seemingly uninterested US policy towards the Middle East. It does not care about the inhabitants and certainly not about genuine reforms. Definitely, there is interest in democratic reforms, freedoms and human rights. They are humanitarian demands imposed by the necessity of a special reality, but the obscurity surrounding the US policy, in my opinion, makes the Yemeni citizen cautious when it comes to the sincerity of America. The fairer America seems to be, the greater trust of any policy towards "the Middle East" will become. If America is serious and it actually wants real reforms, it would have acted in one standard and not the double standards of the Arab-Israeli conflicts".

Whether Yemenis are familiar with the US project or not, Mr. Baghash confirmed that Yemenis do not know much about it not because of low-level awareness, but because of the sense of the injustice and arrogance of America in a world empty of justice and equality. When America seems to be fair in the Palestinian case, the more understanding the citizens become. Simply,

there is a relation between the Palestinian case and what America proposes since because the case is directly connected with Israeli interests and nothing else, no matter what others would like to believe differently, said Mr. Baghash.

Regarding the Arab League reforms, the Editing Director concluded by saying, "The reform of the Arab League is important, which must be a reflection of the internal reforms of each country. Establishing an Arab Union in the manner of EU is farfetched. Regarding subordination to the west, the inferior always assimilates the superior and Arabs do not assimilate anyone. The regular Yemeni citizen has enough concerns, more important than his interest in politics outside his border, whilst the intellectuals are absent from all issues of concern to the citizen and only worry about their own interests".

We did not neglect the opinion of Arab citizens in this issue. The Sudanese National, Bushra Mohamed Saleh, working at the Yemeni Documentation and Information Center, in reply to our questions on how much Arab citizens (including Yemenis) know about the goals of the US reform project, "The Big Middle East", whether this project will actually be implemented in reality and what will happen if it is not implemented, replied by saying, "The general sentiment of ordinary citizens in Arab countries is not satisfied with the current social, economic and political situations. There is also awareness and a rising demand for reforms at the levels of the rulers, the citizens and elite. In spite of the lack of interest of ordinary citizens in all aspects and goals of the US project, the joint common denominator between the citizen and all reform projects is more democracy, freedoms and respect of human rights,

and more importantly economic development. The ordinary Arab citizen believes that broad changes, of clear influence and impact on the social and political formation of societies are imminent, whether motivated by outside influences or based on national convictions. Ultimately, whatever the degree of these reforms might be, they would not just serve the intentions of US Administration alone".

The Arab citizen is seemingly not optimistic about the calls for reform of Arab League, the Arab cooperation slogans and to even the idea of establishing an Arab Union, since the general Arab atmosphere does not encourage them.

The Arab World remains entangled in Arab-Arab disputes, the crumbling situations in Palestine and Iraq, the political and economic turmoil inside each country and in the light of the lack of a unified Arab strategy, the West is always ready to fill in the vacancy to achieve its interests.

Mr. Bushra concluded his opinion by saying that ordinary Arab citizens are merely concerned with their aggravated living situations while politicians and intellectuals are living in a state of shock, despite their awareness of what is going on. The absence of a joint vision to confront this crisis bares the waste of their individual efforts. What is promoted by various media means, concerning reform, is positive and needed. This is not meant to distract Arab citizens and will not necessarily lead to direct reforms of their living conditions, since the motives for reforms impose themselves very strongly on the Arab arena as the demand of the people, not only as a result of foreign pressure. There is agreement amongst the parties on the principle of reform and what is asked of the media is to create a suitable atmosphere towards the reforms.

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Iraq says Arabs should work with U.S. reform plan

RIYADH, March 27 (Reuters) - Arabs have an exaggerated fear of U.S. reform plans for the Middle East and should work positively with Washington's proposals, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said in a newspaper interview on Saturday.

"There is a fear the Arab countries will have their sovereignty stolen. But we must discuss these initiatives and pick out what is good from them," Zebari told Saudi Arabia's Arabic-language Okaz daily.

Most Arab countries have given Washington's Greater Middle East Initiative a frosty response, saying any attempt to impose reform on the region from outside would be unacceptable.

Washington has called for free elections, empowerment of women, civil society, modernisation and fighting poverty.

Arab leaders meeting in Tunis on Monday and Tuesday will try to agree a joint response to the proposals, although advance ministerial meetings have failed to reach a unified position.

Analysts say the stagnant Arab political order is not only bad for its citizens, but has spawned Islamic radicals hostile to the West and the Western support for the autocrats that mostly rule them.

Iraq has been under U.S. occupation for a year since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Washington plans to transfer sovereignty to an Iraqi authority at the end of June.



Official cars are parked outside a conference hall as Arab foreign ministers meet in Tunis Mar. 27, ahead of an Arab League summit. Arab governments have been preparing for the Monday-Tuesday Tunis meeting for months but have failed to agree on common positions either on internal reform of the Arab League or on how to respond to a U.S. campaign for Middle East democracy.

Zebari, a Kurdish member of the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council.

"This does not mean accepting them — the choice must be ours and nothing must be forced on us.

"I believe the fear of these foreign proposals is not justified and is exaggerated," he said.

Guerrilla rocket attack in Iraq kills 2 & wounds 13

BAGHDAD, March 27 (Reuters) - Guerrillas fired rockets at the city hall building in Mosul on Saturday, killing two people and wounding 13, in another deadly attack on Iraqis working with U.S.-led occupation forces.

Colonel Shamil Ahmad, head of the city hall police department, said a child and two police were among the wounded. He said at least three attackers launched two Katyusha rockets, which hit the outer blast walls protecting the building.

Guerrilla attacks in Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, have killed several people this month including four U.S. missionaries shot dead in their car.

In another incident in the city on Saturday, police fought a shoot-out with a criminal gang that had stolen 62 million dinars (\$44,000) in money for government salaries. A policeman and a robber were killed, and two gang members captured, police said.

In Baghdad, a roadside bomb wrecked a passing vehicle, wounding at least five Iraqis. Gunfire erupted after the blast. The explosion targeted a large four-wheel drive vehicle, similar to those used by the U.S. military and foreign security firms.

Shattered glass and a bloodstained cigarette packet lay on the seats of the vehicle after the attack.

Improvised bombs concealed along roads in Iraq have been the deadliest weapon in the arsenal of guerrillas fighting the occupation, killing scores of U.S. soldiers over the past year.

Since the U.S.-led invasion to oust Saddam Hussein, 400 U.S. troops have been killed in action in Iraq.

FALLUJA SEALED OFF

The latest to die was a U.S. Marine killed on Friday in fierce fighting that raged for much of the day in the flash-point town of Falluja, 50 km (32 miles) west of Baghdad.

At least seven Iraqis were killed in the fighting, including a cameraman working for U.S. network ABC. Doctors at Falluja's hospital said many civilians had been caught in the crossfire.

Marines sealed off several roads leading in to Falluja on Saturday and said they were continuing combat operations there.

In the city of Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, where ethnic tensions between Kurds, Arabs, Turkmens and Assyrian Christians have at times boiled over into violence, unidentified gunmen killed an Assyrian police lieutenant in an attack on Friday evening.

In a separate incident in the city, U.S.

soldiers killed an Iraqi working with U.S. organisation RTI International and wounded two others after mistakenly opening fire on their car, a senior police official said. RTI is an organisation hired by USAID to help establish local governance across Iraq.

Japan's controversial deployment of troops to Iraq was back in the spotlight at home after an attack on a truck belonging to an Iraqi firm carrying goods for Japanese soldiers.

Jiji and Kyodo news agencies said an Iraqi had been killed in the attack in southern Iraq, but Japanese Defence Ministry officials could only say that an Iraqi had been wounded.

The incident could well raise tensions in Japan, already nervous about possible military casualties in Iraq and the threat of an attack by extremists at home.

There has been an upsurge in guerrilla violence in March as the U.S.-led administration presses on with plans to hand back sovereignty to Iraqis by June 30.

On Friday, a United Nations team of electoral experts arrived in Iraq to advise on polls due to be held in early 2005.

Washington's hopes of winning support for its political plans have been dented by opposition from Iraq's most revered Shi'ite cleric, Ayatollah Ali al-

Sistani.

Sistani, who wields great influence over Iraq's 60 percent Shi'ite majority, says a U.S.-backed interim constitution signed by the Iraqi Governing Council earlier this month is flawed and undemocratic.

One of Sistani's followers in Kuwait told worshippers on Friday that the cleric may declare that the Iraqi government that takes power on June 30 is illegitimate — a move that would cause many Iraqi Shi'ites to reject it.

"If Article 61 of the interim constitution is not changed, Imam al-Sistani may issue a fatwa declaring illegitimate all those to whom power is transferred in June," Kuwaiti newspapers quoted Ayatollah Mohammad Baqer al-Mohri as saying.

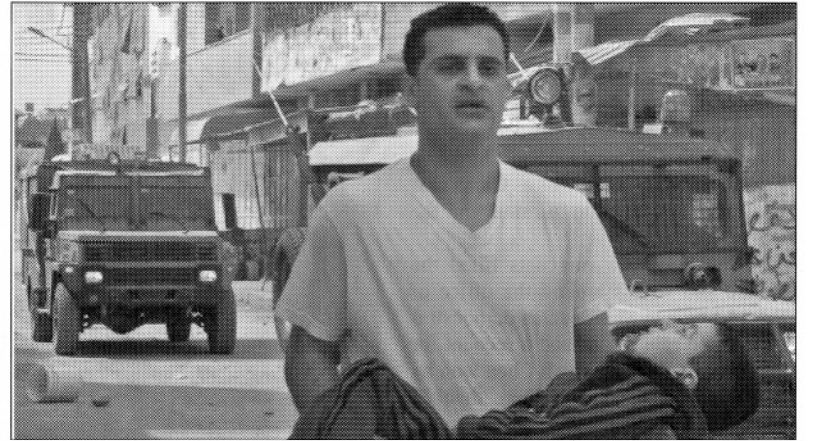
Sistani "may also order the Iraqi people to protest or carry out major popular demonstrations and sit-ins in all Iraqi cities", the newspapers quoted him as saying at Friday prayers.

Article 61 has several clauses, but the most controversial one is that even if a majority of Iraqis approve Iraq's permanent constitution in a referendum, it can be vetoed if two-thirds of voters in three provinces reject it.

The clause was demanded by Iraq's Kurds, who want guarantees that their

right to autonomy in northern Iraq will not be removed. But Sistani has said it is undemocratic as it allows a minority of Iraqis to dictate to the majority.

Six-year-old Palestinian boy killed in Nablus



carry the body of a six year-old Palestinian Khaled Walwil, in front Israeli jeeps after he shot dead in the West Bank city of Nablus March 27. The boy was killed by gunfire in Nablus on Saturday in an incident which Israel and the Palestinians blamed on each other.

NABLUS, West Bank, March 27 (Reuters) - A six-year-old Palestinian boy was shot dead when a Palestinian gunman opened fire at an Israeli military jeep during a raid in a West Bank refugee camp on Saturday, the Israeli army said.

Television footage taken of the incident by foreign television networks showed a gunshot ricocheting off an armoured Israeli jeep towards an upper floor of an adjacent building.

Twenty seconds later women's screams could be heard. Moments later, a Palestinian holding the limp body of a boy with blood on his face and neck is seen outside the building. A Palestinian gunman was filmed in an alley minutes before the incident.

Palestinian residents said the dead boy, Khalil Walwil, was killed either when soldiers on a nearby hill opened fire at the building while he stood by a window or when troops shot at Palestinians throwing stones at Israeli forces in the camp.

An Israeli military commander, who was in the jeep that came under fire, said the boy was killed when a Palestinian gunman in an alley shot at his jeep as forces left Balata camp. The commander said none of his troops returned fire. "I did not fire back at him (the gunman) because his fire was not accurate," said

the commander, who under military regulations could only be identified as Lieutenant Colonel Guy.

"About 10 seconds after that I heard from behind my jeep terrible screams from a Palestinian woman. I turned around and I saw a family with a few people screaming. The father held his son who was covered in blood and they ran to ambulances there".

Television footage showed Palestinians throwing stones at Israeli army vehicles as they drove through the camp minutes earlier but there was no indication the soldiers had responded.

The boy's uncle Said Walwil said his nephew was killed when troops on a nearby hill fired at the house. Other residents said the boy was killed when soldiers fired at stone throwers.

The boy died of his wounds on the way to hospital. Palestinian medics said that soldiers stopped the ambulance transporting the boy to hospital for 15 minutes.

The army said it was checking the report. A spokesman said that Lieutenant Colonel Guy had offered to transport the boy to hospital in a military ambulance but family members had refused.

Israeli soldiers raided the camp to search for militants planning suicide bombings, but left empty-handed.

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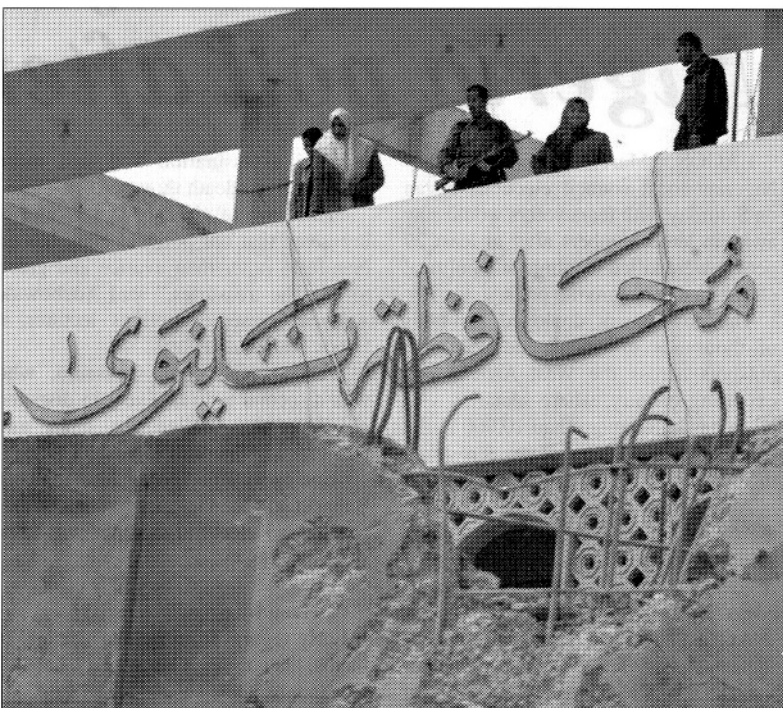
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Civil servants look at the damage caused by a rocket which hit a wall of Mosul's city hall March 27. Police said that insurgents fired two rockets at the city hall killing two civilians and wounding 13 others including a child. The sign reads in Arabic, "Province of Nenowa", the area in which Mosul lies.

REUTERS

Taiwan opposition protest swells, China fumes

TAIPEI, March 27 (Reuters) - In Taiwan's biggest-ever protest, 300,000 supporters of defeated presidential challenger Lien Chan massed in Taipei on Saturday to dispute his loss as China said it would not tolerate turmoil on the island.

A sea of yellow raincoats filled the square and streets around the office of President Chen Shui-bian as demonstrators defied rain to demand a recount for last Saturday's poll, which Chen won by just 30,000 votes out of more than 13 million cast.

Dressed in black in a demonstration of mourning and standing in front of a huge sign reading "Democracy is Dead", Lien told the crowd he had counted more than 1,000 irregularities in the island's third ever direct presidential vote.

"Today so many people gather here to demand a fair election. This is the most basic value of democracy," said Lien, leader of the Nationalist Party who also lost to Chen in 2000.

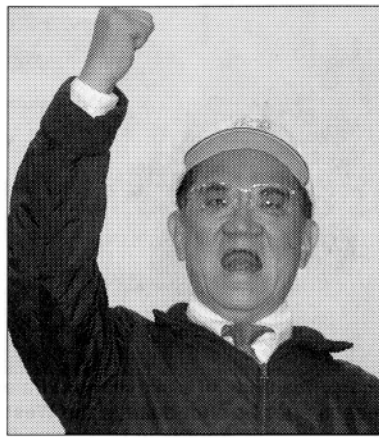
"Our common demands are very simple: immediate recount. I want to ask Mr Chen Shui-bian: what are you afraid of? Stand up!"

"Stand up! Stand up!" the huge crowd shouted back.

The Nationalist Party leader called for an independent inquiry into an election-eve assassination attempt that lightly wounded Chen and created a significant sympathy vote.

"We must be prepared for a long battle," Lien said. "We will not end our struggle until our goal is achieved. We must let the world see the power of the people."

The rivalry between Chen and Lien and the extent of support for the challenger threaten a prolonged crisis that could paralyse policy-making in one of Asia's most vibrant economies. Chen does not have a majority in parliament, making it difficult for his policies to be passed into law.



Taiwan's main opposition Nationalist Party (KMT) chairman Lien Chan chants slogans in front of the Presidential Palace as he attends a protest in Taipei on Mar. 27. REUTERS



Supporters of Taiwan's main opposition Nationalist Party (KMT) protest in front of the Presidential Palace showing their support for KMT Chairman Lien Chan in Taipei on Mar. 27. More than 300,000 supporters of Lien gathered at the presidential palace to protest the incumbent's victory. REUTERS

Beijing said it would not sit idly by if the protests spiralled out of control. The Chinese government is anxious to prevent pro-independence activists who back Chen's policy of greater sovereignty from using the turmoil to promote their cause.

Bulletgate

"Say no to Bulletgate scandal," read one placard held up by the crowd. "Say no to the dirty election," read another raised near a huge plaster replica of the Statue of Liberty.

Lien urged the crowd to go home, but warned Chen that his supporters would return in force to launch a new protest in early April if their demands over the disputed election were not met. He said he

would persist until the president's May 20 inauguration.

An extra 5,000 police were deployed to maintain order and ranks of helmeted officers in full riot gear stood in rows behind barbed-wire barricades in front of the presidential palace.

"I rather hope there will be violence so that the government will listen to us," said protester Chang Kun-lin. "The government is not afraid of the people. It's only afraid of old communists."

China's Communist leadership tried to make sure Taiwan was afraid.

"We will not sit by watching, should the post-election situation in Taiwan get out of control, leading to social turmoil, endangering the lives and property of our flesh-and-blood brothers," Beijing's

policy-making Taiwan Affairs Office said late on Friday.

Beijing regularly threatens to use force to recover an island it claims as a renegade province, but was unlikely to follow up its latest angry words with action.

Taiwan hit back, telling Beijing to mind its own business.

"Communist China has no reason to criticise our internal affairs. It is crudely interfering in our internal affairs," the Mainland Affairs Council said.

The Republic of China, the island's official name since it split from the mainland after the Nationalists fled there after losing a civil war to the communists in 1949, was capable of dealing with internal dissent, it said.

Pakistan installing anti-aircraft guns in capital

ISLAMABAD, March 27 (Reuters) - Pakistan is installing anti-aircraft guns in the capital Islamabad to strengthen security and thwart a possible air attack during a regional athletics event beginning on Monday, a government official said.

The ninth South Asian Federation (SAF) games, postponed three times because of a lack of preparation and security concerns, will go ahead under the protection of 3,000 police and paramilitary troops.

"There is no specific threat but to avoid any, and in case of need, we are installing those guns," Tasneem Noorani, Pakistan's Interior Secretary, told Reuters.

The guns would be centred around Jinnah Stadium, part of a sprawling sports complex in Islamabad's outskirts.

The jinxed games, in which Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives traditionally com-

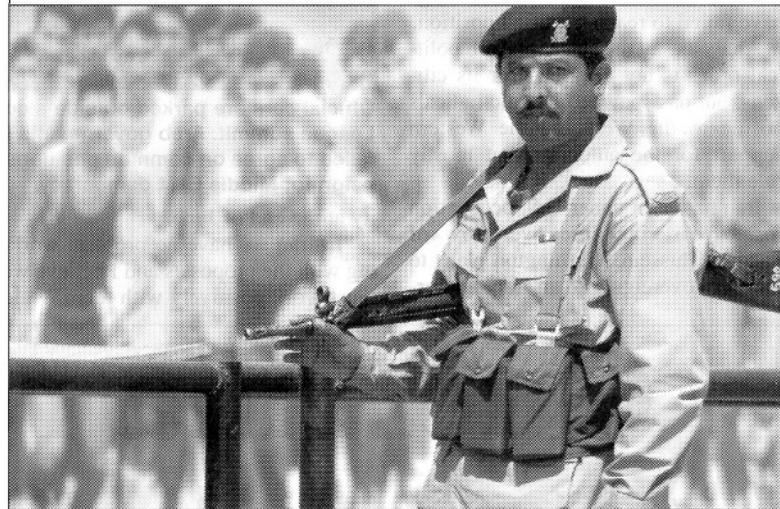
pete, were first postponed in October 2001 after the September 11 terror attacks on the United States.

Pakistan rescheduled them for March 2002 but the games were again cancelled after an escalation in border tensions with India. They were called off again in April last year because of the war in Iraq.

They will be held from March 29 to April 7.

The extra security coincides with fighting between Pakistani soldiers and Islamic militants, including al Qaeda, in a rugged tribal area near the border with Afghanistan. Noorani said the guns were unrelated to that two-week stand-off in which around 100 people have died.

"This is nothing to do with the ongoing military operation," he said. "It is a part of our security plan for the SAF games as foreign nationals are coming to Pakistan."



A Pakistani paramilitary stands guard outside Jinnah Stadium, the venue for the South Asian Federation (SAF) games in Islamabad March 27. Pakistan is installing anti-aircraft guns in the capital Islamabad to strengthen security and thwart a possible air attack during the regional athletics event beginning on Monday, a government official said. REUTERS

Malaysia PM keeps faith with old guard in new cabinet

KUALA LUMPUR, March 27 (Reuters) - Fresh from a landslide election victory that owed much to a strong anti-graft platform, Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi kept faith with the old guard when he named a new cabinet on Saturday.

The retirement of five ministers who had served under his predecessor, veteran leader Mahathir Mohamad, and the resignation of another allowed Abdullah to bring in some young blood.

He also created several new portfolios.

"This is to give some new faces a chance. Those who were not included, (it) doesn't mean that they were implicated in crime or corruption," Abdullah told a news conference.

Otherwise there was a strong sense of continuity from a prime minister who had appeared bent on differentiating his

administration from Mahathir's since taking over in October.

Abdullah, whose "Mr Clean" image was a key factor in beating the Islamist opposition last Sunday, kept the finance portfolio for himself.

But to lighten his load, Abdullah broke up the Home Ministry, creating a new Internal Security Ministry, which he will control. New Home Affairs Minister Azmi Khalid is one of the younger generation the prime minister is keen to promote.

Abdullah retained Nor Mohamed Yakcop, an ex-central banker who had been Mahathir's economic adviser, as Second Finance Minister, and brought in Mustapa Mohamed, an economist with prior experience at the Finance Ministry,



Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi announces his new cabinet ministers in Putrajaya, near Kuala Lumpur Mar. 27. REUTERS

as a minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Najib Razak, who Abdullah promoted as deputy prime minister in January, kept the number two spot and the defence minister position.

Syed Hamid Albar, foreign minister since 1999, held on to his job despite being associated in the international community with some of Mahathir's more controversial positions, notably over relations between the West and the Islamic world.

Trade Minister Rafidah Aziz, ever present in Mahathir cabinets and longest serving minister in World Trade Organisation negotiations, also kept her post.

The other rising star is Najib's cousin, Hishammuddin Hussein, who was promoted from the sports

ministry to education minister.

Cleanliness questioned

There were few casualties.

After Abdullah read the list, the first question in the news conference which followed was whether the cabinet was clean.

"Yes. There's no case for them not to be appointed," Abdullah responded. He added: "Being a minister doesn't give them immunity from the due process of the law."

The line-up drew a scathing assessment from the opposition leader, whose secular party won the most parliamentary seats among the opposition parties in Sunday's polls.

"If integrity and the perception of integrity are among the indispensable criteria for the selection of cabinet ministers, then the first Abdullah cabinet has

failed the acid test," said Lim Kit Siang, a veteran leader of the Democratic Action Party.

Abdullah led the ruling coalition to a huge victory in Sunday's polls, capturing over 90 percent of parliamentary seats and winning control of 12 of Malaysia's 13 state governments.

The margin of victory had sparked speculation that Abdullah could go in for a wholesale revamp of his cabinet.

But Abdullah's United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the party that heads the multi-ethnic Barisan Nasional coalition, holds internal elections at mid-year, and political analysts say he will be wary of sparking any infighting.

Two ministers, who leadership insiders thought could be axed, survived, although they were moved to different ministries.

India's BJP coalition heading for easy win: Survey

NEW DELHI, March 27 (Reuters) - Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist-led coalition will return to power easily in elections beginning next month, an opinion poll published on Saturday said.

The rival Congress Party, led by Italian-born Sonia Gandhi, could slump to its lowest-ever numbers in parliament, the survey published by the Indian Express newspaper said.

Two earlier polls said Vajpayee would lead the Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition to a comfortable victory riding on strong economic growth, rapprochement with Pakistan and his personal popularity.

Since coming to power at the head of a coalition comprising secular regional parties, the BJP has set aside its headline Hindu agenda that helped bring it into the political mainstream in the 1990s.

The BJP-led coalition is campaigning on a platform of development and good governance and will win between 287-307 seats in the 543-member lower house of parliament, more than the 272 required to rule, the Express said.

The grand old Congress party, whose chief Sonia Gandhi has been consistently



Sikh devotees carry silt from the holy pond during the cleaning of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India Mar. 27. Thousands of Sikhs thronged to the Golden Temple, the Sikh's holiest temple, to clean the sacred pond on Friday. REUTERS

targetted for her foreign origins could, along with its allies, take 143 to 163 seats, the poll conducted by A.C. Nielsen for the Indian Express and NDTV said.

The BJP-led coalition controlled 303 seats in the last parliament and the Congress-led alliance had 140. The Congress on its own is forecast to win 90

to 100 seats, according to the new poll, an all-time low. The party won 114 seats in the last election.

The Congress is banking on Gandhi, the torch-bearer of India's celebrated Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, to propel the party back to power after a slump in popularity.

Abstention fears in Nigeria poll after killings

LAGOS, March 27 (Reuters) - Nigerian local council elections began on Saturday with fears voters would stay away in large numbers after at least 29 people were killed in ethnic and political clashes a day before the polls.

The government deployed hundreds of thousands of troops and police to hotspots across the West African oil-exporting country, where sectarian violence has killed more than 10,000 in the five years since democracy was restored in 1999.

At least nine people were shot dead in the eastern oil city of Port Harcourt on Friday by camouflaged gunmen in what residents said was a politically motivated attack.

At least another 20 died in the central Plateau state, but it was unclear whether the attack on Muslims in the town of Wase was aimed at disrupting the poll or a reprisal for earlier raids that have killed 200 in the state in six weeks.

The election-eve clashes topped two months of violence during which two politicians have died, others have

escaped assassination and still more have received death threats.

"The wave of violence is not surprising given that our political class has no manifest other than avarice and greed to loot the treasuries," said Adebowale Adeyeni, a senior politics lecturer at Lagos State University.

President Olusegun Obasanjo, who won a second term last year in disputed elections, has called for calm and encouraged Nigerians to vote.

But opposition leader Muhammadu Buhari fears the violence and last year's widespread electoral rigging, will keep voters away.

"Driven by greed"

Early reports from polling stations in Lagos, the country's largest city, indicated a low turnout.

"I am not going to vote again because I don't trust the politicians. When they win they will forget us," said Amaechi Egeonu, a 30-year-old driver in Lagos.

In Kano, Nigeria's second biggest city, hundreds of voters queued outside

polling stations, but electoral officials said that was because ballots had yet to arrive.

The European Union and the United States reported widespread vote rigging in last year's poll that gave Obasanjo a resounding win and his party control of 27 of Nigeria's 36 states.

Hundreds of council chairmen and thousands of councillors are up for election in Saturday's vote, postponed from last year due to disputes between the federal and regional governments.

There have already been complaints of malpractice in registering candidates, and many states plan to hold polls in new councils which the federal government does not recognise.

Three states have postponed the elections again saying they are not ready. Others have suspended polls due to the violence.

"The struggle for power here knows no limits because it is driven by greed," said Chris Alagoa a charity worker in Port Harcourt, the main city in the oil-rich delta region.

N.Irish Trimble wins party leadership contest

BELFAST, March 27 (Reuters) - David Trimble, a key figure in the Northern Ireland peace process, saw off the challenge of two little known opponents on Saturday to retain the leadership of the moderate Protestant Ulster Unionist Party (UUP).

Trimble, who has battled within his party for the last six years against opponents of the 1998 Good Friday peace deal he helped negotiate, secured 60 percent of a leadership vote at a meeting of the UUP's 800-strong ruling council in Belfast.

"I'm delighted that the party council has, by such a significant majority, re-elected me as leader," Trimble told reporters after the result.

"This does represent the settled will of the party, and I hope that the party will become settled as a result of today's meeting."

Trimble shared a Nobel peace prize for his role in securing the Good Friday deal, which aimed to end three decades of bloodshed between Protestants who back the province's political union with Britain and Catholics favouring a united Ireland.

But since the accord was signed he has faced a constant battle against fellow Protestants who believe he has made too

many concessions to the Irish Republican Army and its political ally Sinn Fein.

Dissent within the ranks of the UUP has increased since province-wide elections last November, which saw the party surrender its position as the leading pro-British grouping to the hardline Democratic Unionists (DUP) led by Ian Paisley.

Trimble's leading UUP critic, Jeffrey Donaldson, defected to the DUP in January, cementing Paisley's position as leading figure on the Protestant side.

The defection also removed the standard bearer of the anti-Good Friday agreement faction within the UUP. In the absence of Donaldson, who led several challenges to Trimble's authority at past council meetings, no high profile candidate was prepared to put themselves up against the leader.

Instead Trimble faced Robert Oliver, a minor party official, and David Hoey, a rank-and-file UUP member who ran as a so-called "stalking horse", in the hope he could damage the leader enough to entice a heavyweight candidate into the ring.

Hoey mustered 22 percent of the vote and Oliver 18 percent, a result seen as delivering a clear victory to Trimble.



Leader of Northern Ireland's Ulster Unionist Party, David Trimble (R), takes his seat alongside party president Martin Smyth at the start of the party's annual general meeting in Belfast, Mar. 27. REUTERS

French lawyer says he will defend Saddam

PARIS, March 27 (Reuters) - The French lawyer known for defending Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie and guerrilla Carlos the Jackal said on Saturday that Saddam Hussein's nephew had chosen him to represent the deposed Iraqi president.

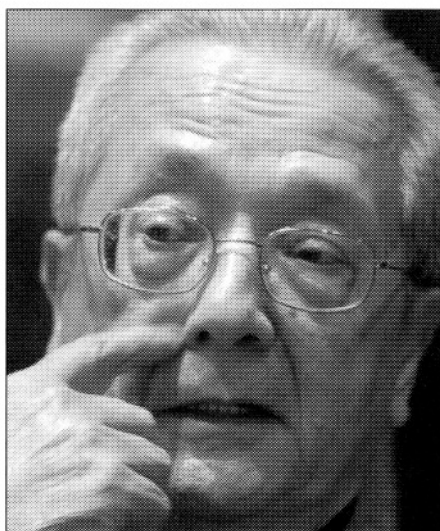
Jacques Verges told Reuters in a telephone interview he had received a letter from Ali Barzan al-Tikriti, whose father Barzan al-Tikriti is Saddam's half-brother, asking him to defend the former Iraqi dictator, captured by U.S. forces in December.

The U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council in Baghdad is setting up a war crimes tribunal to try Saddam on charges which may include genocide and crimes against humanity.

Washington has said the 66-year-old Saddam, whose interrogation is being led by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), should be tried in Iraq.

Verges, who is also defending former Iraqi deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz, said he had accepted the job of defending Saddam and suggested his strategy would focus on the role played by the United States and other countries in supporting the Iraqi leader in the 1980s.

"We know very well that the Anglo-



A file photo shows French lawyer, Jacques Verges during an interview with Reuters in Amman Dec. 18, 2003. The French lawyer known for defending Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie and guerrilla Carlos the Jackal said Mar. 27, that Saddam Hussein's nephew had chosen him to represent the deposed Iraqi president. REUTERS

Americans armed Saddam Hussein, that the chemical weapons were sold by the allies," Verges said in a telephone interview.

SIGHTS ON RUMSFELD

Washington helped Saddam obtain intelligence and military equipment and, according to a U.S. Centers for Disease Control document in the U.S. Senate record, Iraq also obtained from the United States biological agents that could have been turned into weapons.

The United States was at the time supporting Iraq in its war against the old U.S. foe Iran, at a time when Saddam used chemical weapons against Iranian forces and Iraqi Kurds. Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the former Soviet Union also supplied Iraq with equipment, expertise and funding over the years.

The West's close military and commercial relationship with Saddam ended when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

Verges singled out U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, a key advocate of last year's U.S.-led war to oust Saddam, for his role 20 years ago as a special envoy of U.S. President Ronald Reagan.

He said that if a trial of Saddam took place, Rumsfeld would have to "take a seat next to the leader".

Verges decried U.S. treatment of Saddam since his capture and said he feared the former dictator could be

killed before he had a chance to stand trial.

The United States declared Saddam a prisoner of war last month, meaning he has certain rights under the Geneva Convention on treatment of such detainees. But U.S. officials have said they do not rule out the possibility that the United States might re-evaluate that status in the future.

Verges has taken on tough cases before. Barbie, known as the "butcher of Lyon", was jailed for life in 1987 for crimes against humanity in Nazi-occupied France.

Carlos the Jackal, whose real name is Illich Ramirez Sanchez, is serving a life sentence in France for a string of deadly attacks in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s.

Charges against Saddam could cover his campaign against Iraqi Kurds in the 1980s, the use of chemical weapons on Iranian troops and Kurdish civilians, the crushing of Kurdish and Shi'ite Muslim uprisings in 1991 and the oppression of minority groups in the south and north of the country.

The United States and Britain cited Iraqi chemical and biological arms as their justification for invading the country last March. No such weapons have come to light since they toppled Saddam, despite intensive searches.

U.N. envoy says Kosovo status not to be rushed

HELSINKI, March 27 (Reuters) - Rushing a decision on Kosovo's status would be giving in to the violence which rocked the United Nations protectorate last week, the U.N. Kosovo governor told a newspaper on Saturday.

"The vagueness of the national status of Kosovo is a strain on people. Various nationalistic movements see this kind of a situation as insulting," Harri Holkeri, the chief U.N. envoy in Kosovo, told Finnish daily Helsingin Sanomat.

But a quick decision was not the answer. "That would equal to giving in to this violence," Holkeri said.

Clashes between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs last week left 28 dead, hundreds injured and forced some 3,600

Serbs to flee. The Albanians, blamed for the anti-Serb violence, want independence for Kosovo from Serbia.

Holkeri's comments were an apparent response to former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke who said this week the Kosovo violence was predictable as the international community had been too slow deciding its final status.

Holbrooke said he had told Holkeri as far back as October to take action to accelerate the status talks and warned that if the delay continued, violence would escalate.

The U.N., together with the United States and the European Union, will decide whether Kosovo has met democratic standards before determining its

final status. Holkeri told the paper the U.N. needed to change and renew its strategy, but did not say how.

"This multi-ethnicity is not working as planned," he said.

Kosovo is legally a province of Serbia, but has been a U.N. protectorate since June 1999 after 11 weeks of NATO bombing forced out Serb troops and ended their repression of Albanians during an Albanian separatist uprising.

Its unresolved final status is the subject of bitter dispute between independence-seeking Albanians and Serbs who say the province could be granted autonomy, but only under the sovereignty of Serbia and Montenegro.

Annan set to join last-ditch Cyprus peace talks

BUERGENSTOCK, Switzerland, March 27 (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan starts a final push on Saturday for an elusive Cyprus peace deal, meeting Greek and Turkish leaders in a secluded Alpine resort to break a logjam in negotiations.

Weeks of talks between Greece, Turkey, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have made little progress on a U.N. peace blueprint, leaving the chances of a united island joining the European Union on May 1 hanging by a thread.

Thwarted at the last minute in past efforts to end the bitter divide on the Mediterranean island, Annan still believes it is worth diverting his attention from higher profile crises in Iraq and elsewhere to resolve a dispute going back decades.

On the eve of Annan's arrival in Buergenstock later on Saturday, Turkish leader Tayyip Erdogan said he was encouraged about peace hopes after meeting Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis at a European Union summit this week.

"I have met with Karamanlis in Brussels. I saw that he also has the same goodwill approach," Erdogan told reporters on his return to Turkey on Friday.

Karamanlis will join the talks on the shores of Lake Lucerne on Sunday and Erdogan on Monday in what promises to be a long drawn out negotiating process that could go on until Wednesday at least.

Stakes high

The stakes are high for all concerned. Without a deal, only the internationally recognised Greek Cypriot government will join the EU on May 1, representing the whole island.

This could cement the island's partition and harm Turkey's own EU hopes.

A final text of a peace accord is likely to be presented to the parties before



Turkish nationalists hold up banners decorated with Turkish and Turkish Cypriot flags to greet Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş (pictured in banner) upon the arrival of 80-year old leader in Ankara March 4. file photo REUTERS

the Buergenstock talks are wrapped up, with Annan possessing a mandate to fill in any disputed gaps in the U.N. blueprint if the sides fail to agree.

The plan will then go to a referendum on both sides of Cyprus on April 20.

The United States, the EU and former colonial power Britain are piling on the pressure for a reunification deal for Cyprus, split since 1974 when Turkish troops invaded the north after a Greek Cypriot coup backed by Greece.

On Friday, EU leaders reaffirmed their preference for the accession of a united island and "reiterated (their) readiness to accommodate the terms of such a settlement in line with the principles on which the EU is founded".

A key problem in the talks, which

began on February 19, is the nature of exemptions from EU rules on freedom of movement sought by the minority Turkish Cypriots, who fear being swamped by their richer and more populous neighbours.

Greek Cypriots say there can be no "permanent" exemptions to EU law that would hinder forever the rights of Greek Cypriots, such as being able to buy property and travel freely through the island.

Under the complex U.N. plan, under negotiation in one form or another since 1999, there would be broad autonomy under a loose federal government.

Only Ankara recognises the Turkish Cypriot statelet led by Rauf Denktaş, who has refused to attend the Swiss talks because he does not believe a satisfactory deal can be struck.



Botschaft
der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Sanaa
Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Sanaa

Bekanntmachung für Deutsche zur Wahl zum Europäischen Parlament

Am 13. Juni 2004 findet die Wahl der Abgeordneten des Europäischen Parlaments aus der Bundesrepublik Deutschland statt.

Deutsche, die außerhalb der Bundesrepublik Deutschland leben und im Bundesgebiet keine Wohnung mehr innehaben, können bei Vorliegen der sonstigen wahlrechtlichen Voraussetzungen an der Wahl teilnehmen.

Für ihre Wahlteilnahme ist u.a. Voraussetzung, dass sie

1.1 seit mindestens drei Monaten in den übrigen Mitgliedstaaten der Europäischen Union eine Wohnung innehaben oder sich mindestens seit dieser Zeit dort gewöhnlich aufhalten (auf die Dreimonatsfrist wird ein unmittelbar vorausgehender Aufenthalt in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland angerechnet)

oder

1.2 a) in Gebieten der übrigen Mitgliedstaaten des Europarates leben oder

b) in anderen Gebieten leben und am Wahltag seit ihrem Fortzug aus der Bundesrepublik Deutschland¹⁾ nicht mehr als 25 Jahre verstrichen sind,

und vor ihrem Fortzug nach dem 23. Mai 1949 aus der Bundesrepublik Deutschland¹⁾ mindestens drei Monate ununterbrochen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland¹⁾ gewohnt oder sich dort sonst gewöhnlich aufgehalten haben;

2. in ein Wählerverzeichnis in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland eingetragen sind. Diese Eintragung erfolgt nur auf Antrag. Der Antrag ist auf einem Formblatt zu stellen; er soll bald nach dieser Bekanntmachung abgesandt werden. Einem Antrag, der erst am 24. Mai 2004 oder später bei der zuständigen Gemeindebehörde eingeht, kann nicht mehr entsprochen werden (§ 17 Abs. 1 der Europawahlordnung).

Antragsvordrucke (Formblätter) sowie informierende Merkblätter können bei

- den diplomatischen und berufskonsularischen Vertretungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,
- dem Bundeswahlleiter, Statistisches Bundesamt, Zweigstelle Bonn, Postfach 17 03 77, 53029 BONN, GERMANY,
- den Kreis- und Stadtwahlleitern in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland

angefordert werden.

Weitere Auskünfte erteilen die Botschaften und berufskonsularischen Vertretungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.

Sanaa, den 21.03.2004

Botschaft der Bundesrepublik
Deutschland Sanaa, P.O. Box 41+
2562, Sanaa
Sa: 08:00-14:00, So-Mi: 08:00-16:30

1.) Zu berücksichtigen ist auch eine frühere Wohnung oder ein früherer Aufenthalt in dem in Artikel 3 des Einigungsvertrages genannten Gebiet (Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt und Thüringen zuzüglich des Gebiets des früheren Berlin (Ost)).

Words of Wisdom



It is my belief that terrorism will be something with which we are destined to live, and it will be a main feature of the 21st century. It is therefore important for our universities and specialized institutes to offer studies on it. If our world is to grow more open and to ensure cooperation among all, we should also try to address the grievances of all members of society.

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

OUR
OPINION

Arab summits:

Symbolizing
weakness and
humiliation

The Arab Summits in the views of most Arab citizens have nowadays turned to symbols of inability and helplessness. Looking at Arab summits held in the recent past, one would easily find that every time Arab leaders meet in any Arab city, all they end up with is mere talk and cries for justice. They condemn or denounce the occupation of Arab land, while doing nothing to change the reality. They occasionally show courage in accusing each other and in rare cases insulting each other, as happened in the last summit before the war on Iraq.

What more can we expect from those summits? Perhaps more humiliation and embarrassment? As a nation, we have reached the most vulnerable time in our history. It wouldn't surprise me to see another Arab nation attacked and occupied without any action by other states because we are all in a stage of complete stagnation. This is basically due to our inability to unite our views and positions on pan-Arab and international affairs.

When trying to analyze the situation carefully, we would realize that this is due to the fact that Arab regimes don't trust each other and know that if any tries to defend his brother country, he will not be supported by the other Arab states, making him the second to be victimized. On the other hand, on an individual basis, each of the Arab regimes of today do not believe that their people will stand with them in case of confrontation with the enemy, whoever that enemy is. This is obvious because Arab regimes are generally oppressive and still hold a mentality of dictatorship and total domination and control of the people and the country's resources, making it quite difficult to win their trust and support.

The recent assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin has added more troubles to the troubled regimes, putting them in a critical position before their people. "All they do is talk and talk"... "They are good for nothing, mere puppets of the USA"... "All together they are not equal to a finger nail of Ahmed Yassin... To hell with them all..."

Those are a few sentiments heard in various protests in Yemen and the Arab world about Arab regimes and leaders.

They have proven in the past that they are unable to meet the expectations of the people, and it is just to say that their people are not expecting a lot from them any way. This year's Arab Summit is expected to be like many others, full of useless talk and denunciations, and empty of any agreement or real action.

We just hope that those leaders will look into their people's affairs and stop wasting money on traveling and spending time in useless meetings that are concluded with no concrete action. Perhaps they could save the millions spent on such pointless summits for something more useful, something like building schools, or even planting trees!

The Editor



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First English Newspaper in Yemen, Founded in 1991
by Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf

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The importance of media
in population census

BY AHMED MOHAMED
AL-QADHI
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

No doubt the media has an important and effective role in any political, economic and social activity. The Media has become an important element in recent times in accompanying development in various aspects taking place in the world. The media is one of the crucial important and scientific pivots which require perceivable facts. The population census media campaign aims primarily to increase the awareness of society and to gain the trust of the citizens in order to collect accurate statistical data from the various. The

member of society is the source of data. And in order to collect accurate and precise information, the citizen must have trust when providing information to the researchers working in the field. Good preparation phases regulating the role of the media must accompany the fieldwork of the population census. The success of the media campaign depends on the following:

1- The ability of the researchers in the field gain primarily the trust of the citizens in order to obtain the information without suspicion. The researchers must be aware of the importance and benefits of the census in the economic planning. They must have good conduct in such work and in dealing with the public in a way that does not reflect hesitation or concern. These are some of the stipulated conditions for the success of the census.

2- The nature of the means the researchers are using to persuade the public interact with them to reach the positive goals of the census. This issue is accompanied by the roles of the different media, TV, radio and newspapers, on a broad scale and with all possible capabilities. This is usually based on a concerted plan of how to deal with public opinion, for instance the use of preachers in Mosques in pointing out the importance of population census through involving as many citizens as possible from all walks of life. The holding of lectures at schools and universities and organizing individual interviews and distributing various informative leaflets will also play an important role in getting the public ready to take part and to contribute effectively to provide accurate information for the population census.

A tragedy called "The
traffic system in Yemen"

BY ADEL AL-MOTAKEL
afnadel@yahoo.com

Sana'a being the Arab cultural 2004 deserves better attention to earn its title, especially when it comes to the traffic system. Is what is happening in the traffic and by the traffic authorities natural? Or is there a need for revision and rectification.

People are fed up of corruption, blackmailing and looting. And whenever a traffic officer stops a car the consequences would be the driver bribing the officer and getting away with the violation, as if the officer's job is everything else but to ensure order of traffic and safety of passengers.

There is another problem in the traffic system and that is implementing the specifications and standards on the vehicles. If the driver buys his way through regardless the status and condition of his vehicle, what results is the existence of huge number of vehicles outside the standards and specifications, a fact that made air pollution a special aspect of Sana'a.

I wonder how our Yemeni lungs are still working in the middle of this pollution and I suggest granting the international award to our (miracle) lungs and including them in Guinness Book of Records.

We as Muslims believe in fate, but truly, there are many traffic accidents which could have been prevented if the performance of the authorities- whom you know - was as it should be.

If you examine the reasons of the accidents you will discover that most of them happen due to burned-out head lights or rotten tires or incompetent drivers. What is tragic is the number of under-aged drivers without licenses. What's worse is that some of them have license and the question is "How did they get them?"

Another complaint related to the traffic system is the microbuses and their drivers. Are all the drivers really qualified to serve the citizens? Truly I don't think so. Nowadays we have got used to the rudeness and disrespect of the drivers (of course not all of them) towards the passengers, especially towards the women and old people, which made rid-

ing the microbus an unsafe adventure and an un-enjoyable experience through which one's dignity and self esteem is likely to be shattered. For some of the drivers take pleasure in insulting passengers, and do not care about their feelings and their preferences, for example, regarding the loud awful music they keep playing all the time regardless of the passengers' comfort.

In addition to the dirt and dust that covers most of the taxis and public transport cars, the seats are usually so small it feels they were designed for children, and tall people crumble in their seats wishing for the journey to end as soon as possible.

These observations are quite obvious to anyone with eyes, and it's a small part of the suffering and the troubles people face in the streets. It is high time the related authorities do something about it instead of isolating themselves and burying their heads in the sand while the outside world is looking in and keeping track of everything and the external media is reporting every little and big thing there is.

Corruption investors
reject reforms

BY HASSAN AL-ZAIDI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Calls have been heard condemning the reform project offered by US for the Middle East. Critics insist their rejection to the US reform project mainly because reforms must come in from within and not from abroad. May be we could agree with those critics in this point in the case of having reforms to encounter damages inflicted by the state's officials. The fear may come from imposing political reforms in Arab countries, when the beneficiaries may lose a lot of interests by giving in their influence, privileges and authority. Could those corrupts repair the exacerbated corruption cases in order for the peoples to exempt them from political reforms.

But how can corruption be eliminated without having political reforms?

There is no doubt that corruption, originated from the womb of system, could not be eradicated since it has become one of the system's important pillars. With the increase of wealth of corrupts, the increase number of cynical hypocrites and beneficiaries surrounding those corrupts. This factious cycle deepens and begins to root in the society and the people are lift in despair while the state's fortune continues to funnel into the pockets of limited number.

The lingering question to the Arab rulers is, "Could these rulers mend what the state's officials have spoiled? Could the rulers eradicate corruption and corrupts from the authority ladder?"

Dr. Ahmed Alrobai said that corruption in some countries is the authority itself, the elimination of corruption means the collapse of the authority. They are not afraid of US reforms, but are afraid of national reforms, which would deprive them from many amenities.

In Yemen, corruption has swallowed everything the reformists had hoped to build. Leaving to having the minority influential and beneficiary class versus the majority devastated class. And today, we are at the verge of death dose on the pretext of economic reforms. It would be the killer dose of the people after the consecutive governments have failed to make actual economic reforms due to the spread of corruption and dominance of corrupts. The doses may eventually awaken the people and would ignite a real war against corruption and corrupts, especially in a country where the corrupt is rewarded by promotion to a minister or an ambassador.

The reports of Central Organization for Control and Audit (COCA), which refer to only 5% of corruption related cases by officials are indication of the dominance of corruption in Yemen. Some reports have confirmed the loss of

many loans and foreign donations. Other reports have indicated the misappropriation and spending of public funds and revenues of economic public sector, estimated at 125,903,846 Riyals, as assistants, gifts and cars for some high-level officials, without official documents.

If embezzling public funds has disturbed at one time those in the top of government authority pyramid, corrupts would not have dared to continue to bluntly exploit public funds for their personal benefits. The corrupts would not have actually built palaces, driven fancy cars considering they came to power owning nothing just inferiors.

Extravagant wealth:

Palaces, Mr. President are being built in Haddah for the corrupt officials and fancy cars are being driven by their children. Sometime ordinary citizens barely surviving are run over by these cars due to reckless driving. The people wish if only five of those corrupts would go to trail to be examples.

We suggest that instead of economic doses, the confiscation of just several officials' illegal funds and banking accounts here and abroad towards the state's treasury and suspending them from their offices would actually boost the economy for two years. Otherwise, the worn out people are only left with pray for US project.

Letters to the Editor

Coverage on Madrid bombings
Why didn't you inform to the population about the attacks in Spain. You speak of freedom of press. Spanish people are really sad. We have always supported the Palestinians and Syrians, economically and morally. We have always been the bridge between the Muslims and the Occident. We lived together for 700 years in peace.

Part of our language has Arabic words. In our schools Muslims and Catholics are together.

We have the biggest mosque in Europe. Spanish people never supported the war. I don't understand why they kill in the name of god. I think we have the same god but this god tells me not kill and love the others. I hope that in the future we will be able to live all

together and tolerate different religions and ideas, GOD will help us.

Silvia A.
Spain

Dear Silvia,
Please check edition number 720, where the main story is about the attack.

—The Editor

COMMON
SENSE

By Hassan Al-Haifi

Why all the
fuss about
"the Passion"?

"I don't know why all the fuss about a movie?" said Khalid

Mahmoud remarked: "What do you mean? The whole world is in an uproar about the film that is said to portray the life of Jesus Christ? There were people who said that the book and movie are so gory that it would be unhealthy for children to see the movie."

"Nothing is unhealthy anymore for children. Why, with all the bloody films being produced these days, 'Passion' might just be a teaser on the goose pimples of little kids", said Fatima as she joined her two other fellow employees, who shared the same office in the authority they were working for.

Khalid came back into the conversation as he finished checking out the files on his desk, which he apparently seemed to think did not require urgent attention: "I think there are some Christians in the US who are just getting too cozy with the Zionists and somebody was reminding them that this coziness might be unwarranted in light of the suffering inflicted on Jesus by the ancestors of these Zionists."

Fatima came back with some clarifications: "Look, Jesus was also one of them, and as far as we Moslems look at it, the Lord Al-Mighty was not about to let anyone make a bloody mess out of the Deliverer he sent to Israel and the entire world. He simply forfeited them the opportunity to show their sadistic cravings towards Christ and lifted him up unharmed, before they ever got to him".

Mahmoud had a whole different perspective: "It is not to my knowledge that the Christians or the Jews have ever looked seriously at the Koranic version of the story of the Messiah. I think that if they have, they could have been spared a lot of nonsensical feuding over *whodunit*." That is why I often wonder, why is it that the Zionists still display a harsh hatred for Moslems, as the Moslems were the ones who let them off the hook over the crucifixion of Jesus, peace of Allah be upon him? That is in itself is worthy of their considerable recognition."

Fatima had another reflection: "The Zionists do not speak for the Jewish people. I have often heard and read many Jews, who disclaim any ties to their Zionist brethren, because they believe that Zionism lacks the moral grounds to be considered a religious movement".

"Back to 'Passion'", said Khalid as he fiddled in his desk drawers for a pen, continuing, "Did you know that a lot of Jewish writers were raising the anti-Semitism yodel again, because they felt that the movie was a deliberate attempt to rejuvenate the argument over who crucified Jesus." If we are to believe the distorted versions of both the Christians and Jews, then we can easily state that *both* collaborated with prior intent to put out the flame that Jesus (P) was igniting among the discontent and the oppressed. The Romans went on later to carry the banner of Christianity, while putting the blame on the Jews. The Jews, in the meantime, had difficulty getting along with any religious persuasion, which did not conform to the dogma disseminated by their powerful clergy, while adopting religious misconceptions that were the very things that religion was totally against, such as the Zionist dogma."

Fatima added weight to Khalid's statement: "Yes, you are right, Khalid, it is impossible to believe that a religious movement could allow for the murder of a fully paralyzed religious man, as he was coming out of his Dawn Prayers. How many of you physically able men actually bother to attend Dawn prayers in the mosque?"

There was a silence of embarrassment by her colleagues. Then Mahmoud said: "I assure you Fatima that I do not miss out on any of my prayers, some in the mosques and the rest at work or at home. You are right to take note of the fact that Ahmed Yassine is indeed a more pious man than any of us. You are right also to point out that the death of Sheikh Ahmed Yassine should not be taken so lightly by the Moslems and the Zionists who had the audacity to inflict such a heinous crime. Maybe this was Ariel Sharon's answer to Mel Gibson's book and movie!"

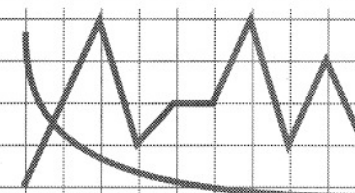
Mahmoud wanted to alarm Fatima: "Fatima, if what you are saying reaches the ears of the Zionist establishment, you would be slandered all over the media. Did you know that they went as far as saying that Mel Gibson not only had anti-Semitic tendencies, in fact they said he was gay! God knows what they would say about you, if they heard what you said".

What puzzles me is that Zionists will always regard their evil deeds as just and justified. But, the whole world, except Bush and Co. said that what they did to Ahmed Yassine was simply out of line and unjustified, even those who were highly critical of Hamas and the suicide attacks".

Khalid said: "I can't understand these western critics of Hamas. Look at all the crazy things that westerners do when they get frustrated or even depressed. How many crazy murders did one hear about in the streets of Ulster and Oklahoma? What about the Mansons and all those other misfits who organized cult suicides after going on a wild crime spree that brought havoc to many an American community? Haven't the Palestinians been subjected to the most inhumane treatment by the Zionist land thieves, not to mention the systematic make life as hard as they can for the remaining Palestinians, who are bravely holding on to the last stretch of their native homeland. That is the motto of Sharon's unilateral peace initiative?"

Fatima made a closing comment as she wanted to seriously get some work done: "With the cold blooded murder of Sheikh Yassine, the Zionists only gave added weight to the Mel Gibson illustrations of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, as they are related in the Christian Gospels."

YT Business



The water crisis,

Utilization of rainfall, the ideal solution

BY MAHYOUB AL-KAMALI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Agricultural engineers confirm that the rational utilization of rainfall waters would limit aggravation of the water crisis Yemen is suffering from as a result of the burdens put on shoulders of the population especially in the areas deprived of water mainly the villages of the governorates of Taiz, Ibb, Saada, Jawf, Mareb, Hudeida, Abyan, Dhahli and Lahj.

Those specialists have also said that rainfall waters are still squandered and the work for increasing reservoir in water dams and barriers would contribute to expand the area of agricultural products and the volume of local production of agricultural economy from its present situation of 18 per cent of the gross national product to 28 per cent and an additional proportion of at least 10 per cent.

The specialists add that storing rain water would eliminate the water problem in areas threatened by drought and those suffering from scarcity of subterranean waters in the areas depending on wells producing little daily waters.

A study by the World Bank had affirmed that the total of renewable water resources in Yemen are estimated at around 21 billion cubic metres and the individual share does not exceed 150 cubic metres per year. The study said 28 billion cubic meters of water are consumed each year with an

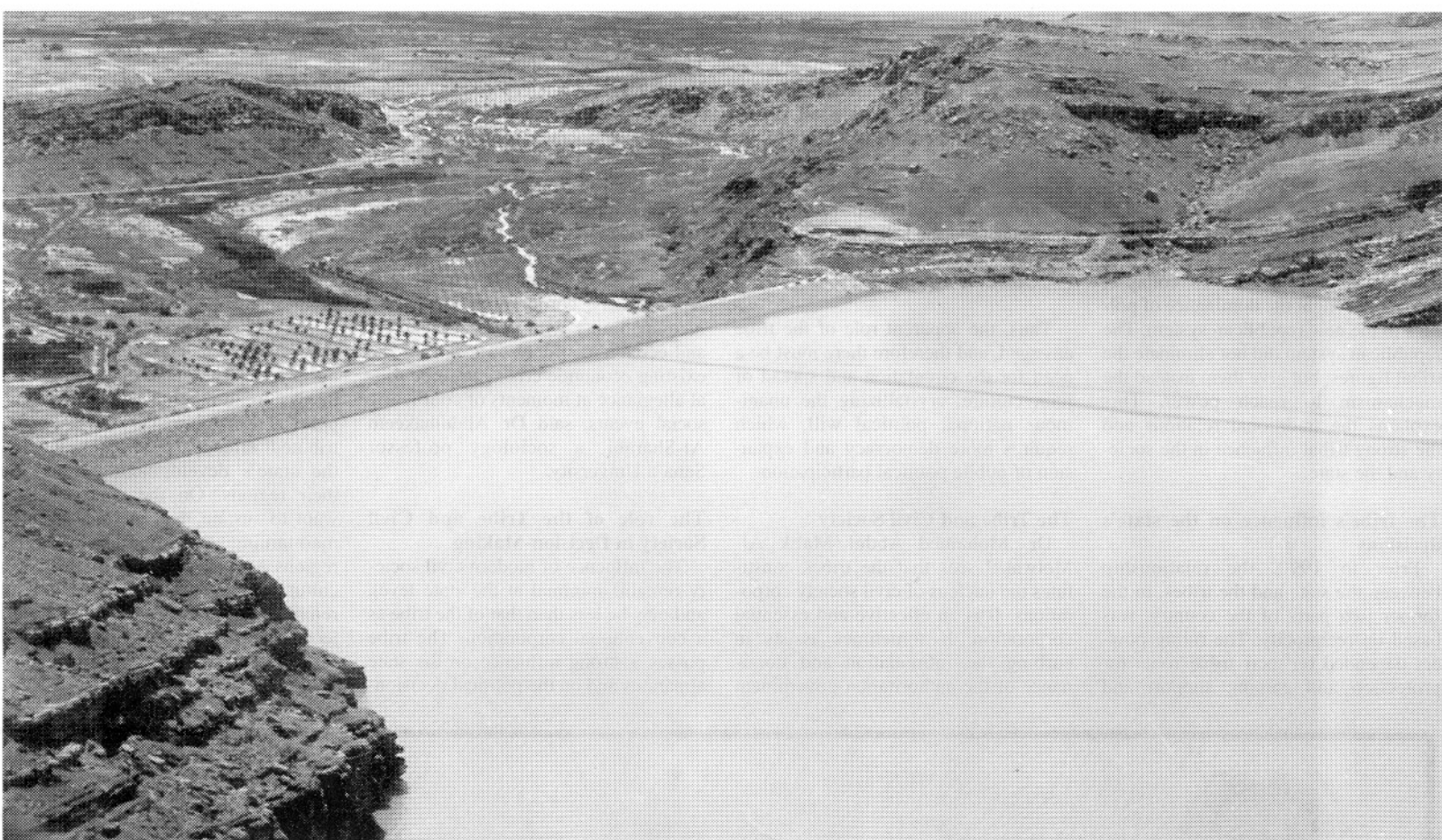
increase proportion exceeding the reservoir by 7 billion cubic meters a year.

Surveying studies mention that among the causes behind aggravation of waters crisis in Yemen is the depletion of water reserve in the major cities and haphazard drawing water in the Yemeni countryside and the qat tree water consumption between 50 to 60 percent of irrigation waters, in addition to the obsolete equipment and tools used for drawing underground waters.

The phenomena of the crisis are reflected on stability of the population life to an extent of the spread of gangs stealing water at nights from seasonal reservoirs, as happens in the area of Shara'ab in the governorate of Taiz.

The areas suffering from water shortages are still witnessing tensions among families over water of subterranean well and there are armed conflicts taking place every now and then because of water and resulted in claiming life of many people in several governorates.

Specialists in the field of water at the beginning of each rainy season that there is a huge water wealth that can be stored and gaining increase in agricultural crops in fertile areas but that requires providing sources of financing projects of building new water dams and barriers for the ideal utilization of rainfall waters that is still not benefited from up till now. The ministry of water and other concerned authorities has to double their efforts for facing the water problem. For



Marib dam

experiments have proved that construction of barriers for storing waters

is not expensive but that needs organization of efforts and concentration on

areas where there are flows of torrents in order to retain them and thus over-

come the crisis for good.

Changing of economic life patterns in Yemeni countryside

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The Yemeni countryside is presently a scene of big changes in the pattern of economic and consuming culture while conflict between old habits and social traditions and the spirit of change and modernization coming from urban areas is getting intensified. Modernism is also resulting from the state plans for civilizing the urban life with development and service projects especially the expansion in building schools and colleges of civil community and providing electricity,

water, telephone networks, paved roads and centers for training and qualification.

Data of the rural reality mention that the projects financed by the World Bank and the UN Development Program and the UNICEF as well as the donor countries such as Germany, Holland and others contribute to creating job opportunities for a proportion of the unemployed and enable the poor families to improve their levels of income and their stability in a social environment that is continuously and steadily growing.

In addition to that, the projects built by the local authority and those approved in development plans of the central government contribute to modernizing the countryside economic life and developing consumption culture and paying attention to the local and social environment. The official efforts were concentrated on supporting farmers and marketing their products to the cities over paved roads, a matter that produced financial benefit for the people in the countryside.

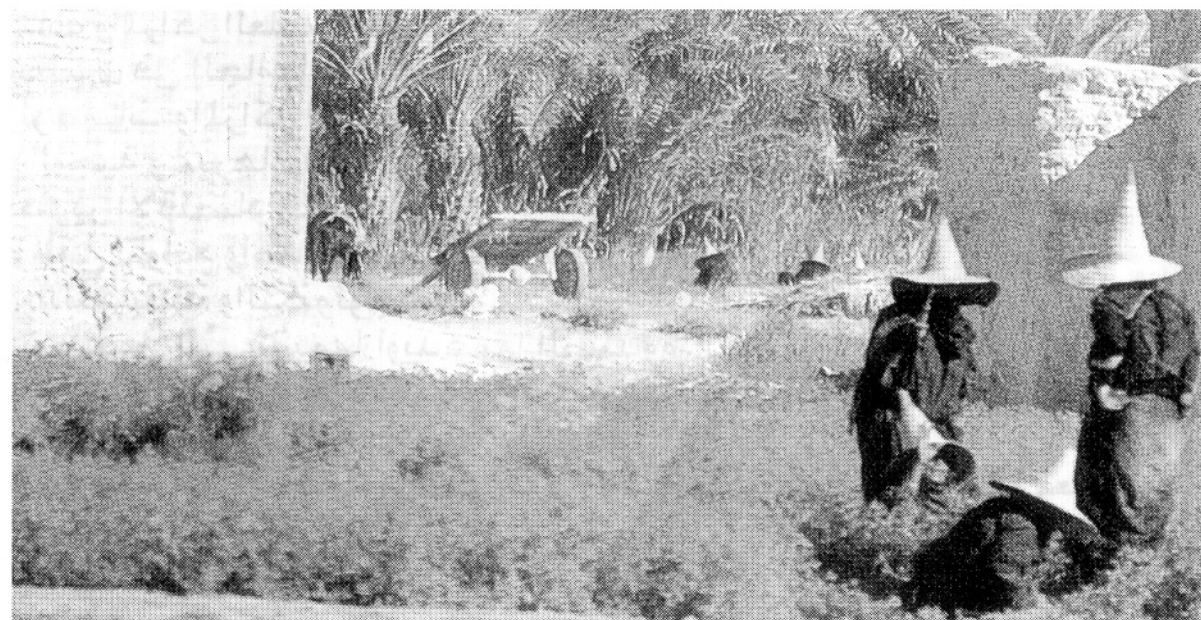
Visitors to the Yemeni countryside would find that 5 percent of the population consisting of families settled in the villages depends in their living spending on revenues coming to them from their expatriate sons. Those contribute to funding vital projects, educational, health and cooperative implemented, in addition to their administration of investment productive projects in the cities and export and market their products to the villages.

As a result of official and private efforts, services of electricity reached

many densely populated villages where the state establishment of electricity and rural water carry out direct supervision on building power-generating stations and employing a number of the unemployed in following up signing of contracts for extending services to the citizens and paying bills of subscription. The state establishment also builds projects for water through building water dams and barriers for overcoming the water crisis especially in the areas suffering from the problem of non-availability of water. It also extends services to the citizens' houses in return for duties paid monthly to direct supervisors. In rural areas densely with females the concerned authorities and government and non-government organisations build centers for training and qualification for women enabling them to manage small projects, sewing workshops and embroidery and other handicrafts which they market to cities within a plan of Yemen's implementation of a national strategy for fighting poverty.

These efforts have contributed to changing the manner of economic life in the countryside in Yemen. On its part the private sector worked for spreading the GSM telephone service by erecting relay stations that extended coverage of the service to most of areas having dense population where fixed telephone services have not reached rural villages.

It is to be noted that countryside populating participation in dealing with GSM services of the private sector created a competition between the two companies; Sabafon and Spacetel that have been able to cover the largest area



Yemeni women work in a farm, they partner Yemeni men to improve their life

of villages at a time services of the state establishment of cable and wireless communications are still weak and limited spread due to not building relay stations in rural areas. Thus the culture of the rural consumer has changed where supplying of electricity services have urged the people to buy television sets and receivers for viewing satellite TV channels, except for the poor families that cannot afford buying them.

Despite of this change in the Yemeni countryside there is an intensifying conflict between a generation living at the age of globalization and ken on education and encouraging its sons and

daughters to go to public schools another generation still tied to the past and sticking to religious fundamentals and social habits and traditions that look at woman as her place in society is confined to raising children and managing household affairs.

Of the results of this conflict in some villages there appeared some elements calling for depriving the Yemeni woman of public posts and threatening the employed wives of divorce if they do not quit their job of teaching in government schools. This means there is an exaggeration towards the woman work which constitutes a dangerous phenom-

enon threatening the future of the woman life in the country.

It can be affirmed that the economic and social life is changing in the Yemeni rural areas and that implementation of development and services projects play an important role that would lead this change that in turn would develop culture of he local society and bring up a new generation dealing positively with the language of science and knowledge. There would be a generation that would take part effectively in running the local authority and implementing local projects that contribute to improvement of the general performance of economy.

Exchange Rate for the Yemeni Rial		
Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	184.4500	184.6800
Sterling Pound	340.5400	340.9700
Euro	226.8000	227.0800
Saudi Rial	49.1800	49.2500
Kuwaiti Dinar	625.5500	626.3300
UAE Dirhem	50.2200	50.2800
Egyptian Pound	29.8300	29.8700
Bahraini Dinar	489.2400	489.8500
Qatari Rial	50.6600	50.7300
Jordanian Dinar	260.3200	260.6400
Omani Rial	479.1300	479.7300
Swiss Franc	146.0800	146.2600
Swedish Crown	24.5800	24.6100
Japanese Yen	1.7285	1.7307

Source: Central Bank of Yemen

The Tribe and the State in Yemen

BY HASSAN AL-ZAIDI
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The absence of the state's constitutional corporations in the past one hundred years or so, has influenced and contributed tremendously to making the Head of the State the sole person determining the relations between the tribes and the state. This was clearly noticed during the reign of Imam Ahmed and the following period of the formation of the Republic of Yemen, and until today. Conflicts normally erupt between the state and the tribes when the state's ruling authority seeks to impose oppressive practices against tribesmen, and dismisses, reduces or marginalizes the roles of tribes' sheikhs.

The relative stability of relations between the state's authority and the tribes during the Presidency of Ali Abdullah Saleh can be attributed to numerous policies adopted in handling the tribes, ranging from a containment policy to taming, subjugation and sometimes reconciliation and appeasement policies.

The first Government of the Republic in 1962 included some influential sheikhs, strengthening and expanding their social status. They consequently did not seek the return of the monarchy following its collapse, but rather sought the dominance of politics in the new republican system. The republican system did not eliminate the tribal figures, but give them instead the mechanism to reach power. This explains the traditional relations and the strong tribal influence in the society and the state.

The tribe's influence on the state's decisions

Prior to 1990, the relationship between the state and the tribes, in the former two parts of the country, was based on reciprocity. The ruling powers depended on their tribal roots for protection and gaining support and

legitimacy, in return for the state's support of tribal figures and the adaptation of tribal system. The majority of seats of the first parliamentary elections of 1971 went to tribal figures, to the extent that the council looked like a tribal-Sheikhs council. This encouraged the remaining sheikhs to join the state and its corporations.

The following factors are behind the manifestation of the effectiveness in the tribe in the local community in its conventional form and as an integral part of the political society (the state):

- 1- The independence tendency of the tribes from the central government versus the state's tendency towards dominance and authority.
- 2- The tribe's joint liability and common culture connected with individuals.
- 3- Civil society corporations are immature.
- 4- The strong tribal allegiance versus the weakness of general national allegiance.
- 5- The ambitions of some tribal leaders.
- 6- The role of the state itself in the reproduction of the mentality of the tribe.
- 7- Insufficient and incompetent social and economic modernization operations and the lack of political stability.
- 8- Other foreign factors.

Thus, the apparent role of the tribe emerged, and therefore there must be a need for the circulation and spread of joint culture, crystallizing the unanimous national political will, which requires more democracy and expansion of public political participation.

The Tribe and Civil Society

Dr. Mohamed Abdul Malik Al-Motwakel sees that the tribes constitutes the nucleus of civil society corporations. It is an effective and essential corporation. It sometimes assists in curbing the intimidation and dominance of the authoritarian government

especially if the tribe's leverage is utilized properly.

Dr. Mohamed Al-Huthy, a professor at the Faculty of Information in Sana'a University, thinks that the noble traditional values of the tribes in Yemen do not exist in Yemen nowadays, except in very rare situations and regions. Many researches have shown that values have changed. However, the tribes neither preserved the constructive and worthy values of the past nor adopted the meaningful and good values of the present. The tribe developed the bad of the past and the ugly of the present. This transformed the tribe and its prominent sheikhs into seekers of money and fame. Dr. Al-Huthy adds that the state has shown weakness in some stances and that regions that encouraged the tribe to become the alternative to the state. When the state does not grant and protect the citizens' rights, they normally find their refuge in the tribe.

The Influence of Democracy on Yemeni Tribal Society

In spite of the adaptation of various forms of democracy, such as the transfer of power to the elite directly by the public, these democratic practices did not either replace or reduce the foundations of democracy-contradicting conventional formations such as the tribe or the region. Ironically, ineffective civil society corporations and their incompatibility with the current social and economic structure in light of the existing economic crisis reinforce tribal allegiance at moments of conflicting social events, said Dr. Abdulhakeem Al-Sharabi, a sociology professor Sana'a University.

The role of the Tribe and Civil Society in Decision-Making

The influence of modern civil society remains minimal at the state level, and may be less than that of the tribe as a conventional corporation. The tribe poses a strong influence on the state apparatus and on the political decision-



Tribesmen undeniably control vast areas in Yemen and can on many occasion defy the government by not abiding by given laws and orders

making process. Sometimes the tribe fulfills a role independent of and parallel to the state.

The role of the civil society corporation remains theoretically strong in the framework of the call to build the modern state of Yemen and the rule of law, but practically is unable to implement its vision, unlike the tribe. In fact, political decision-makers have not contributed effectively to strengthening the state's development strategy in their regions. On the contrary, they want to sustain their statures through maintaining the situation of their regions as it is. They are afraid that a cultural and economic development renaissance in their regions would jeopardize their social status, says Dr. Foad Al-Salahi.

The Tribe's Army Verses the State's Army

The tribes have played major and decisive roles in political conflicts in Yemen. After the revolution of 1962, the tribes loyal to the defeated monarchy, armed and financed by Saudi Arabia and other foreign powers, were able to regain some ground lost to the Republicans. In fact, they reached the outskirts of Sana'a, surrounded the city and imposed an embargo on the city for 70 days before they were finally defeated. These tribes also inflicted heavy casualties on the Egyptian Armed Forces, which came to Yemen to support the newly founded republican system. They were a people's army fighting against a uniformed and highly mechanized equipped uniformed Egyptian army, supported by armed

Yemeni militias.

The tribes also played a worthy role beside the legitimate forces against the secessionists in the civil war of 1994.

The tribes, through involvement in these conflicts, acquired a lot of weapons and still possess them today. In addition, they have gained combat experience from their practical involvement. The difference now is that the military corporation has far more developed military capabilities than the tribes. The tribes still retain a strong military capability and a trained people's army, which could be used and benefited from by any authority despite the fragmentation of tribal unity caused by tribal conflicts, local wars and revenge incidents.

Continued on page 13

مؤسسة السعيد للعلوم والثقافة

إعلان

تخليداً لذكرى المرحوم الحاج/هائل سعيد أنعم ، وتعزيزاً لمسار الخير في سبيل دعم أبناء بلادهم في الجمهورية اليمنية ، وتجسيداً لنهجه في البذل والعطاء ، ومن أجل نشر الوعي العلمي وتقديم الحلول العلمية للمشكلات التي تواجه المجتمع ، ولالإسهام المباشر في البحث العلمي في اليمن ، وتنشيطه ، وبما يؤدي إلى زيادة المعرفة وأن يكون ذا فائدة علمية لليمن .
قررت مؤسسة السعيد للعلوم والثقافة تأسيس :

صندوق السعيد لدعم البحث العلمي

لتحقيق الأهداف والمقاصد الواردة أدناه :

- يهدف الصندوق الى دعم البحث العلمي وتشجيعه في الجامعات والمؤسسات والمراكز العلمية اليمنية من خلال :
- دعم البحوث العلمية الأصلية للباحثين والمتخصصين والأكاديميين اليمنيين في الجامعات والمؤسسات والمراكز التعليمية .
- تشجيع الباحثين والمتخصصين والأكاديميين اليمنيين في الجامعات والمؤسسات والمراكز العلمية اليمنية ، على إجراء بحوث علمية مبتكرة .
- دعم البحوث العلمية في مجالات العلوم الأساسية والتطبيقية والتكنولوجية وغيرها ذات الأولوية للصندوق والمؤسسة .
- التطوير المشترك للتكنولوجيات الناشئة التي من شأنها الإسهام في تطوير الاقتصاد اليمني .
- المشاركة في دعم المؤتمرات المتخصصة والندوات وورش العمل العلمية التي تتواءم وأهداف المؤسسة .
- العمل على تنمية إمكانات مكتبة السعيد في كل من العلوم الأساسية والتطبيقية والتكنولوجية .
- العمل على نشر نتائج البحوث العلمية ووقائع المؤتمرات والندوات وورش العمل التي يقيمها أو يدعمها الصندوق .
- المشاركة في إنشاء مشاريع بحوث علمية محددة مشتركة بين مختلف فروع العلم وفي مجالات توائم وتستجيب لمتطلبات التنمية في اليمن .
- الإسهام في توفير النصوص الكاملة للمقالات العلمية المنشورة في أدبيات العلوم إلكترونياً .
- تشكيل صلات علمية بينية فاعلة من خلال تشجيع التعاون بين مجموعات من المتخصصين في فروع العلم المختلفة والعمل معاً لمعالجة موضوعات نوعية ذات أهمية خاصة لليمن .
- إقامة وتعزيز الصلات مع مراكز ومؤسسات دعم البحث العلمي محلياً وعربياً ودولياً .

وعليه :

فإن صندوق السعيد لدعم البحث العلمي يعلن لجميع الأخوة والأخوات الباحثين في مؤسساتهم وفي التخصصات المختلفة تقديم مقترحاتهم البحثية إلى مكتب مديرعام مؤسسة السعيد للعلوم والثقافة وفقاً للنموذج والشروط على أن يتم أخذها من الأخ الأستاذ/فيصل سعيد فارح مديرعام مؤسسة السعيد للعلوم والثقافة بمدينة تعز على العنوان التالي :

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صندوق السعيد لدعم البحث العلمي

عناية الأخ المدير العام - تعز - الجمهورية اليمنية

ص.ب. ٥٩٦٢ - هاتف: ١٩/٢١٢١٢٠-٢١٢٢٦٠ فاكس: ٠٤-٢١٢٢٢٦ - بريد إلكتروني: E-Mail: alsaeed Fund@y.net.ye

Japanese hot springs are a healing business

NIKKO, Japan, March 14 (Reuters) - Sitting in a scalding hot bath with naked strangers sounds more like punishment than a popular pastime.

But for generations, the Japanese have found no better way to relax than soaking together in a hot spring bath. And now an economic upturn and worries about travelling abroad are encouraging even more to take the dip.

"This is just the best thing," said Ayako Hatano, a retired teacher, soaking in a murky white bath with her friends in Nikko, a mountainous hot spring resort three hours north of Tokyo.

"You come out so relaxed, like a totally different person."

Hatano is one of more than a hundred million travellers this year visiting the "onsen", or hot springs, that dot Japan's volcanic archipelago and are believed to relieve muscle tension and work wonders for the skin.

Japan Travel Bureau, the biggest travel agent in the country, expects a rise of one percent in domestic travel this year, boosted by the economic recovery and continuing fears of travelling abroad after the September 2001 attacks in the United States and health scares around Asia.

Since about a third of all tourist travel inside Japan involves a trip to an onsen, that's good news for the sector.

"Onsen have always been the most popular reason to travel but now even more so," a JTB spokeswoman said. "We're introducing more tours than

ever."

All this will be welcome relief for an industry estimated by some analysts to generate 400 billion yen (\$3.6 billion) a year in revenue but struggling to recover from over-expansion in the 1980s.

After the bursting of the bubble economy, many onsen hotels found themselves in a saturated market and soaking in debt.

DEBT AND DEFLATION

The plight of the onsen industry is nowhere more evident than in Kinugawa, a once-popular resort near Nikko.

At night, lantern-lit streets give off the ambience of a quaint onsen town, but daylight reveals a row of decrepit buildings and huge concrete hotels with cracked facades.

The failure of the local Ashikaga Bank late last year has aggravated the situation, making many hotel owners worried their loans will not be rolled over.

Many local residents are pinning their hopes on talk that the state-backed Industrial Revitalisation Corp of Japan plans to buy the debts of struggling hotels and help them restructure.

But debts are not the only problem.

Like much of the economy, onsen hotels are also suffering from deflation and room rates are still falling, even though the number of guests is recovering.

Most consumers these days expect onsen hotels to offer a room with a view and an impressive dinner for

about \$100-150 per person, down by about \$30-50 from a couple of years ago, JTB said.

While luxury inns offering rooms for around \$500 per person are still said to be flourishing, the country's growing population of pensioners means consumers will want to travel more frequently, and for less money.

BACK TO BASICS

To many, an onsen is still the epitome of indulgence, often experienced in combination with a lavish meal of fresh fish and some chilled "sake" rice wine.

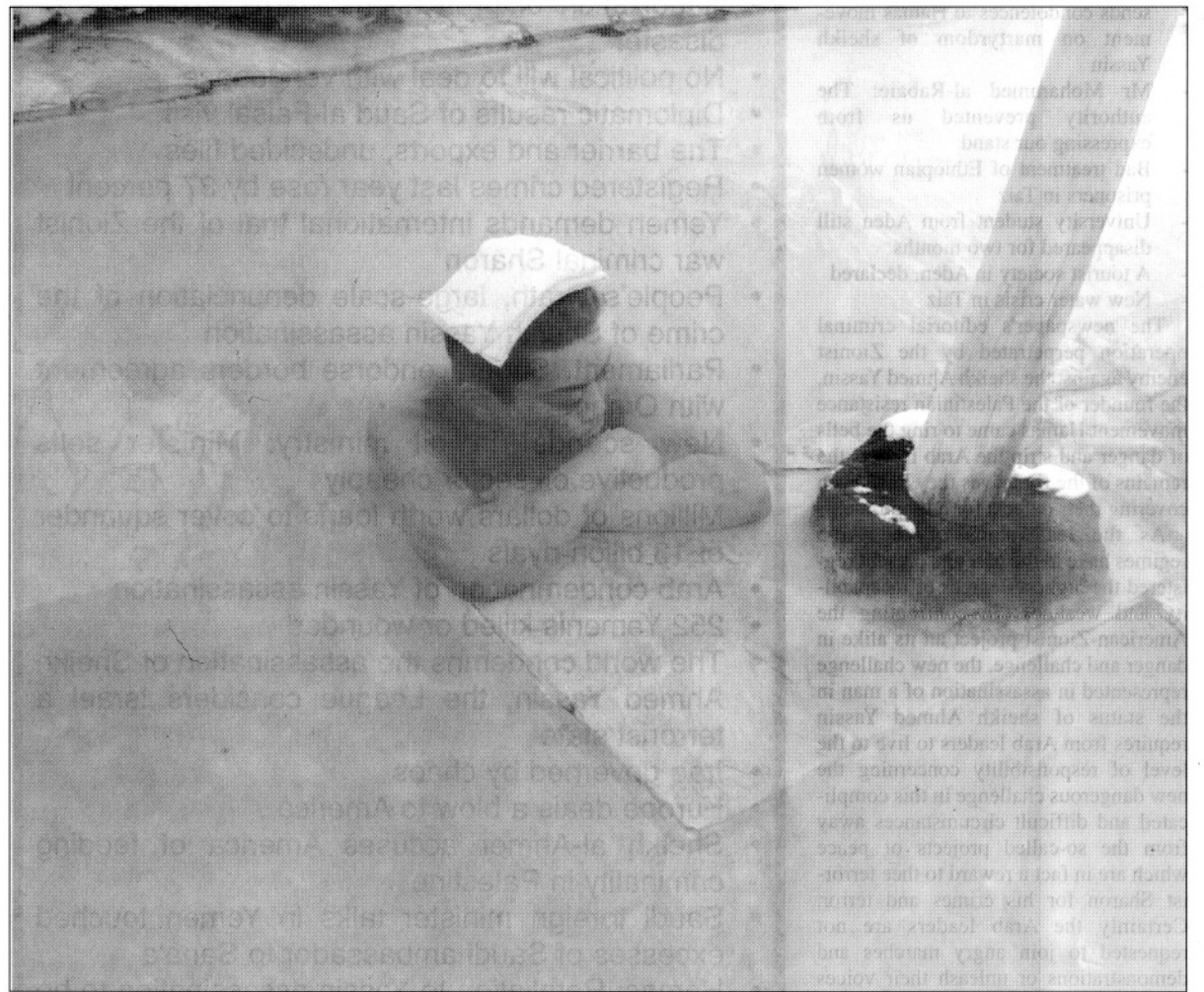
Dedicated onsen fans, however, say bathing in hot springs was never meant to be a costly treat, but something more communal.

By visiting public bathhouses in neighbourhoods with hot springs, even the most frugal traveller can experience its therapeutic effects and bask in the after-onsen glow, otherwise known as the "boiled octopus" look.

Some of the most popular onsen are outdoors, where bathers can gaze at fluttering snow in the winter or lush green mountains in the summer.

"Just sitting in a bath, looking at scenery, and talking to friends can feel so good," said Chio Yamada, a clerk at a trading company in Tokyo.

Perhaps the best news for first-time visitors is that an increasing number of hotels are offering private baths for couples and families — although aficionados swear that letting go of inhibitions is an essential part of the experience.



A Japanese worker takes a break from work to soak in a hot spring bath in Nikko, northern Japan, Feb. 7. Tourists seeking the relaxing and therapeutic effects of hot spring baths, or onsen, are expected to increase by one percent this year with the help of a recovering economy and concerns of travelling abroad. REUTERS

War scars slowly heal in Jaffna peninsula

JAFFNA, Sri Lanka, March 14 (Reuters) - The road from the airport into town is often a good indicator of what a place is like.

Nowhere is this more true than in Jaffna, the spiritual capital of the minority Tamils in northern Sri Lanka and a key battleground in a two-decade-old civil war.

You fly in on a half-full Fokker pro-

peller plane, with only local residents, aid workers and a stray tourist on board. Soldiers with machine guns dot the tarmac, and a soldier drives a bus out of the army's high-security zone around Palaly airport.

The dusty road to the town of Jaffna goes through fallow fields. Nearly every house is bombed out. Every wall seems to be pockmarked by bullets. Signs

everywhere warn of landmines.

"You have to be a pretty determined tourist to come here," said Charles Dumolin, a Belgian artist whose son is engaged to a Tamil, and who has been to Sri Lanka 15 times.

For centuries, this peninsula was the heart of a Tamil kingdom, before it was taken over by Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial rulers of Sri Lanka.

After independence in 1948, Jaffna was Sri Lanka's second-biggest city. As well as a thriving centre for trade, it was home to the best schools on the island, where even the Sinhalese majority sent their children to be educated.

But in the past two decades of civil war, Jaffna has been fought over by the Sinhalese army, an Indian peacekeeping force and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and each battle added yet more scars to this once-beautiful town.

Now, nearly a decade after the Sinhalese army retook it from the LTTE, Jaffna looks like an open-air museum of devastation, with houses, churches and factories reduced to overgrown rubble. Meanwhile, the LTTE has built up Kilinochchi, in the rebel-held north of Sri Lanka, as the new Tamil "capital".

As refugees gradually return to their shattered houses, Jaffna is regaining a semblance of normality, but the very visible presence of some 40,000 Sinhalese soldiers in camps and behind sandbagged bunkers gives it the air of an occupied city.

Out of this rubble rises the famous 163-year-old Jaffna library, a symbol of Tamil learning, which is largely what the war is all about.

Set ablaze by Sinhalese thugs and police in 1981, the gleaming white building, built in 1954, has been restored in the past few years and reopened to students last month. Because of a lack of personnel, it is still closed to the public.

With 40,000 books — compared with 100,000, including rare palm leaf writings, before 1981 — the library is a shadow of its former self. But so is Jaffna, and the culture of education that gave the Tamils a unique position in post-colonial Sri Lanka.

"For the Tamil people, the main theme is education — it is their main purpose," librarian Sabaratnam Thanabaalasinham said.

SINHALA-ONLY POLICY SPARKED TENSIONS

Unlike the Sinhalese, the Tamils were amenable to Christianisation by Britain's colonial rulers, and generations of Tamils acquired an education in Jaffna's many missionary schools.

Not only were the Tamils used as administrators in Ceylon in the 19th and 20th centuries, they were also sent to Burma and Malaya (now called Myanmar and Malaysia respectively).

When Ceylon gained independence, 30 percent to 40 percent of the island's civil service was made up of English-speaking, often Christian, Tamils. In 1956, Solomon Bandaranaike — father of current president, Chandrika Kumaratunga — rode to power on a platform of Sinhalese nationalism and introduced the "Sinhala only" policy.

English was scrapped as the official state language, robbing Tamils at a stroke of their educational and linguistic advantage by making Sinhalese a requirement for the civil service.

"When the Britishers left, the Tamils were governing the country. That hurt the Sinhalese. They should have studied to come to that level, but they took a shortcut and imposed the Sinhala-only policy," said Raviraj Nadarajah, a Tamil parliament member and former mayor of Jaffna.

The Tamils suffered a second blow in the early 1970s when university admission rules were changed to favour Sinhalese.

Admission was no longer solely based on academic merit, but included racial and geographical criteria, with a set

number of places reserved for the Sinhalese. The system still works today.

The pro-Sinhalese policy, similar to Malaysia's "Bumiputra" campaign to promote ethnic Malays, sparked decades of wrangling between the Tamils — who make up 12.6 percent of Sri Lanka's population of 19 million — and the majority Sinhalese.

In 1983, the LTTE launched a guerrilla war that has now lasted two decades and claimed more than 64,000 lives.

A Norwegian-brokered ceasefire has held for two years but the peace is fragile, and Sri Lanka's two main Sinhalese parties will fight an election on April 2 over how to cement the truce with a political agreement that would give Tamils some form of self-governance within a federal Sri Lanka.

Diplomats doubt that Tamils and Sinhalese can find a compromise on a new state anytime soon, but even if they do, the Tamils are unlikely to regain their traditional strongholds.

In the Sri Lanka civil service, only a few percent of staff are Tamil; they make up less than one percent of the army; and the schools that were once the pride of Jaffna are no longer the entry-way into university and government service.

"The percentage of Tamils going into university after college has suffered, so many students either go abroad, into technical schools or into private companies," said S Thanapalan, principal of the anglican St John's college, founded in 1823.

Does this mean Jaffna library has only symbolic relevance? Jaffna University Dean of Arts S K Sitampalam disagrees.

"The library is not a white elephant. It is important to educate people," he said.



A Sri Lankan man reads a newspaper outside a bombed-out gas station in Jaffna, Sri Lanka February 27, 2004. Nearly ten years after the Sri Lanka army retook Jaffna from the Tamil Tiger rebels, Jaffna town is still scarred by war. Picture taken Feb. 27. REUTERS

Local Press

Prepared by Mohammed Khidhr

Al-Shoura weekly,
organ of the Union of
People's Forces of
Yemen, 24 Mar 2004.

Main headlines

- Chairman of the Higher Council of the Yemeni Union of People's forces sends condolences to Hamas movement on martyrdom of sheikh Yassin
 - Mr Mohammed al-Rabaie: The authority prevented us from expressing our stand
 - Bad treatment of Ethiopian women prisoners in Taiz
 - University student from Aden still disappeared for two months
 - A tourist society in Aden, declared
 - New water crisis in Taiz
- The newspaper's editorial criminal operation perpetrated by the Zionist enemy against the sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas came to ring the bells of danger and strip the Arab leaders the remains of the fig leaves they have been covering their defects for a long time.
- As the leaderships of the Arab regimes have in the past and present registered the highest degrees of incapability and weakness in confronting the American-Zionist project an its alike in danger and challenge, the new challenge represented in assassination of a man in the status of sheikh Ahmed Yassin requires from Arab leaders to live to the level of responsibility concerning the new dangerous challenge in this complicated and difficult circumstances away from the so-called projects of peace which are in fact a reward to the terrorist Sharon for his crimes and terror. Certainly the Arab leaders are not requested to join angry marches and demonstrations or unleash their voices in boisterous speeches. It is better for the Arab regimes to stop interfering in steering the street movement and direct it according to their whims. They have to devote themselves to their political and national duties and take stands and policies supporting the Palestinian resistance in the occupied Arab territories.

Al-Sahwa weekly, 25
Mar 2004.

Main headlines

- Yemen denounces the crime of assassinating sheikh Yassin
 - Radie citizens complain continuation of their detention
 - Deputy prime minister puts the blame on diesel for water exhaustion
- The newspaper editor in chief says in his article which he devoted to the assassination of sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the leader of the Palestinian resistance organisation Hamas that humanity woke up last Monday but did not research for details as the occupying state had assassinated a man it completely realizes his role in defending his citizens rights, other less than that has no importance or that state. Outwardly, Israel has comprehended where the danger of sheikh Yassin lies and it fully understands the extent of danger of the results of its crime but as any tyrant is blind to that.
- Let's make the incident of assassinating of sheikh a window through which we the program of managing the conflict with the unjust and for the sovereignty of freedom and peace and against occupation and aggression.

Al-Wahdawi weekly, 23
Mar 2004.

Main headlines

- Behind the scene elements prevent typing a parliamentary report disclosing a government scandal
 - Parliamentary committee recommends reducing price of electricity tariff
 - Prevented a demonstration at the anniversary of aggression on Iraq
 - The government warmly welcomed commander of the American war
 - In a first meeting with their syndicate, the government promises journalists of facilities
 - In retaliation of Sharon's crime, Saba'a university students demand hitting of American interests
 - JMP condemns the government preventing off demonstration at the anniversary of aggression n Iraq
- Columnist Ali al-Saqqaf says in his

Main headlines

- Hamas: Arab leaders face a test of their honour
- Saudization of professions warns expatriates of disaster
- No political will to deal with vengeance
- Diplomatic results of Saud al-Faisal visit,
- The barrier and exports, undecided files
- Registered crimes last year rose by 37 percent
- Yemen demands international trial of the Zionist war criminal Sharon
- People's wrath, large-scale denunciation of the crime of Sheikh Yassin assassination
- Parliament, Shoura endorse borders agreement with Oman
- New scandal in oil ministry: Minister sells productive oil sector cheaply
- Millions of dollars worth loans to cover squander of 13 billion riyals
- Arab condemnation of Yassin assassination
- 252 Yemenis killed or wounded
- The world condemns the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the League considers Israel a terrorist state
- Iraq governed by chaos
- Europe deals a blow to America
- Sheikh al-Ahmer accuses America of feeding criminality in Palestine
- Saudi foreign minister talks in Yemen touched excesses of Saudi ambassador to Sana'a
- Hamas: Retaliation to Yassin assassination to be earth-shattering
- Al-Ahmer calls on Arab rulers to support the Palestinians
- Sana'a, Riyadh exchange wanted for security issues
- The president denies knowledge about whereabouts of Ubeid, promises contacts with Egyptian authorities
- Sana'a receives 19 Yemenis from Saudi Arabia against the backdrop of their affiliation to al-Qaeda
- Poll: Iraqis more optimistic for future of their country
- Authorities arrest Ethiopian refugees in front of the UNHCR

article that the assassination of sheikh Ahmed Yassin, leader of Hamas Palestinian organisation, as much as it is very painful for most of Arabs and Muslims, it was not a surprising event. Leaders of the Zionist enemy have many times states that they would continue their operations of physical liquidating of prominent leaders of the Palestinian resistance movement, not sparing any of its factions. The Zionist enemy has already killed great number of the leaders of the Palestinian action of resistance during the past years and decades, inside and outside Palestine.

This time, with the assassination of sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the Zionists seem to have opened the gates of hell against them because Yassin is not just a prominent political personality but also a spiritual leader entertaining very high respect among millions of Muslims all over the world. Sharon and those behind him will certainly pay a very high price for their crime despite the humiliation and weakness of the regimes and rulers.

because it would send a clear message to all regimes in the region that they should embark on reform and modernization. It seems clear that Tunis summit would be facing many important dossiers needing to be decided even before the convening of the summit, such as the file concerning representation of Iraq which has not been decided yet. The Arab League secretary general had announced earlier that Iraq would be taking part in the summit but the level of its representation had not been defined so far.

The most important of dossiers the summit is waiting is that of developing the Arab League and finding new Arab mechanisms, such as the Arab Parliament, the National Security Council and Arab Court of Justice, especially at the emergence of some differences regarding several ideas on development of the League performance through what is described as initiatives proposed by some Arab countries. Those differences have pushed observers to say that the expected summit might form a chance for the Arab League to activate its institutions or might be a summit for sending the League to its resting place.

Al-Tagamou weekly,
organ of Yemeni
Unionist Congregation
Party, 22 Mar 2004.

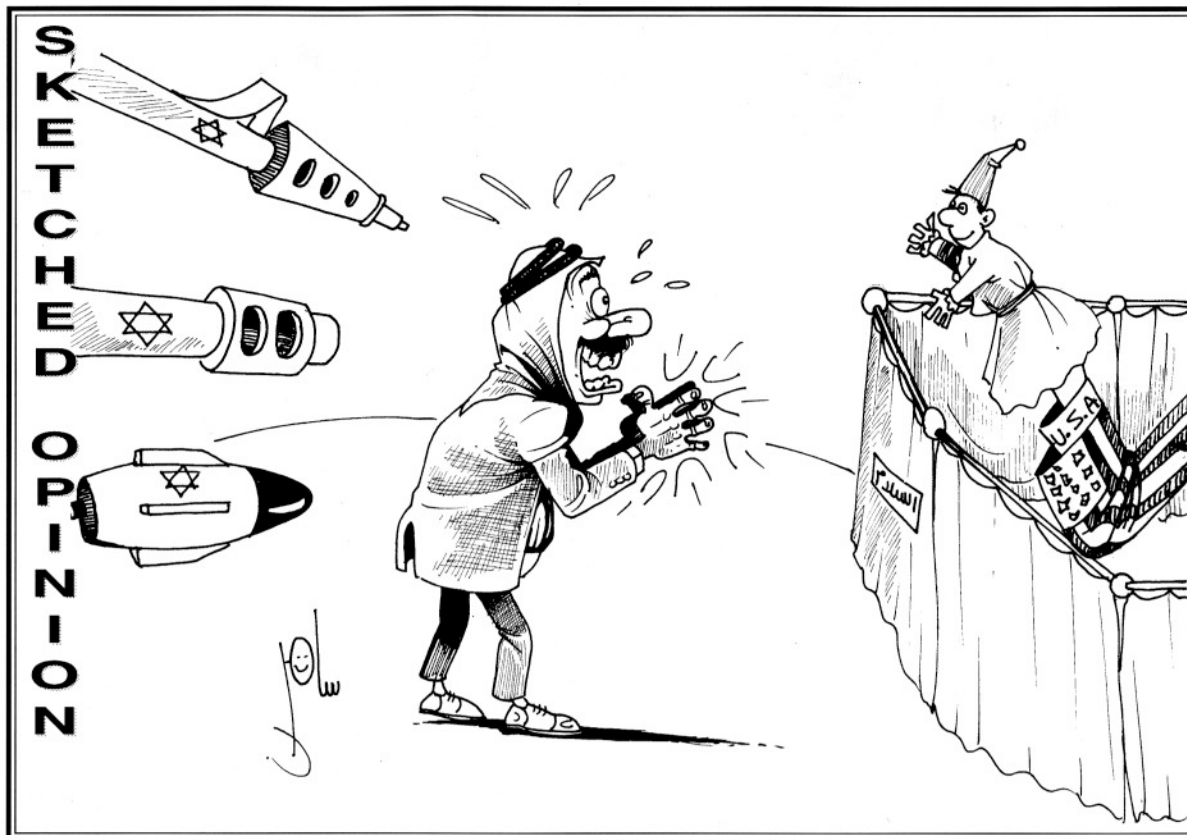
Main headlines

- Abu Zaid discusses security cooperation between Washington and Sana'a
 - 99 areas in Yemen threatened with drought
 - Engineers prepared to resist domestication and attempts of partisan domination
 - False keenness kills Aden port
 - Saudi fatwa against "Al-Hurra" satellite TV channel
- Columnist Fathi Abu al-Nassr says in an article that the Arab summit is to be convened in Tunis in the late of this month and it is a summit of challenge

Al-Wahda weekly, 24
Mar 2004.

Main headlines

- YR more than 20 billion losses of organised smuggling via customs exempt
- YR 15 billion the amount of debts on big consumers of electric service
- GSM monopoly in Yemen broken
- Government spending on health very low
- Sana'a to host Youth Poets forum
- 60% of Yemenis does not obtain safe drinking water
- 10 tons of expired food stuffs con-



discated in Sana'a
- Head of the Thai trade delegation: We hope o establish trade partnership with Yemen
Columnist Mohammed al-Zubaidi says in an article there has been much talk about naming the document signed lately in Baghdad pertaining the future of Iraq. Some call it the interim constitution the other some give it the name of the law of the state administration. The difference in naming indicates that there is difference in the vision to the subject

altogether among the 25-member of the governing council itself. The follower of discussions held by the media about the subject would not hear a convincing answer concerning the essence of the subject and its content. Many of the Iraqi thinkers think what is going on in Iraq is illegitimate and the governing council and the government are not different than the occupying authority as long as the appointment came by the occupation authority and what is doing is flagrantly contradicting Geneva con-

ventions and the UN security council that defined the identity governing Iraq and running its affairs as an occupying force. The day has to come when the United Nations assumes its role in Iraq. The impasses fort the occupier as well as the occupied would appear in some months and that would dictate the presence of the international organization and making it the basic axis, if what is intended is to restore for Iraq its freedom and independence in the legitimate image.



By Yahya Al-Olfi
alolfi@hotmail.com

Reflections

Our spoilt judiciaries

From time immemorial humans discerned that justice is the basis for upright governance. Islam gave this aspect a prime importance and hence the chief judge used to be summoned to meetings with the Muslim Caliph in order to be consulted about serious state affairs. Corrupt judges used to be disqualified and were loathed by the general populace.

The judge at those times used to represent the viewpoint of the rulers and their decisions were always under scrutiny lest they deviate or appear to follow their whims. Many qualified Muslims used to refuse the assumption of the profession out of fear of God's punishment and the accusation by the people of being unjust.

In Arabic we call the judge "Al-Qadi". Spaniards borrowed the word and are using it to refer to the mayor as "Alcalde" whilst the British and Americans borrowed from Arabic the word Sheriff (i.e. the honest and honorable) which is in Arabic a highly regard attribute of the judge but they use it in the same manner as the Spanish with slight differences.

In fact, during the heyday of Islamic Civilization this profession was highly respected and the judges had privileges and immunities and likewise were required to be honest, intelligent and wise. Muslims of all classes used to respect the Islamic judicial system and the story of a litigation filed by a Jewish citizen against the Caliph Ali, in which the Jew won the case and later converted to Islam due to such an instance of brilliant justice is widely renowned in our history and shows how Muslim leaders in those days paid extreme attention to justice.

Regrettably one of our state "irresponsibles" made me laugh when he said that the human beings merely devised laws in order to maintain the rights of the weak.

Unfortunately, he does not know that justice is what matters in any given country and if justice is well

served the concerned country is calculated as highly civilized, or conversely, amongst the deeply backward. The dangerous side effect of the absence of law and order is that recourse to legal authorities becomes tedious, as is the case unfortunately in our country, and people have begun to shun state courts and resort to irregular tribal arbitrations.

Complaints are mounting about the corruption of our judiciaries, that they prolong cases, intensify the differences and whip up the antagonists, all for the sake of ripping people off. Due to the intensified complaints, the government decided to increase the judges' salaries and privileges.

Now, judges have large enough salaries, private cars and other allowances but are still persisting in their abominable habits. I have been observing closely the development of two cases and found out that in the first the litigation is still going on for the fifth consecutive year and that both parties have lost money in the litigations equaling twice the value of the property that is the subject of their dispute, and the problem is still unresolved.

On the other hand the second case goes like this: "A man produced his title documents to plots of agricultural land because the individuals entrusted to till the lands have after years of exploitation coveted them and are denying his title to the said plots of land. The judge at first studied the documents of the plaintiff and when he found them correct and binding. Being intent upon usual blackmail process (like most of our judges), he of course does not want the litigation process to go smoothly without a well-wrought exploitation of this advantageous opportunity and thus has instructed his clerks to dilly-dally in the procedures and to extract as much money as possible as bribes first. He begins preparations for endless instances of extortion, particularly when animosity heats up and each party would like to prevail.

This continues even if one of the

involved parties knows for sure that he has no right, but due to the corruption of the judiciary and the certitude of being able to inflict morale and material losses on the other party with impunity, the wrongdoer is encouraged to go on.

Islam has come to replace tribal traditions but our government is reviving tribal traditions, which are not only irreligious but also illogic. How can we expect investors to invest their capital in Yemen if we cannot demonstrate the cleanliness and express performance of our judicial system, let alone the fact that we revert to backward tribal non-Islamic solutions. All other crimes thrive because of daily injustices and the worsened performance of our judiciary.

Errors are made in other Arab countries but without the slightest doubt, they are incomparable to our bottomless blunders.

I had the chance to follow broadcasts of lawsuits on a German satellite channel named ZDF and an American channel named OLISAT. I noticed that bringing suits goes smoothly unhindered and the institution of legal proceedings is expedited and any given case is solved in one, two or three sessions if needs be. People there are relaxing in their homes watching the claims and counter-claims and finally out of their final closed-door sessions the judges and their advisers emerge to pronounce their impartial, rightful verdicts. Of course, we can make setup sessions in order to imitate, just like our futile parliamentary sessions, but they are for sure totally unequal in transparency and evenhandedness.

When there are fair and strict empowered judiciaries, crimes undoubtedly will be reduced. People will take the initiative and will for sure cease carrying arms lest they commit mistakes and out of extreme fear of the impending justice. Real reform of, not fake proclamations about, the judicial system shall be the cornerstone of the overhaul of our poor current state of affairs.

Continued from Front page

Yemen's new initiative

Second: Arab-Israeli Conflict:

Reactivating role of the four-party committee while including the Arab League to implement the Roadmap to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and to consider the Arab Peace Initiative as complementary to the Roadmap. The four-party committee will carry out the following:

- 1- Dispatch an international force to separate the Palestinians and Israelis according to borders of 5 June 1967.
- 2- The obligation of Palestinians and Israelis to halt violence and the declaration of an armistice between them reinforced by UN resolution towards the implementation of the roadmap and related UN-recognized resolutions on and the establishment of a Palestinian state on borders of 5 June 1967.
- 3- The announcement of an Arab decision unifying all Palestinian factions under one unified leadership including all parties.
- 4- Work to dismantle the apartheid wall.
- 5- The commencement of rebuilding Palestine and the state's apparatuses, particularly the security apparatus.
- 6- The Israeli withdrawal from

Syrian and Lebanese occupied territories within a specified time frame and an Arab-Israeli agreement guaranteeing the Arab and Israeli rights.

7- The obligation to the declaration of the Middle East Region free from weapons of mass destruction and setting up a plan to disarm the countries of the region, including Israel.

8- The holding of a peace conference of countries of the region following the announcement of the foundation of the Palestinian state, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands.

On the other hand, as of 27 March 2004, Arab Foreign Ministers during their preliminary meetings have not reached an agreement on the goals of the Arab summit, scheduled for 29-30 of this month.

The Republic of Yemen has presented its initiative to America and EU and the permanent members of the Security Council. France and some European countries have positively responded to it, according to September 26 Newspaper.

Warning to US citizens

"We are inside Palestinian land and acting only inside Palestinian land," said the new Hamas leader Addel Aziz Rantisi to reporters last Wednesday. "We are resisting the occupation, nothing else. Our resistance will continue just inside our border, here inside our country."

The US Government maintained that the threat is still taken seriously. According to State Department Deputy Spokesman Adam Ereli, the United States remains concerned about the safety of Americans in the Middle East and North Africa.

The US Embassy in Sana'a released a Warden Message for Americans in Yemen last week, advising them to avoid demonstrations, especially last weekend. There were no large demonstrations in the capital last weekend, but the message advised US citizens to take precautions.

"Americans are reminded to pay particular attention to their personal security at all times, including keeping a low profile, varying routes and times of travel, avoiding large crowds and demonstrations," said the Warden Message.

John Balian, the Political Affairs Officer at the US Embassy, told Yemen Times that security at the embassy has not changed since the assassination.

"Our precautions and our strong security posture has remained the same," said Balian. "The security arrangements at the embassy have been and will remain strong."

The Yemeni government intensified security around embassies, foreign companies and government institutions in Sana'a in recent weeks after receiving reports of planned terrorist attacks in Yemen. This came when security forces began its operation of

tracking down and arresting Al-Qaeda suspects in the Abyan region.

Sultan Al-Barakani, Chairman of the GPC Caucus, told Yemen Times recently that national security has been the Yemeni Government's top priority. He cited that the Government has rounded up numerous suspects, captured key Al-Qaeda operatives, thwarted terrorist attacks and stopped the kidnapping of foreigners, which hasn't occurred in over two years.

A foreign diplomat said that although Yemeni security has increased dramatically, the combination of US presence in Iraq and the Israeli assassination of Yassin may spur an increase in terrorist activities.

"The war in Iraq and the killing of Sheikh Yassin could motivate terrorists to increase their activities worldwide," said the foreign diplomat.

Hamas has announced its plans to target Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and other Israeli officials.

Khaled Meshal, based in Damascus and head of the Hamas political bureau, was quoted by the pan-Arab Al-Hayat daily as saying that Hamas now has the right to "hunt down the big Zionist heads" including Sharon.

Sharon is said to have ordered the assassination and described Yassin as "the greatest arch-murderer of Palestinian terrorism" who sought to "kill Jews everywhere and eliminate... Israel."

Since violence erupted in 2000, more than 2,700 Palestinians and 950 Israelis have been killed.

Israeli helicopters fired seven missiles that killed Yassin and three others as they left a mosque in Gaza City at dawn last Monday. Up to 17 were wounded, including two of Yassin's sons

Continued from page 10

The Tribes and the State in Yemen

The Authority's Stance on Tribal Powers:

Sheikh Ameen Al-Ukaimi, Member of Parliament and a prominent Sheikh in Al-Jouf, explained to Yemen Times that there were some significant policies adopted towards the tribes during the 1980s. The ruling power sensed the danger of the tribes due to the weapons they possessed, and therefore they ignited tribal conflicts to deplete the weapons and to weaken their capabilities in comparison to the capability of the armed forces at that time.

Yemeni Tribes and Current Directions to Fight:

Following the September 11 incidents and the international campaign to counter terrorism, the Yemeni Authorities began the preparation of a security plan called "The Security Redeployment" in some regions, mainly Marib, Al-Jouf and Shabwah, believed to constitute a safe-heaven for terrorists considering also the ragged landscape of these regions. However, the tribes of these regions dealt with the issue of terrorism and the protection of terrorist elements in an unexpected way. The tribes

denounced terrorism and refused to provide protection for terrorists who infiltrated to these regions. The tribes have taken into consideration the following factors with regards to terrorism:

- 1- The tribes avoided military confrontation with the newly founded counter-terrorism forces.
- 2- The fear and suspicion of most of the tribes that labeling them as harboring terrorists easily gives the chance for some state's officials to get even with them in the case of compulsory confrontation.
- 3- The lack of support among tribesmen for these extremists.

This is why there has not been a real military confrontation between the tribes and security forces. Minor incidents in Marib and some remote regions took place as a result of misunderstandings and misconduct by either of the two sides, which were quickly contained.

The tribes have adopted different means in dealing with and handling the terrorist elements wanted by the Security Forces, accord-

ing to the origin of these elements and the collective opinion reached by all members of the tribe. The tribes offered these elements the following choices:

- 1- Providing them a guarantee for fair trials if they render themselves to the tribe, which would render them to the Security Forces.
- 2- If the terrorists reject the offer, they are left on their own and for the Security Forces to apprehend while the tribe sits aside. But the tribe refused to carry out the arrest operation, contrary to desire of the Security Forces.

The Tribes and Foreign Intervention:

Many Sheikhs and social dignitaries depend on high monthly allowances from Saudi Arabia. A minimum allowance is USD 2000 per month for each. This makes these figures more inclined in the direction of Saudi and less interested in what they may obtain from the Authorities. The tribes do not need to exert much effort at the state level to receive services and development projects for their communities since their relations and involvement with the state's officials have become rare.

Sheraton Sana'a concludes Tennis Tournament

Sheraton Sana'a Hotel held during the period from 18-19 March 2004 its first Social Tennis tournament for 2004.

A total number of 42 participants including various diplomats, CEOs and General Managers of different Oil Companies, Commercial, Airlines and bankers participated in the competition, which took place at the hotel's tennis courts over the weekend.

On Friday evening an awarding ceremony around the swimming pool took place attended by H.E. Dr. Rashad Al Aleemi Minister of Interior (President of Yemen Tennis Federation) and H.E. Dr. Abu Baker Al-Qirbi Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Tony Goubran hotel General Manager and Ehab El Gammal Director of Sales & Marketing congratulated and distributed prizes to the winners of the Men's Double Mr. Wicher Boissevain from Arcadis Euroconsult & Mr. Saeed Al-Khamiri from Yemen Hunt Oil, and to the winners of the Mixed Double Mr.



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Wicher Boissevain & Mrs. Mira Boissevain from Arcadis Euroconsult.

Valuable prizes were sponsored by Emirates Airlines, Arab bank, Al Eklhel "Rolex", CCC, Deloitte & Touche M.E., Coca-Cola, Red Bull, Canada Dry, Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel & Towers, Sheraton Deira Hotel & Towers, Sheraton Gold Mohr Aden, Sheraton Sana'a Hotel.

Sheraton Sana'a Hotel is known to hold such sports activities and its management has expressed commitment to continue this tradition.

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Continued from Back page

Promoting the virtues of two-wheelers

In the 1860's, the French mechanic Pierre Michaux attached pedals to the front wheel. Later James Starley of the Coventry Machinists Company increased the front wheel diameter to allow greater speed, which led to the familiar 'penny-farthing' design. In 1885, John Kemp Starley (James' nephew) invented the 'Rover' bicycle, which overcame the dangers of a large front wheel by attaching gears and cranks to the rear wheel instead.

John Boyd Dunlop invented pneumatic tyres in 1888 - competitions then proved that a 'safety' bicycle with pneumatic tyres could easily match the daredevil speeds of the penny-farthing. This established the standard design that has survived to the present day.

Since then, bicycles have had a huge impact on society. JK Starley went on to form the Rover car company, and many other transport pioneers - such as Henry Ford and the Wright Brothers - also began as cycle mechanics.

Cycling opened up new horizons for people in the nineteenth century by allowing them to travel beyond their home community. The invention of the motor car appeared to sound the death

knell of the bicycle in industrialized countries. However in recent years, the humble two-wheeler has enjoyed a revival in the West. The reasons for this have been several.

The environmental effects of the petrol-driven monsters soon became apparent - these included the pollution of cities through noxious chemicals released into the atmosphere, the destruction of forests and farmlands to build even more highways, and the depletion of non-renewable fossil fuels. Socially, cars were seen as 'isolation capsules', enclosing and separating people from each other. Higher speeds, traffic jams and parking problems added to the stresses of modern society. New concepts like 'road-rage' entered our terminology.

The bicycle, by contrast, has many advantages. It is cheap and clean to run, as well as convenient to park.

There are also health benefits. According to the British Heart Foundation, cycling at least 30 kms per week reduces the risk of coronary heart disease to less than half that for non-cyclists. Cycling at a gentle 20 kph on a flat road uses 450 kcal per hour.

Cycling also raises the speed of your metabolism for hours afterwards, so your body continues to burn calories even after exercise. Cycling is mainly an aerobic activity. This is beneficial to the lungs which expand to push as much oxygen into the body as possible and the heart which beats faster to transport this oxygen around your body.

A strong heart and powerful lungs form the basis of general fitness. Exercising releases what are known as endorphins into your blood - these create a feeling of contentment and happiness, therefore helping to reduce stress.

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the motor traffic in Sana'a. It now takes a significant amount of time to get around this city by car. Parking has become a problem. Each day a brown pall hangs over the city. We are starting to choke in our own pollution.

One solution is to promote the usage of bicycles. The roads in Sana'a are good, and the climate is suitable for biking all year round. The flat geography makes it easy to get around. In fact, a bicycle is often much faster than a car.

So mark April 2 on your calendars. And ride on.

International Community Services & The Yemen Cycling Federation
Ministry of Youth and Sport
Present
The First Great Sana'a Bike Ride

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Enquiries: Bernie Power 71616150

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First "Great Sana'a Bike Ride" on April 2

Promoting the virtues of two-wheelers

By **BERNIE POWER**
FOR THE YEMEN TIMES

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the traffic in Sana'a. Getting around this city by car is taking more time than ever. Parking is a problem. And a brown pall of pollution hangs over the city.

Enter the bicycle, a perfect way for getting around the suitable roads in Sana'a. Yemen's climate is suitable for biking all year round. Its flat geography makes it easy. And a bicycle is often much faster than a car.

Considering such benefits of the bike, the first Great Sana'a Bike Ride, a 21 km ride around the city, is taking place on Friday April 2nd.

Organized by the NGO International Community Services, it will begin at 8 a.m. from the *maydan saba'een*, near the Pizza Hut.

There will be a festival atmosphere, with a Lucky Draw at the beginning of the Ride. Prizes have been donated by the sponsors Spacotel and the Taj Sheba Hotel, as well as the Yemen Times.

It will not be a race, with winners and losers, but a fun Ride, a community event, open to all: a time to get outside, have some exercise, make some new friends, and enjoy the sights and sounds of the Arab Cultural Capital of 2004.

Everyone involved will be a winner. And the virtues of two-wheel-



Bernie Power, organizer of the 1st Great Sana'a Bike Ride, to be held April 2, rides on the two-wheeler that he commonly uses on the streets of Sana'a. (Yemen Times photo by Jamil Abdul Karim)

ers - which have been around for many years - will be displayed for people across the city.

The wheel actually has been around for a very long time. Cartwheels with spokes were used in Mesopotamia over 4,000 years

ago, and it seems the Chinese used them over 6,000 years ago. But it was a long time before it occurred to anyone to put one behind the other and to use this as a mode of transport. In 1817 Baron von Drais of Baden invented a 'run-

ning machine' to help him move more quickly around his forests. It consisted of two spoked wheels joined by a frame with a seat in the middle. It was propelled by pushing it along with a leg on either side.

Continued on page 13

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