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## Zindani shows interest to meet US Ambassador to Yemen Edmund Hull:

# Zindani accuses US of targeting Islam

BY MOHAMMED AL-QADHI  
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Sheikh Abdulmajeed al-Zindani, head of Islah Central Committee and Rector of al-Eman University criticized the US Ambassador to Yemen Edmund Hull for the accusations that al-Eman University promotes extremism in Yemen and helps fund terrorism.

A press statement issued by al-Zindani's office, distributed on Wednesday, condemned the unnecessary US worry over the university. "We wonder whether any ambassador has the right to issue such judgments on any country's affairs?", the statement said. It also called, in a way to show al-Zindani's interest in direct dialogue with the US, to "be honest and just in their charges against Sheikh Zindani and al-Eman University." "If the Ambassador visited Sheikh Zindani, the doubts of the US govern-

ment would be assuaged and if he asked Sheikh Zindani about Islam, he would tell him that Islam is a religion of justice, mercy and loyalty," the statement said. The statement stressed that Zindani is ready to reply to the accusations before a Yemeni court, describing them as baseless. It pointed out that the US accusations against al-Zindani and al-Eman University fell in line with "the US Administration's policy of trying to dry up the springs of Islam" rather than terrorism.

Mr. Edmund Hull told al-Nahar independent weekly last Wednesday that "we are worried about the activities of al-Eman University; we aim to stop foreign funds to al-Zindani, so as to stop his funding for the university and the activities that promote terrorism and finance terrorism."

Al-Zindani was put by the US Treasury Department on the list of people suspected of supporting and funding al-Qaeda and terrorist organi-

zations. Al-Zindani denied such accusations and described them as baseless and untrue. He even appealed to the Yemeni political parties and the Muslim nation to defend him against the US charges. The US Treasury Department said he has a long history of working with Bin Laden. The US media reported in January 2003 that prisoners held in connection with the attack against the USS Cole told local authorities that al-Zindani issued a decree or fatwa ordering the strike and that the authorities did not investigate into such allegations which were denied by some leaders of the Islah party.

Al-Zindani's statement disclosed that "the US Ambassador informed Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar, chairman of Islah Party that a student of al-Eman University called Amer al-Shareef was being detained by Yemeni security authorities, and that he previously used to run al-Qaeda cells at the uni-

versity, but that the investigations made by al-Ahmar and al-Zindani with the university administration found that the name was not enrolled at the university and did not study at it at all". It added "al-Ahmar told the ambassador about this information," but the ambassador replied that "he might not be a student at the university but he had contacts with its students."

Despite the denial of al-Zindani and al-Eman University that Abed al-Kamil, murderer of the three US doctors at the Jibla Baptist Hospital on December 30, 2002 was not a student at the university, Hull said "the killer of the doctors in Jibla is a member of the al-Eman university and it has a role in promoting extremism."

Al-Zindani's statement accused the US administration of targeting the Muslim world, its governments, clerics, and its educational and charity institutions. "The US administration



Sheikh Abdulmajeed al-Zindani, head of Islah Central Committee

after the September 11 adopted an unclear conception of terrorism and on its basis it took up policies and strategies making the Muslim countries, their governments, clerics and their educational and charity institutions a target for what it called the 'War on Terror' to the extent that some people began to think that terrorism is a syn-

onym for Islam". It said that on the basis of this, the US administration "practiced the policy of drying up the springs of Islam, alleging that it is drying up the springs of terrorism. It demanded the governments in Muslim countries change the Islamic education curricula of schools, institutes and universities."

## Journalist's lawyer demanded YR 10 million compensation Verdict on Thabet's case to be issued on April 13

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

The Western Sana'a Court, hearing the case of journalist Saeed Thabet Saeed, is to issue its verdict on Tuesday, April 13, whilst the defense advocates demanded compensation of YR 10 million for the journalist and his family.

Thabet was arrested on March 5th and was put in jail by intelligence agents on charges of "spreading false reports" on the attempted assassination against the son of President Ali Saleh



Saeed Thabet talking to the press after leaving the court. YT Photo by M. Al-Qadhi

(Colonel Ahmad, commander of Republican Guard and Special Tasks Forces). In its last hearing on Saturday, the court listened to the defense of advocates Mohammed Naji Allaw and other lawyers in which they refuted the allegations of the prosecution. Allaw said that Thabet's work as a reporter for Quds Press, which published the news, does not make Thabet, first Deputy Chairman of the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate, accountable for the published news. He demanded that the court judge Mohammed Sharaf Eddin acquit his client and order compensation of YR 10 million to be paid by the intelligence service, whose agents kidnapped the journalist from the street, refusing his appeal to even bring his kid who was with him home. He also demanded a payment of YR 2 million for the advocates.

Cont'd on P2

## Al-Qaeda suspects to be tried

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Yemen announced on Thursday that 41 terrorism suspects will be referred to court during the coming days. The 26 September weekly, close to the Presidency and mouthpiece of the military, reported that 41 al-Qaeda suspects, including 6 people suspected of being involved in the USS Cole bombing and 5 others in the French oil tanker Limburg bombing will be tried soon. The source said that the decision to refer their files to the prosecution and court has been taken after the security authorities completed their investigations into the cases. It said the trial of the suspects would start soon, without giving a date.

The Yemeni authorities announced several times that investigations into these issues have been completed and that the trial of the suspects

would be run soon, but nothing happened since the suicide bombings against the Cole and Limburg. The US refused several times to allow the suspects of the Cole bombing to be tried, in order to collect more information on the operatives. Some political analysts said that the announcement by Yemen shows that Yemen has a problem with the US and it said openly that the US is asking for things that are impossible to achieve without financial rewards. However, the US stresses that protecting Yemen's porous border is the responsibility of the Yemeni Government and that the US is committed to assist Yemen in this regard.

Cont'd on P2

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## Member of Local Council: Governorate officials cripple and weaken the role of local council

Mr. Hussein Ali Atef, member of the local council in Hanfar Province, Abyan Governorate, complained to Yemen Times that the leaders of the governorate have crippled and weakened the roles and duties of the local council and its administrative board. He stated several incidents that prevented the council from carrying out its jurisdiction in connection with monitoring, planning and execution operations on development projects. The operation of collecting of financial revenues is not implemented in accordance with financial regulations and this operation is frequently restricted to a centralized form at the level of the governorate. This results in the loss of governorate earnings

and fees from the Police Department., consumption bills, qat taxes, construction permit fees. The appointment of directors of departments in the provinces is also conducted without referring to the decision-making authority in the province and the property of the province is disposed of without recognizing that that belongs to the province.

Mr. Atef concluded his statement by saying that members of the local council have presented a petition to the leadership of the governorate, suspending their activities due to the lack of a response from the governorate's leaders to them as members of the local council.

## Features of the Population Problem in Yemen

By ISMAIL AL-GHABRI

The population problem is a world problem. Governments of all countries of the world as well as the related international organizations exert considerable effort, particularly in third world countries.

The definition of the population problem is a disequilibrium between the state's resources and the needs of the population. In other words, it is a gap between economic and social development rates and population growth rates. Whenever the hiatus becomes bigger, the lower the living standard becomes. Consequently, the drop of the social status leads to more backwardness and lack of ability to keep up with development. The population problem is aggravated

and becomes obvious when development rates can not keep up with higher growth rates of the population.

In order to realize the danger of the population problem in Yemen, we have to remember that the population of Yemen in 1950 was 4.3 million, while, according to population censuses, the population of Yemen reached 15.8 and 18.9 million in 1994 and 2001, respectively. It is expected to reach 22.2 million in 2006. The problem of the population in Yemen lays in the high growth rate, estimated at 3.5%, one of the highest growth rates in the world. This can be attributed to a high fertility rate during the past twenty years. The high birth rate is associated with high rate of early marriages and the keenness of families to have as many children as

possible because of the spread of illiteracy in Yemen. The high growth rate can also be attributed to the gradual decline of the fatality rate as a direct result of the improvement of health services, clean drinking water and spread of awareness through the implementation of social and economic development projects.

The end result of the accelerated population growth is the shortening of the doubling periods of the population to become, in recent times, that the population doubles every twenty years. This implies an age distribution of a population where half of the population would be under the age of 15 years, increasing the burden of dependents to the economically active in the distribution of the national income.

### 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 think that there will be a split between Arab leaders on the place and time of the Arab summit?

Yes,  
No,  
I don't care

#### last edition's question:

Do you think that the Arab summit will be held this month?

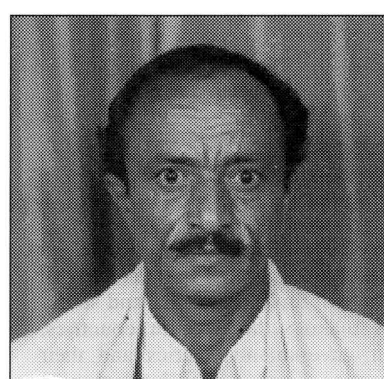
• No, they will not. 55.3%  
• Yes, Arab leaders will agree. 44.6%

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## Calls for establishing private TV and Radio channels renewed

Calls to allow the emergence of private TV and Radio channels have been renewed recently by the intellectual community in Yemen. The Shoura newspaper has recently held an extensive survey requesting opinions of officials, media personalities, businessmen and intellectuals and results to the survey have proved that there is a strengthening position in support for such a move.

Recently, a number of initiatives were taken by Yemeni businessmen and intellectuals to start new private TV stations in Yemen. Among them was the project of establishing "Democracy" channel, whose initiator, Sheikh Abdulqawi Al-Shuwai committed himself to establishing the channel as soon



as conditions permit so it could serve as a democracy enhancing tool that would support freedom of expression.

Meanwhile, hundreds of prominent personalities have signed a petition in which they supported the 'Democracy Channel' project and pledged to support a law that could be passed from the parliament to allow free electronic media in Yemen.

Among the supporters is prominent personality General Muslih Ayyash, who invited political parties including the Opposition Joint Meeting parties to support the 'Democracy Channel' and has pledged to support the initiative fully.

It is worth noting that Yemen has always stressed on democratic reform, but the government has fell short of allowing the private sector to establish TV and Radio channels.

## Consultation meeting of leaders of Ministry of Justice

On 31 March 2004, began in Sana'a the activities of the first consultation meeting organized by the Ministry of Justice and Heads of Appeal Courts throughout the governorates of the Republic. The meeting aims at the discussion of the role of the judicial authority, in addition to the evaluation of the level of work at the Courts of Appeal.

The speeches of Dr. Abdullah Al-Olefy, Vice Public Attorney, and Dr. Adnan Al-Jafry, Minister of Justice, confirmed the importance of activating and developing the performance of courts.

The second day of the meeting, April 1<sup>st</sup>, focused on the importance of putting an end to the phenomenon of revenge. This is in accordance with the directive of President Saleh to find a practical solution to eliminate the revenge phenomenon. The meeting concluded with the formation of a commission chaired by Dr. Mohamed Ja'far Qassem, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Justice, to undertake to resolve revenge problems and to promote general reconciliation in the country.

Continued from P1:

### Verdict on Thabet's case to be issued on April 13

The prosecutor insisted that the journalist was guilty. Thabet refused to answer the questions of the judge, demanding that the investigation report by the prosecution should be read overtly at the court. The judge agreed to that.

Allaw presented to the court the letter sent by the UN High Commission for Human Rights to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The letter stated "I should appeal to your Excellency's Government to take all necessary steps to secure the right to freedom of opinion and expression of the above mentioned person (Saeed Thabet), in accordance with fundamental principles as stipulated in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

Reporters Sans Frontier already

demanding the Yemeni Government to drop the trial of Thabet, whilst around 50 volunteer advocates demanded in previous hearings that the intelligence agents and prosecutors should be held accountable for kidnapping and detaining a member of the YJS board.

The final hearing session was attended by al-Amri Sharooof, Head of the Amnesty International delegation that arrived in Yemen last Wednesday to investigate the human rights situation in the country.

Several local and international human rights and press freedom NGOs condemned the arrest of the journalist and stated that they consider it a backward step for Yemen's press freedom.

### Al-Qaeda suspects to be tried

Yemen arrested some people suspected of having links to the Cole operation. Yet, ten of them, including the suspected mastermind Jamal al-Badwi, escaped from the prison of the Intelligence Services in April last year. The Government announced that some of the fugitives were arrested again in its recent crack down in Abyan, including al-Badwi and Fahd al-Qis'e.

Some local and international

human rights organizations lashed out at the Yemeni Government for detaining tens of al-Qaeda suspects without legal warrants or trial. Some have been released after they pledged to the clerics committee conducting dialogue with the detained extremists that they would never get involved in terrorist activities. However, security officials expressed worry that some people who were released were caught red-handed.

## Sana'a University Students Call for Elections

The preparation committee for the elections of the General Union of Yemeni Students at Sana'a University and its branches, in a statement distributed on 29 March 2004, called on all students to participate in the elections. They are scheduled to be held this month, April, according to the timetable set by the preparation committee.

The statement emphasized the importance of the neutrality of the University administration, the board of teachers and the security and local staff in the coming elections.

## Large quantity of fish perished on coasts of Abyan Governorate

A number of fishermen in Abyan Governorate believe that the main reason for the recent death of many fish is the pollution of sea water with chemicals. They called on, through Yemen Times, the concerned competent authorities, to conduct a study on this unnatural incident and to examine and analyze some of these fish in

order to find immediate solutions to this problem, which ought to concern consumers and fishermen alike.

It is worth mentioning that fishermen's associations in Shagrah, Zunjubar and Ahwar have already informed the related authorities at beginning of the problem.



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Held by Women's Forum for Research and Training in cooperation with Yemen Times -Taiz:

# A Seminar on effects of Poverty and AIDS on Society

TAIZ BUREAU  
YEMEN TIMES

Women's Forum for Research and Training (WFRT) in cooperation with the United Nations Information Center (UNIC) and Yemen Times organized during 30-31 of March in Taiz City, a forum entitled, "Poverty and Aids and their effects on society".

The Forum was participated in by an elite of specialists and researchers presenting working papers on Aids, its effects on women, and how Islam approaches the prevention of Aids, poverty and development.

The first day of the forum reviewed a working paper presented by Dr. Saeed Nouman on Preventive Measures of Aids. Another by Mr. Emad Al-Saqqaf, Editor-in-Chief of Family and Development Magazine, entitled, "Information and its role in awareness of the dangers of Aids", was delivered on his behalf by Mr. Fkri Qassem, Editing Director of the magazine. The first day concluded with enlightening comments on roles of mosque preachers in pointing out the dangers of Aids.

On the second day, the forum heard a working paper of Dr. Mohamed Qahtan entitled, "Poverty, features and reasons and the roles of NGOs in combating it", and a similar one by Mr. Abdullah Najy on poverty in Yemen and available development resources.

Discussions brought out the positive role played by the forum. Participants and attendants then toured the art exhibition of works by artist Rasha Ahmed, creative handcrafts made by Ms. Soad Abdul Qawe, cartoon sketches on poverty and Aids and works on violence against woman, as well as listening to songs from Al-Noras band.

Yemen Times, following the forum, sought the views of some of participants and opinions of some of audiences in order to find what comes after the seminar and what could be achieved by the working papers. Dr. Emad Al-Saqqaf said that the seminar has achieved its objective as it has determined the causes and solutions to Aids. All that remains is the practical implementation. As far as our Family Magazine is concerned, it will fulfill its end of the bargain by utilizing the magazine to dis-



Panel of the seminar

seminate the informative message of the outcome of the seminar. The working paper of the magazine focused on Aids and youths, the hope for better future

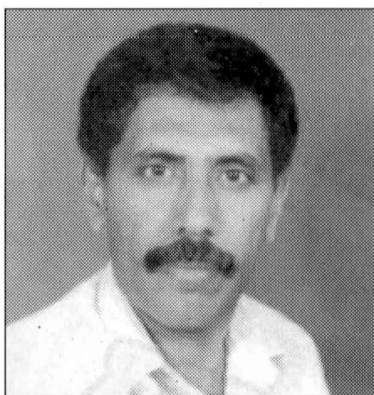
their free time and keep them on the correct path and eliminate the motives for their deviation.

Dr. Emad Al-Saqqaf added that no



Emad Al Saqqaf

and called for providing them with opportunities for education, jobs and a better life, and to create new job opportunities to enable them to settle down and to get married. The State and civil society organizations and various media organisations are urged to find practical solutions to the issue of exorbitant dowries, which occasionally lead males and females into unsafe behavior and illegal relationships with potential risk of Aids infection. Paying attention to our youths, says Al-Saqqaf, will kill



Mohammed Ali Kahtan

harm or disrespect was intended by our working paper in stating that Yemeni Embassies and Consulates abroad assist in the spread of Aids, but to bring the issue to their attention to increase scrutiny of the health issues, and to demand health certificates from those wishing to visit Yemen, since this requirement is legal and normally practiced by all foreign embassies. The same can be applied to airports and seaports. He also stated that the inappropriate practices of local hospitals, labs and blood banks

ignorantly contribute in the spread of Aids, especially those seeking financial gains at the cost of public safety and spreading fatal diseases because of the lack of effective monitoring. Some citizens end up paying a high price by getting infected with this virus while seeking medical treatment from ordinary illness.

The working paper also touched on the tourism aspect. As much as it provides the country with hard currencies, tourism if not realistically monitored could backfire tremendously.

Mr. Ameen Al-Maktary, who participated in the seminar on behalf of Yemen Socialist Party, agreed to the connection between poverty and Aids. He added that WFRT must have a commendation for staging a candid and coherent discussion meeting on an important and vital issue such as Aids and poverty, especially in light of the official and public silence towards the danger of spreading a base for Aids. In fact, there should have been more time to discuss and to crystallize ideas and solutions



Suad al Gadasi

from all working papers presented. In spite of the success of the forum, Mr. Al-Maktary had hoped for more media coverage of the seminar and participation of more experts and specialists who could not make it to the forum. Furthermore, he felt that special attention ought to be given to the working paper of Mohamed Qahtan, which possessed genuine scientific findings and reflected a true image of the situation of poverty in Yemen and benefited from his common sense approach in connecting family resources and expenditures.

## Reform Initiatives in Yemen and Arab Region

# Demand of Parliamentary System

By MOHAMED BIN SALLAM

The Yemen Center for Strategic Studies organized on Tuesday 30 March a discussion ring regarding "Reform Initiatives in the Arab Region". Dr. Mohamed Abdul Malik Al-Motwakel, Assistant Secretary General of People Powers Unionist Party contributed a working paper discussing - in addition to the US Greater Middle East initiative - the initiative of Egyptian Islamic Groups (Al-Akhwah Al-Muslimeen), the Arab Initiative and a small reference to Canadian and Danish initiatives. Dr. Al-Motwakel laid down preliminary proposals for a local Yemeni initiative.

Regarding the Yemeni political and administrative reforms' initiative, the state system, says Dr. Al-Motwakel, must be a pluralistic parliamentary republican system, not a presidential one. The President of the Republic should be directly elected by the people every five years. The Prime Minister

would be nominated by the Party with a majority of seats in Parliament, where the power of executive branch (civil, military and security) follows directly the cabinet. Members of the Al-Shoura Council should be elected by people in all governorates of the Republic. Dr. Al-Motwakel demanded for citizens the right to elect their local councils, governors and directors of provinces and the right to administer their local affairs according to regulating constitutional laws. He demanded a unified independent judiciary, including the Supreme Court, the amendment of the constitution and election laws and the existing election system based on individual constituencies, the adoption of percentage rates and setting a predefined ratio for woman represented in parties. He also demanded the abolition of the Ministries of Information and Civil Services to guarantee neutrality.

Concerning administrative reforms, Dr. Al-Motwakel demanded the review



Panel of the seminar on Reform Initiatives in Yemen and Arab Region

and revision of laws and regulations and the rebuilding of the structure of state corporations according to the constitution and in accordance with the state's general goals, which would prevent

interference with authorities.

Continued on page 4

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Continued from Page 3

## Reform Initiatives in Yemen and Arab Region

## Demand of Parliamentary System

Dr. Al-Motwakel demanded a precise mechanism for filling in all available job positions at state corporations, which would predefine the duties and missions of departments and divisions and administrative units, determine precisely the scope of each job and required qualifications needed for the job as well as determining the financial rewards for each employee. Regarding the Central Organization for Control and Audit, it must be associated with Parliament and if necessary to submit copies of its reports to the President, Al-Shoura Council and Prime Minister.

The working paper of Dr. Al-Motwakel summarized the initiatives at hand as follows:

**Arab Initiative:**

The Arab initiative is based on releasing freedoms, guaranteeing human rights and his needs, confirming the freedoms of the press and expression, the modernization of the economy, the development of judiciary, building a renaissance in education and expanding the base of knowledge, increasing the involvement of youths and the empowerment of women to contribute to society's development.

**Egyptian Islamic Group (Al-Akhwah Al-Muslimeen):**

Demands a democratic constitutional parliamentary republican system in the scope of Islamic principles where the people are the source of authority and personal rights and the beliefs and practices of recognized heavenly religions are respected. The right to peaceful demonstrations, the independence of judiciary, economic liberalism, the rights of women to take part in parliamentary elections and the prohibition of any activity leading to instigating religious and ethnic discrimination are further requirements.

**Canadian and Danish reform plan for Middle East region:**

This plan hopes for the obligation of primary principles such as justice, equality, security, law and order and cooperation based on trust to establish strengthened economic and political relations. In accepting these principles, the Canadian and Danish Governments would encourage the development of partnership as catalyst to achieve these goals, not only on the level of the Middle East and North Africa, but also on the world level.

**US Initiative:**

The justifications for the US initiative are the three deficiencies (freedom, knowledge,

empowerment of women), referred to in the 2002-2003 United Nations report, contribute to creating situations threatening the national interests of all G8 member countries. As long as the number of individuals deprived of all political and economic rights keeps increasing, so will extremism, terrorism, international organized crime and illegal immigration. Statistics describing the current situation in the Greater Middle East constitute a major concern for the international community, such as:

- The total local GNP of all Arab countries collectively is less than that of Spain.
- 40% of Arabs (65 Million) are illiterates of which two thirds are women.
- The urgent need to create at least 6 million new job opportunities to absorb the newcomers to the market place.
- The rate of unemployment in region will be 25 million by 2010.
- Two-thirds of the population of the region live on less 2 USD per day.

To improve the living situation requires at least the doubling of the economic growth to 6% from the currently standing at 3%. And the alternative to this deteriorating situation, according to the US project, are the political, social and economic reforms.

**The G8 initiative:****1- Concerning democratic reforms:**

The G8 could support democratic reforms in the region through their obligation to mutual visits, seminars, the foundation and enhancement of independent election monitoring commissions and evaluation reports.

**2- Combating corruption:**

The World Bank classifies corruption as the biggest hurdle standing against development. The G8 would support the adoption of transparency and anti-corruption principles, which are effective inside the G8 countries and would support an initiative of the Economic and Development Cooperation Organization and the United Nations Development Programs in Middle East and North Africa - discussed by Head of Governments, donor countries and NGOs - for national strategies to combat corruption and increase accountability.

**3- Civil Society:**

The initiative assumes that the momentum for reform must come from within. The best method to encourage reform is through representative organizations and in order to achieve that, the G8 would:

- Encourage regional governments to grant permission for civil society organizations, particularly those involved in human rights and media, to work freely

without harassment and restrictions.

- Increase direct funding for regional NGOs interested in democracy, human rights, media and women etc.
- Fund an NGO which combines legal and media experts from the region to formulate annual reports on efforts exerted on judicial reforms and freedoms of media means.

**4- Economic field:**

The initiative calls urgently for unleashing the capabilities of the private sector, particularly in small and medium development projects, considering them the principal generators behind economic growth, creating new job opportunities and the strengthening of the effectiveness of the financial sector as an essential component to obtain higher growth rates and more job opportunities.

In this respect, the G8 launched its initiative to urge countries to:

- Grant loans to small project with the focus on projects seeking profit, especially projects carried out by women.
- Allocate 400-500 million USD to be paid through five annual installments to assist one and a half million economic activists, 750 thousand of which are women, to break out of poverty.
- Found a bank for development of the Greater Middle East after the pattern of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In addition to the G8, creditors from the Middle East region would assist the countries seeking reforms.

**WTO Initiative:**

The most important element of this initiative is that the WTO would assist countries towards accession to the WTO through limited technical assistance programs, the provision of consultants and elimination of customs barriers.

Dr. Al-Motwakel concluded his working paper with reference to the G8 initiative by saying that it did not elaborate on democracy and fighting corruption. Perhaps of the aim at this stage is to control the gradual development of election operations and to pressure the existing regimes. The initiative also aims at involving and finding a distinctive position for Israel in the region whilst neglecting any reference to establishing a Palestinian state or about the Arab-Israeli conflict. The best of the initiative is related to civil society corporations.

Thus, by the economic dominance, the economic segment, tied with the West, would eventually become the ruling authority in the future.

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# Arab League head skips Algeria, regional split looms

CAIRO, April 3 (Reuters) - Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa has dropped Algeria from a North African tour designed to muster support for an early Arab summit to replace the one which Tunisia unilaterally called off last week.

The Arab League said on Saturday that Moussa would fly from Tunisia to Morocco on Sunday, missing Algeria, because Algerian leaders are too busy with presidential elections on April 8.

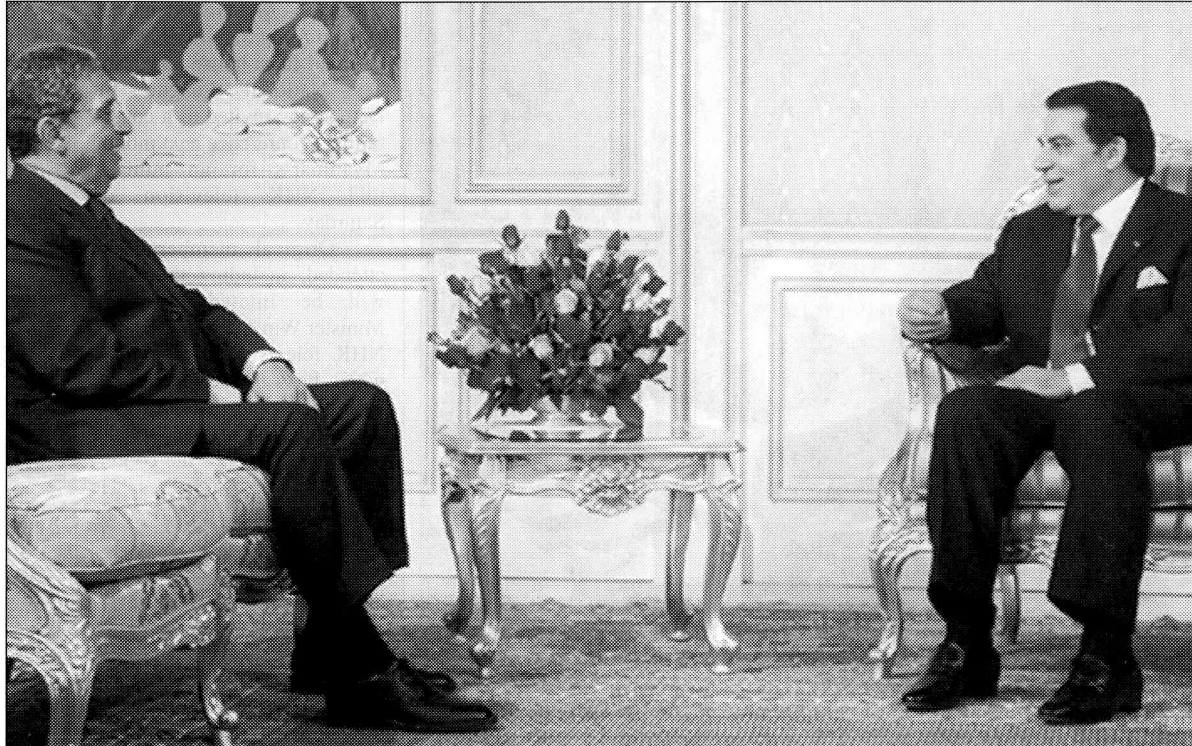
"All the coming dates are dates where every candidate will be fighting his campaign. It is not the right time to make a call like this so it was agreed that the visit will take place after the elections," said league spokesman Hossam Zaki.

Moussa had talks on Friday with Tunisian President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, who stunned the Arab world last Saturday by postponing the Tunis summit indefinitely.

Tunisia said some countries were reluctant to make a clear commitment to democracy and human rights but delegates from other countries disputed the Tunisian explanation.

Algeria has shown some sympathy for the Tunisian position and President Abdelaziz Bouteflika said during preparations for the summit that some countries were in favour of a postponement.

The dispute has raised the prospect of a split in the Arab world between the Maghreb states in North Africa and the countries in the east of the Arab world.



Tunisian President Zine Al-Abidine Ben Ali (R) meets Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa (L) in Carthage late April 2, in Tunis. Moussa's tour falls within the framework of contacts by the pan-Arab organization to prepare for the 4th ordinary Arab Summit that was postponed by Tunisia last Saturday. The tour is Moussa's first after a controversial postponement.

world.

A central block of Arab states, led by Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia, is campaigning for a quick summit in any venue to dispel the impression that the Arab world is divided.

On Friday Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz met King Mohammed of Morocco — the first high-level meeting since the Tunis debacle between leaders from the two wings.

After Moussa saw Ben Ali, the Tunisian presidency said that it stood by its right to hold the summit in Tunis and that the substance of the summit was more important than the timing.

The agenda for the summit includes

Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a common Arab response to Washington's campaign for political reform in the region.

A presidency statement said Tunisia intended to consult other Arab governments to find a common position on the substance of the summit and to fix a new date for a meeting.

But in practice Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has been at the centre of consultations. He has seen the Saudi, Jordanian and Bahraini leaders this week and will meet Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Cairo on Sunday, officials said.

An Arab diplomat said Moussa and Mubarak were treading carefully because they do not want to alienate the North African states by giving the impression that Egypt is running the show.

Moussa, a former Egyptian foreign minister, has sometimes irritated Arab governments because of his strong personal views and assertive style of diplomacy.

The Arab League does not expect that a single visit to North Africa by Moussa will bring Arab governments together on where and when to meet and what decisions to take, an official said.

"It needs very delicate diplomacy, a lot of convincing and flexibility and we have to be patient and focus on the content, because it is the content that is important now," said the league official, who asked not to be named.

## Arafat unmoved by Sharon threat

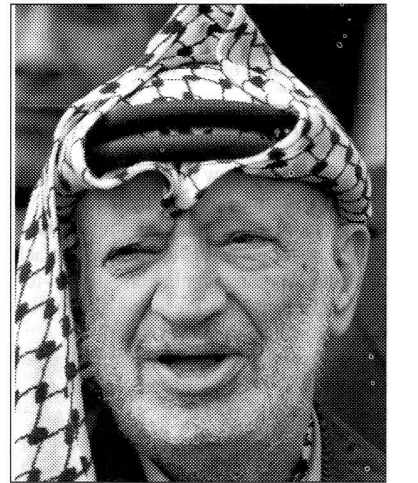
RAMALLAH, West Bank, April 3 (Reuters) - Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said on Saturday he was unmoved by a veiled threat from Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to assassinate him.

Speaking in English at his battered headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah a day after Sharon made his threat in an interview with Israeli newspapers, Arafat said:

"I don't care for it. I am caring for my people, for our children, for our women, for our students."

Sharon's threat to assassinate Arafat drew criticism from Israel's main ally, the United States.

Sharon, who is under fire in Israel over his plan for a unilateral Gaza pull-out and over a bribery scandal, also said Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Lebanon's Hizbollah guerrilla group, could be targeted.



Palestinian President Yasser Arafat talks to reporters at his headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah April 3. Arafat said on Saturday he was unmoved by a veiled threat from Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to assassinate him.

REUTERS

## Syria sentences 14 human rights activists to jail

DAMASCUS, April 3 (Reuters) - A Syrian military court has sentenced 14 human rights activists to jail for belonging to a banned group after they attended a lecture condemning the country's emergency law, activists said on Saturday.

The court in the northern province of Aleppo jailed 13 of them for three months and one for a year because it was his second offence.

"The 14 activists are free at the moment because the ruling is not final and can be appealed against...They will appeal against the ruling," lawyer and rights activist Anwar al-Bunni said.

Amnesty International condemned the charges as arbitrary, said the military trial was unfair and called for the sentences to be dropped.

"The organisation once again calls on the Syrian authorities to take immediate steps to curb human rights violations...and to allow human rights activists and bodies to function freely," it said in a statement received in Beirut.

The 14 activists went on trial in October on charges of trying to incite factional conflict. They were arrested in August at a lecture against the Arab state's emergency law, imposed days after the country's 1963 revolution.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad freed hundreds of political prisoners and tolerated political debates that openly criticised Syria's autocratic rule after succeeding his father in 2000.

But Syria later cracked down on critics, sentencing several dissidents to jail terms on charges such as trying to undermine the constitution and inciting insurrection.

Syria has, however, released seven activists jailed on similar charges less than a year after they started jail terms of three to four years, the activists said.

"This may be a good will gesture but they were initially tried by an extraordinary court, a military court," Bunni said.

Bunni said the seven were among 20 people who were charged with illegally forming a political grouping in a town near Damascus last year.

# Iraqi police, protesters clash in Basra, shots fired

BASRA, Iraq, April 3 (Reuters) - Demonstrators demanding jobs clashed with Iraqi police in the southern Iraqi port of Basra on Saturday, prompting police to fire shots into the air to try to control the crowds.

Witnesses said a few hundred demonstrators smashed shop windows and attacked a post office building in the centre of the city, Iraq's second largest, while around 100 police officers tried to pacify the violence.

Police said one officer was wounded by stones lobbed by the crowd.

British troops, who have overall responsibility for security in Basra, were keeping their distance, but witnesses said around 10 armoured British military vehicles were in the area and ready to intervene if the situation deteriorated.

Basra has been relatively quiet in the year since U.S.-led forces invaded Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein, particularly in comparison to areas to the north and west of Baghdad.

But disturbances have increased in recent weeks, with the unemployed holding several marches and other protests led by Iraqi security service employees seeking monthly salaries or pension payments.

Last Monday, protesters swung iron bars and threw stones at British soldiers outside the offices of a religious organisation. At least one protester and two



An Iraqi police officer tries to drive away from youths pelting his car with bricks and stones during disturbances in the southern city of Basra April 3. Demonstrators demanding jobs clashed with Iraqi police in the southern Iraqi port of Basra on Saturday, prompting police to fire shots into the air to try to control the crowds.

REUTERS

British soldiers were wounded.

At least one Iraqi was killed when demonstrators and police clashed on

Thursday.

Late last month, protesters attacked a British armoured troop carrier and threw

petrol bombs, setting several soldiers briefly on fire. Thirteen British troops were injured.

# Foreign participation doubles at Libya trade fair

TRIPOLI, April 3 (Reuters) - The Tripoli trade fair has attracted about 3,000 foreign firms, twice last year's number, signalling greater investor interest following an improvement in relations between Libya and the U.S. and Britain.

Visits by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State William Burns last month were the culmination of a lengthy process of detente.

The trips came as a reward for and reflect confidence in Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's promise in last

December to abandon weapons of mass destruction programmes.

"The increased attendance of firms from 40 countries at the Tripoli fair is evidence about the interest the international community is showing towards building economic relations with Libya," said Prime Minister Shokri Ghanem, who opened the fair late on Friday.

"The strong participation by foreign companies is also evidence about the support and the encouragement by the international community for Libya's economic reforms," Shokri told

Reuters. The fair lasts until April 12.

The Libyan government plans to privatise most state-owned companies, including some energy firms, in the coming years as part of a drive to turn the state-dominated economy into a fully free market economy.

Libyans hope the rapprochement with the U.S. will help increase investment in the country's economy after years of sanctions and isolation.

"The latest decision by Libya (in December) was the main factor behind the increase in the number of foreign firms and countries attending the Tripoli

fair," said Khaled Salah Senoussi, head of Libya's Fairs Organisation.

Asked by Reuters about attendance by U.S. firms, Senoussi said no company from the United States was taking part in the fair but his organisation plans to arrange three separate exhibitions for U.S. concerns later this year, including one in pharmaceuticals and another in foods.

U.S. officials said last week that the Bush administration plans to gradually lift sanctions that have blocked U.S. oil firms and other companies from doing business in Libya.

## Hamas claims responsibility for settlement attack

RAMALLAH, West Bank, April 3 (Reuters) - The Palestinian militant group Hamas claimed responsibility on Saturday for killing a Jewish settler, saying it was to avenge Israel's assassination of the group's leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.

A Palestinian gunman infiltrated the Jewish settlement Avnei Hafez near the West Bank city of Tulkarm, killing a settler and wounding his 12-year-old daughter before Israeli troops shot him dead.

A member of the Hamas military wing told Reuters in a telephone call that the attack was launched to avenge Israel's March 22 assassination of Yassin by helicopter strike in Gaza.

## Israel rebuffs US for comments on Arafat threat

JERUSALEM, April 3 (Reuters) - Israel on Saturday strongly rebuffed criticism from the United States, its closest ally, of a veiled threat by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to assassinate Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Internal Security Minister Tsahi Hanegbi of Sharon's right-wing Likud Party said in an interview with Israeli Radio that "it seems to me that it (the United States) should be the last one that can preach to us about how to implement our right to self-defense."

Washington said on Friday it would oppose the exile or assassination of Arafat, after Sharon made his most explicit threat yet against the Palestinian leader in interviews published by Israeli newspapers on Friday.

# Taiwan opposition protests against election defeat

TAIPEI, April 3 (Reuters) - Tens of thousands of Taiwan opposition supporters held a big protest on Saturday to demand an independent inquiry into an election-eve assassination attempt on President Chen Shui-bian that they say swung the poll.

Police estimated more than 60,000 people were gathered at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in downtown Taipei, waving flags and tooting horns in the second major demonstration after the hotly disputed presidential election on March 20.

Around-the-clock protests and the violent storming of election commission offices have divided the island and triggered alarm in rival China, which views the pro-independence Chen as a threat to regional stability.

The opposition Nationalist Party has warned of "endless" protests for the next four years if their demands were not met.

"We will continue to let Mr. Chen Shui-bian know that he must bow to people power," Nationalist leader Lien Chan told a cheering crowd. "We demand the truth. We will not stop until the truth is clear."

They shouted back: "Return the truth to the people."

"On April 10, if we have not yet received a response, then let us gather more friends to show our unity," Lien said.

Lien lost the election by just 30,000 votes out of more than 13 million cast, after a bullet gashed Chen in the stomach while he was campaigning on an open-top jeep in Tainan. Vice President Annette Lu was also wounded in the knee.

Lien says the attack caused a swelling of sympathy votes and raised suspicions it may have been staged.

"The whole shooting episode was suspicious. This election was unfair," said elementary school teacher Lu Shu-yuei.

"I have no respect for our head of state and I don't trust our government," she said, waving Taiwan's flag.

RECOUNT  
The Nationalists filed a lawsuit to nullify



A group of Taiwanese university students stage a hunger strike at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei April 3, in a protest condemning the hotly disputed March 20 presidential polls. The defeated opposition presidential candidate, Lien Chan, has contested incumbent President Chen Shui-bian's razor-thin victory and demanded a vote recount. REUTERS

fy Chen's razor-thin victory, and at a hearing on Friday the judges gave both sides five days to iron out terms of a vote recount.

The opposition lawsuit also cites voting irregularities and a record 330,000 invalid ballots, triple the number rejected in the last presidential election four years ago. Chen has agreed to a full recount, which would include the spoiled ballots.

Lien led half a million people to the presidential office on March 27 in Taiwan's biggest political protest to dispute the election outcome.

"After today, we're going to wind down the rallies. We're not going to hold daily rallies any more, maybe weekly or bi-weekly," said Su Chi, one of Lien's top

aides.

Su said the opposition will focus on a vote recount and the investigation into the shooting: "If these clouds are not cleared away, Chen's presidency will be mired for four straight years."

The Nationalists have asked the president to endorse special legislation that would allow an independent inquiry into the shooting, but Chen's Democratic Progressive Party rejected the move, saying it would violate the constitution.

In a bid to meet opposition demands, Chen permitted a team of U.S. forensic experts to examine his wound and gave them access to evidence in the case.

Before returning to the United States, the team said the president's injury was

indeed a gunshot wound, but said further conclusions required more analysis of data.

Wearing yellow raincoats and white headbands reading "Fight for democracy" and "Want truth", eight university students launched a hunger strike before the afternoon protest.

One of the most charismatic student leaders of Beijing's 1989 pro-democracy movement gave the Taiwan students his support.

"What you are doing is something remarkable," said Wu'er Kaixi, who was number two on China's list of 21 most wanted student leaders after the June 4 crackdown nearly 15 years ago. He lives in self-exile in Taiwan.

# Myanmar says Suu Kyi to be freed before May 17-NHK

BANGKOK, April 3 (Reuters) - Myanmar democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi will be freed from house arrest and her National League for Democracy invited to a constitutional conference next month, Myanmar's foreign minister told NHK television on Saturday.

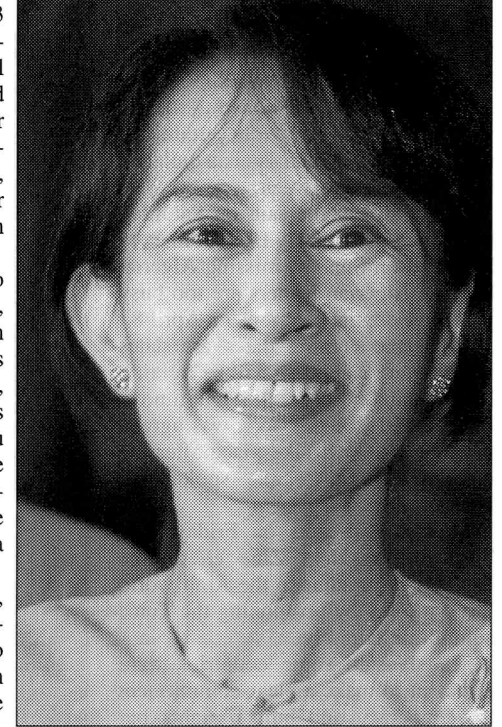
"Original members who attended, including the NLD, will be invited," Foreign Minister Win Aung told Japan's NHK television in Bangkok, where he was due to meet his Thai counterpart. Asked if Suu Kyi would be released before the May 17 start of the conference, Win Aung said: "Yes." He added it was too early to give a precise date.

The military government, under pressure to show it is sincere about its "road map to democracy" announced with few details last August, set the date for the constitutional meeting last week.

But it made no mention of Suu Kyi, the Nobel peace laureate who remains under house arrest at her Yangon home, or her party, which has had its offices shut since clashes between opposition and government supporters a year ago.

Yangon faced calls last week from U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, the United States and human rights groups to allow Suu Kyi and her party to participate in the conference.

The conference was suspended in 1996 after the NLD walked out, accusing the military of manipulating the



Myanmar democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi speaks to reporters at her party headquarters after being freed from 19 months of house arrest in this file photo taken May 6, 2002 in Yangon. Suu Kyi will be freed from house arrest and her National League for Democracy invited to a constitutional conference next month, Myanmar's foreign minister told NHK television April 3 in Bangkok. REUTERS

process to stay in power. The NLD won general elections in 1990, but the government rejected the results.

There had been speculation Suu Kyi may be freed in mid-April following a recent visit to Yangon by U.N. special envoy Razali Ismail.

# Sri Lanka president's party leads, but no majority

COLOMBO, April 3 (Reuters) - Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga's party inched closer to a general election win on Saturday, but looked short of a parliamentary majority, complicating efforts to restart peace talks with Tamil rebels.

It was a mixed message from voters, ousting Ranil Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP), but giving large minorities to smaller parties on opposing ends of the island's ethnic divide.

"This is not a good thing. The country did not need another minority government," Rohan Edrisinha, a legal expert at the University of Colombo, said after Sri Lanka's third parliamentary election in four years.

The Elections Commission said with more than two-thirds of the votes counted, Kumaratunga's United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) had 47.6 percent of the vote, compared with 37.3 percent for the UNP.

An all-clergy party of Buddhist monks had 6.4 percent, while a rebel Tamil Tiger-backed party had six percent.

The figures are still in flux, but projections give the Alliance up to 109 seats in the 225-member parliament — four short of a majority — while the UNP is forecast to take 80.

"This is a complete repudiation of the UNP," said presidential spokesman Harim Peiris. "The projections show a big difference in the number of seats."

The United States issued a statement urging the new government and the Tigers to return to talks to "quickly forge a lasting peace".

Final results could be delayed for up to a week if re-polling is ordered because of possible fraud at one or two polling stations in central Kandy and Ampara on the east coast, but that is unlikely to change the overall figures.

## PEACE PROCESS

The vote in Sri Lanka's most peaceful election in decades was fought mostly over how to permanently end the 20-year civil war that has killed 64,000 people and tarnished the country's image internationally.

Wickremesinghe and Kumaratunga have shared an awkward government since he won the last election in 2001, as he controlled parliament while she had

vast powers under the constitution. Kumaratunga used those powers to call the snap election after accusing Wickremesinghe of endangering the security of the country by giving away too much to win peace with the rebels.

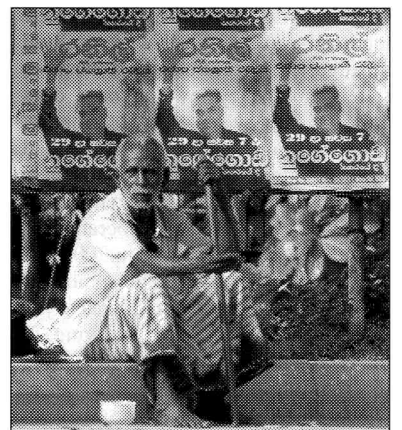
"I think it will be a real blow to the peace process as well, there will be no clear direction," Edrisinha said.

Kumaratunga has said she wanted to start talks with the Tigers as soon as possible, but the People's Liberation Front, a Sinhalese nationalist party that is part of the Alliance, has in the past taken a hard line in dealing with the rebels.

The party could also be concerned for investors because of its stance against economic reforms and privatisation.

The economy grew an estimated 5.5 percent last year and the stock market has surged nearly 80 percent since the ceasefire was signed in February 2002 as prospects of a peace dividend lured investors back and aid donors pledged \$4.5 billion.

A ceasefire that Wickremesinghe signed more than two years ago has held despite stalled peace talks, the feud between the president and prime minister and a recent split in the Tigers.



A beggar sits in front of posters for Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's United National Party in Colombo Sri Lanka April 3, a day after Sri Lanka's general election. President Chandrika Kumaratunga's party is in line to win Sri Lanka's third general election in four years but will be just shy of a parliamentary majority, early returns showed on Saturday. REUTERS

# Old guard eyes comeback as Indonesia heads to polls

JAKARTA, April 3 (Reuters) - Indonesia's old guard is eyeing a comeback in Monday's parliamentary elections, with nostalgia for the stability and economic growth of ousted autocrat Suharto's rule seen returning his former party to prominence.

Around 90 percent of the 147 million eligible voters in the world's most populous Muslim nation are expected to take part in the election, billed as the biggest and most complex one-day vote the world has ever seen.

Tens of thousands of police and soldiers will be on duty at polling stations and strategic locations in cities and villages around the vast archipelago, amid fears that supporters of rival parties may clash or Muslim militants may disrupt proceedings.

Opinion polls show Golkar, the former political vehicle of Suharto, leading incumbent President Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesia Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P) in a race seen as a key test of the country's nascent democracy.

They also show for the first time Megawati trailing in the presidential race set for July, to former chief security minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the candidate of a smaller party.

"This may be the watershed point," said William Liddle, an Indonesian expert at Ohio State University visiting for the election. "Support for Megawati's party has been going down for some time. Now her personal popularity is also dropping."

The latest Indonesia Survey Institute poll showed Golkar winning 23.2 percent of the parliamentary vote, with Megawati's party, now the strongest in the legislature, taking 17.5 percent.

A separate poll by a U.S.-based group had Golkar with 22.2 percent and PDI-P 11.5 percent in a field of two dozen parties.

Ballot boxes and ballots were still on their way Saturday to some remote parts of the world's fourth most populous country.

Television pictures showed burros carrying election materials strapped to their

backs across jungle streams in mountainous areas of Sulawesi, some 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) east of Jakarta.

In Aceh in the far northwest and Papua in the far east, both sites of simmering separatist movements, a lack of election material could mean a delayed vote in isolated areas.

But Nazarrudin Sjamsuddin, chief of the General Election Commission (KPU), told Reuters: "We have 585,000 polling stations. The polling stations that we think will have problems are only a half of a percent of the total."

## TERROR SIDELINED

The parliamentary vote marks only the second time Indonesians have taken part in a democratic ballot since Suharto's overthrow in a popular uprising in 1998. The subsequent presidential election will be the country's first direct vote for that post.

As the polls point to nowhere near a majority for any party, Monday's results are expected to be followed by a scramble to build coalitions before the presidential vote.

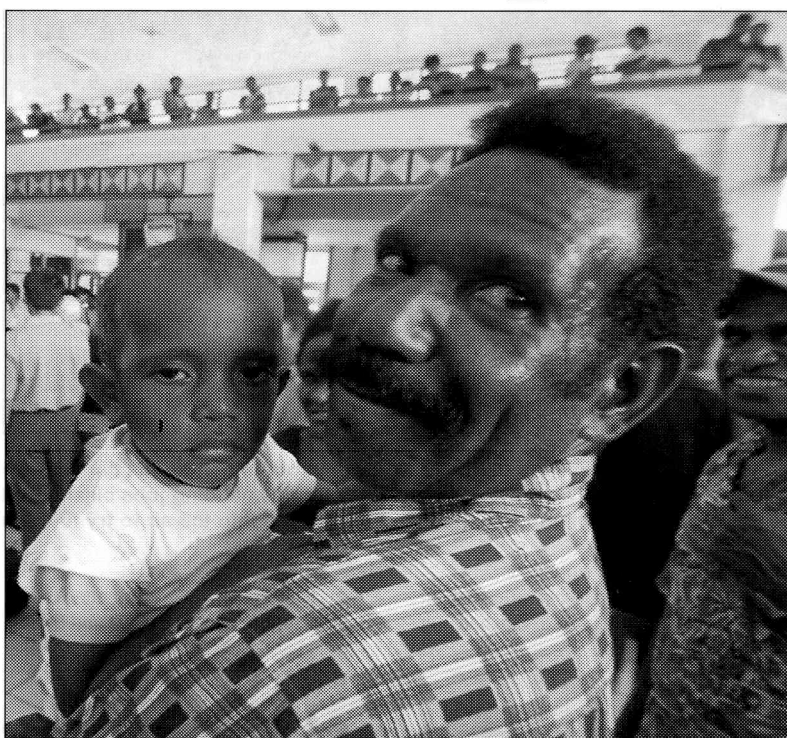
Although bomb blasts have killed hundreds of people in Indonesia in recent years, the issues of terrorism and the country's militant fringe have largely been sidelined as candidates seek to avoid inflaming Islamic sensibilities.

Instead, in the rare moments when issues emerge at mass rallies, candidates have spoken about the economy lagging behind levels needed to create jobs.

"What people are thinking is that Golkar was the political party that provided them with economic growth of 6-7 percent a year for all of those years under Suharto," said Liddle.

Dewi Fortuna Anwar, a political analyst and adviser to a former president, said that despite promises, Megawati's government had failed to deliver.

"I think the government has done relatively well with stability and the macro-economic indicators are positive, but the government has not been able to go that extra mile in pursuing reform and eradicating corruption, ensuring rule of law



An Indonesian West Papuan holds his son while waiting for a flight home at Sentani airport on April 3. Indonesians are heading home to vote in legislative elections next Monday and first direct presidential election in July this year. REUTERS

and especially in providing jobs."

Standard Chartered Indonesia economist Fauzi Ichsan said if the market is happy with the elections, money will start flowing back into the capital markets. "But for foreign direct investment to come, I think the country needs more than just political certainty."

For that, the new government will have to deal with such issues as legal uncertainty, regional autonomy, and labour regulations, he said.

## TIRED OF CHANGE

As Indonesians head for polling booths to elect 550 legislators and more than 7,000 other local representatives, many are experiencing change fatigue, some analysts said.

"People long for a period of stability

and consolidation," said Rizal Mallarangeng, director of the local Freedom Institute.

While seeking to distance itself from Suharto's excesses, Golkar has stressed stability and its record in government, especially on the economy. That makes an attractive platform in a country where half the people live on less than \$2 a day.

However, in terms of policy, little separates Golkar from most of its secular and Muslim-based rivals.

"One does not really see what the parties stand for on any particular issue," said Anwar. "There has not been any discussion on terrorism. Everybody talks about corruption, claims they are opposed to corruption, while being party to corrupt practices. At the moment, frankly, I don't see any differences."

# German leftists rally to slam Schroeder, reforms

BERLIN, April 3 (Reuters) - More than 100,000 demonstrators marched through the centre of Berlin on Saturday to protest government welfare, pension and health care spending cuts.

Organised by unions and the anti-globalisation activists, leftist rallies were also staged in Stuttgart and Cologne.

Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's centre-left government has come under attack from unions for its "Agenda 2010" economic reform programme scaling back Germany's generous social welfare system to improve its lagging business competitiveness.

But the powerful unions, accustomed for decades to a well-padded safety net, reject the measures. Their fierce resistance has hit Schroeder and his Social Democrats, causing several humiliating local poll defeats for the party. "Schroeder must go!" was written on scores of the pre-printed posters carried on the march route through Berlin's government quarter. "Overthrow 'Agenda 2010'" and "Stop the social welfare demolition" were written on other banners.

Union leaders said there were 200,000 people at the Berlin rally and 420,000 people in total across Germany. But police in Berlin put the figure at 100,000. The union said there were more than 100,000 in both Cologne and in Stuttgart.

"We want to send a signal to the rulers in politics and industry that we're fed up with policies that hurt



A protestor holds a poster reading "Schroeder Must Go" during a demonstration against welfare cuts behind in the German capital Berlin April 3. German Chancellor Schroeder's 'Agenda 2010' programme, passed after a marathon battle in parliament last year, has cut pensions and health benefit and toughened conditions for the unemployed to overhaul Germany's generous but overstretched welfare system and make the economy more competitive.

REUTERS

the masses and help the rich get richer," Michael Sommer, head of the DGB federation of German unions at the rally in Berlin.

Although some left-wing members of Schroeder's SPD praised the rallies and took part, SPD general secretary Klaus Uwe Benneter criticised unions

for attacking the wrong target.

"The unions need to see where the real enemy is," Benneter told the Leipziger Volkszeitung daily. "It's not the government but the opposition that should bring them into the streets. If the conservatives take power, they'll destroy the social wel-

fare state and not just rebuild it as we are trying to do."

Friedrich Merz, a leader of the conservative opposition, also criticised the marchers. "Some of these union leaders are dreaming of the 1970s and forgetting about the country's future," he said.

# Fear runs high in Spain after rail bomb found

MADRID, April 3 (Reuters) - High-speed trains to southern Spain began running again on Saturday after a bomb found on the line was defused but fears ran high that Islamic extremists could strike again after the Madrid rail bombings.

The 12-kg (26-lb) bomb found on Friday on the high-speed line from Madrid to the southern city of Seville revived tension that was just beginning to subside after the suspected al Qaeda commuter train bombs on March 11 killed 191 people.

The bomb was so like those used to blow up the four Madrid trains that the same group of Islamic militants is believed to be responsible in both cases, Spanish newspapers said on Saturday.

The prestigious AVE trains, which can reach speeds of 350 kmh (220 mph), began running again on Saturday after being suspended on Friday while police painstakingly checked the track.

But passengers were anxious and trains which had been almost fully booked a few days earlier were half-empty, said a Reuters correspondent travelling on one of the first high-speed trains out of Madrid.

"It always affects you. You can't be calm. Everything seems relatively under control but you don't know what will happen," said Jose Antonio Perez, a 40-year-old chemist on his way to Cordoba in southern Spain.

Normally, the trains would have been packed with travellers leaving town for the Holy Week holiday.

The chairman of Spanish state railway company Renfe Miguel Corsini took the first high-speed service to Seville to show it was safe. The train arrived without incident.

El Pais newspaper reported that Spain is the main al Qaeda base in Europe and said police believed al Qaeda could strike again here.

Spain was once used as a rear base by Islamic militants, but having failed with attempted attacks in other European countries, "sleepers" were now carrying out operations in Spain, it said. Police suspected 200 people in Spain of cooperating with radical Islamist groups, it said.

## HUNDREDS OF DEATHS AVERTED

The latest bomb, attached to a detonator with a 136-metre cable, was spotted by railway workers about 60 km (35 miles) south of Madrid on Friday. Investigators believe attackers planned to derail a high-speed train.

If the plan had worked, Spanish newspapers said, hundreds of people could have been killed.

Spanish authorities, anxious to reassure citizens, ordered the army to help protect the high-speed railway and other key installations, using helicopters and armoured vehicles.

In Britain, a Department of Transport spokesman said the department had taken note of developments in Spain.

"What has been announced in Madrid today will be considered with a view towards lessons to be learned, and this will be fed into our security regime," he said.

Spain's outgoing Popular Party government declined to speculate on who planted the latest bomb.

But Spanish newspapers pointed the finger at Islamic militants and said, if this theory was confirmed, it posed a grave security problem for Spain.

The challenge will fall to Spain's incoming Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, who takes office later this month after a surprise victory in a general election held three days after the Madrid bombings.

Zapatero has promised to pull out Spain's 1,300 troops from Iraq if the United Nations does not take charge there by the end of June, undoing the policy of outgoing pro-American Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar.

El Pais said the similar dynamite and detonator used in Friday's bomb and the March 11 Madrid bombs "suggests that in both cases it is the same terrorist organisation, supposedly the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group."

Spain has identified the militant Islamic group as the prime suspect in the March 11 bombings.

Several newspapers reported that the Spanish embassy in Egypt had recently received a letter signed by the Abu Hafis al-Masri Brigades and al Qaeda threatening to attack embassies, consulates and other Spanish interests in north Africa and the southern and eastern Mediterranean region.

The letter said the attacks could be avoided if Spain withdrew its soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan in the next four weeks, El Mundo reported.

A letter sent to a London-based Arabic newspaper on March 11 claimed responsibility for the Madrid train attacks on behalf of the Abu Hafis al-Masri Brigades — a group that aligns itself to Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda network.

Spain is holding 15 people, many of them Moroccan, over the March 11 Madrid attacks.

# Slovaks vote for president and on referendum

BRATISLAVA, April 3 (Reuters) - Slovaks voted for a new president on Saturday in the first round of a ballot that could ease the country's EU accession or open the door for a political comeback by Brussels' authoritarian bete noire Vladimir Meciar.

In an embarrassment for centre-right Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda a month before he takes the former Communist state into the European Union, voters are also casting ballots in a referendum — albeit largely symbolic and probably doomed — that calls for a parliamentary election to get rid of him.

Nationalist former prime minister Meciar, who crossed swords with the EU over human rights, is bidding for a comeback in the mostly ceremonial presidency. Dzurinda's foreign minister Eduard Kukan has been running just ahead of him in opinion polls.

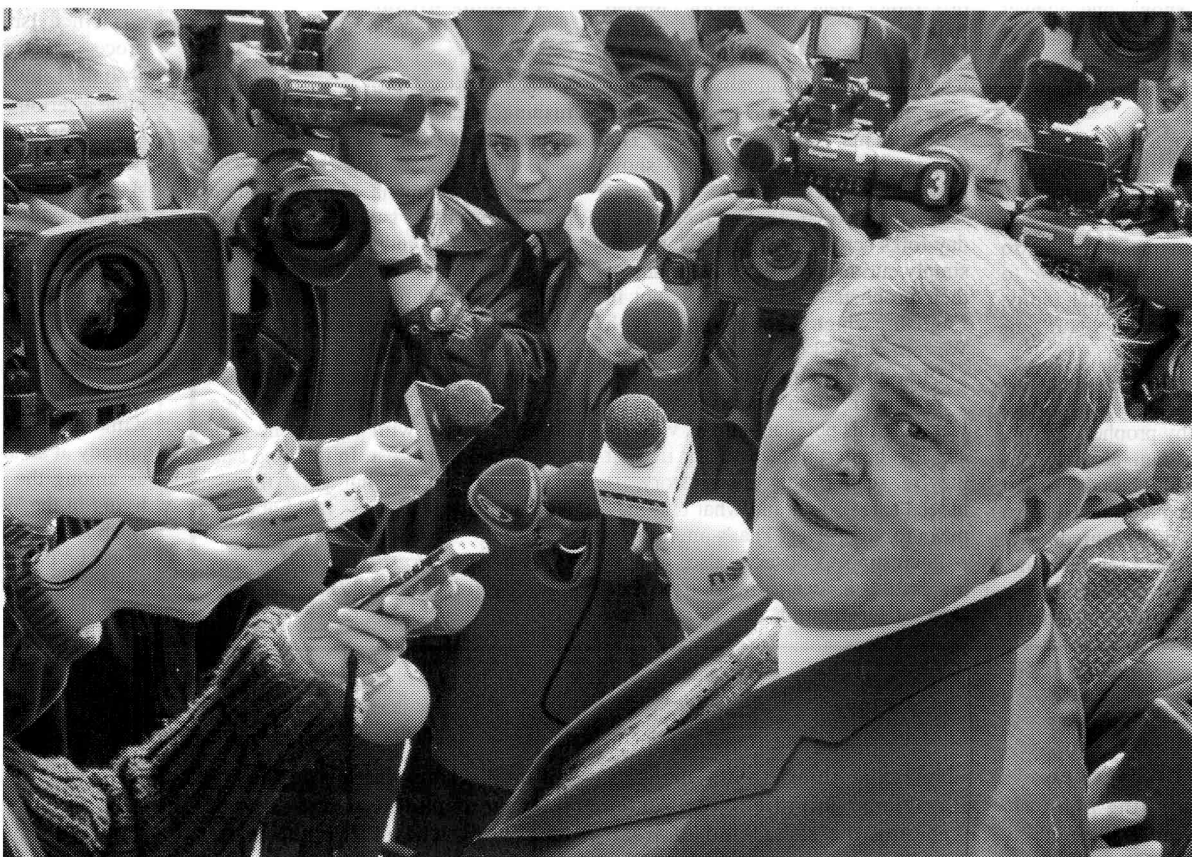
Polling stations close at 10 p.m. (2000 GMT) and preliminary results are not expected until Sunday.

Kukan has run on a pledge to help finish painful free market reforms and become a respected member of the EU, which Slovakia joins on May 1 along with nine other mostly eastern countries.

Kukan led Meciar in opinion polls, with support near 30 percent to about 25 percent for the former prime minister. A runoff on April 17 will be required if none of the candidates, who include the incumbent Rudolf Schuster, score 50 percent.

A Meciar win could force an awkward standoff with NATO, which Slovakia joined on Friday, and with the EU.

Meciar could use the presidential veto to disrupt efforts by Dzurinda's minority, four-party coalition to overhaul the education, healthcare and other sectors. But he said on Saturday he had revised some of his views since



Former Slovak Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar looks back while answering reporter's questions in front of a Bratislava polling station, April 3, after casting his vote in the first round of presidential elections. Meciar and Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan are the two favoured candidates for second round of voting.

REUTERS

losing office in 1998.

"I have changed. I've had different experiences since the last (elections)," Meciar said after casting his own ballot.

"I think Meciar had his chance to show what he could do, and we saw what happened. His time is over," said one voter, Robert Paulicky, 25, from the southern town of Velky Krtis.

## REFERENDUM ON GOVERNMENT

REFERENDUM ON GOVERNMENT

Rising public anger at government belt-tightening has prompted the referendum on an early parliamentary elec-

tion, promoted by the opposition and authorised by President Schuster, a former Communist who has been at odds with Dzurinda.

It is not expected to succeed, however, and even if voters were to support it, the government would be unlikely to fall.

Low turnout poses a first hurdle. At least 50 percent of the electorate must take part for its result to be valid and that seems unlikely.

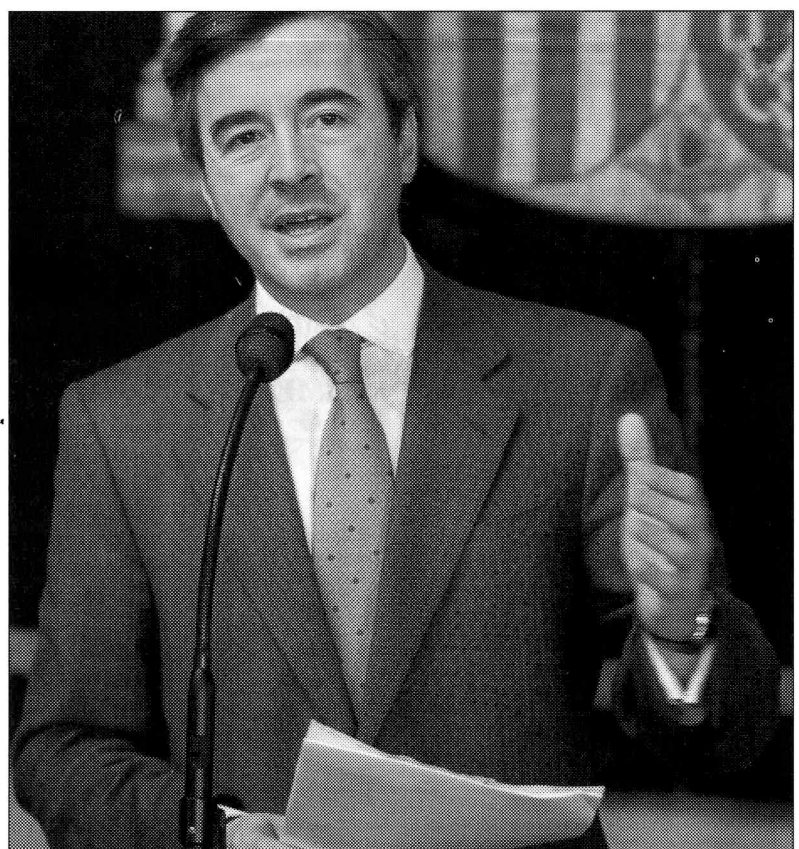
At one Bratislava polling station about a quarter of registered voters turned out in the morning, in line with other elections. But in another part of

the building, where referendum ballots were being cast, an official said turnout was very low.

"I did not go to the referendum, and I will not," said Kukan as he cast his presidential ballot.

Even if the referendum motion wins sufficient support, Dzurinda's controls enough seats in parliament to block the necessary two-thirds majority required to dissolve the chamber. The next parliamentary election is not due until 2006.

Schuster is running a distant fourth in polls behind Ivan Gasparovic, a former Meciar ally.



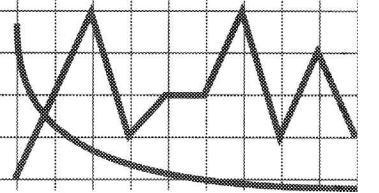
Spain's Interior Minister Angel Acebes answers a question during a news conference in Madrid April 3. Acebes said the dynamite in a bomb found on a high-speed rail track on Friday is of the same type and brand as used in March 11 bombings of four Madrid commuter trains that killed 191 people.

REUTERS





# YT Business



## Yemen and the need for economic assistance

BY YASSER AL-MAYASI  
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Yemen, during the Paris Donor Conference, held at the Headquarter of the World Bank in Paris from 16-17 October 2003, called for a genuine partnership with Yemen towards integration and to increase mutual benefits. The Yemeni delegation to the conference reviewed the outcome of economic, political, financial, administrative and legal developments Yemen had witnessed in the frame of economic, financial and administrative reforms following the 1.4 billion USD granted to Yemen by the two donor conferences held in Paris and Brussels during 1996-1997. Yemen was able to obtain promises for 2.3 billion USD to support development projects and strategic plans to ease poverty during 2003-2005.

Yemen, for years, has been seeking to achieve economic development through the implementation of economic, financial and administrative reform programs. It has achieved positive results accompanied by some problems for low-income families. However, the terrorist related security problems such as the kidnapping of tourists, the bombing of USS Cole and the French oil tanker Limburg had a negative impact on Yemen.



Yemen, since the adaptation of various reform programs, was able to achieve an economic growth rate of an annual average of 5.5%, to reduce the general fiscal budget and achieve a surplus of 7.1 in 2000 and 1.3% in 2001. The inflation rate dropped from 49.2% to 11.9% in 2001, accompanied by a

stable exchange rate and the increase of foreign exchange reserves to USD 4 billion and the reduction of foreign debt to USD 4.8 billion, while achieving a surplus in the total economic balances.

With regards to administrative aspects, Yemen witnessed establishing an information database on state employees, implementing the employment census and the commencement of rationing the state administrative apparatus. It has begun the restructuring of some of its economic sectors and has made progress in detecting and eliminating duality of jobs, in addition to motivating the investment and exporting competition capabilities of the private sector and the development of ports.

Yemen, during the conference demanded an additional USD 750 million to guard its coastal areas and ports from terrorist activities and to establish a coast guard.

While Yemen receives support from foreign countries, the support received from Arab countries does not reach the expected level, considering that Yemen is a natural and strategic partner for countries in the region. Yemen continues to face investment shortages and financial shortfalls in efforts to alleviate the consequences of financial and economic reforms on the poorest sections of society. Yemen needs YR 413.4 billion during the next three years to cover expenses of the Social Safety Network and national strategy to ease poverty.

## Returnee families shocked by tightfisted assistance

BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Families returning from expatriation described as tightfisted the monthly assistance granted to them by the government pursuant to the law of expatriates care, as too small to meet expenditure of a family of five members for five days when spending at minimum level on food stuffs, lodging and clothes.

Those also mention that the article of assistance grants each afflicted returning family from expatriation an sum of 3 thousand Yemeni riyals a month while the family needs 2 sacks of wheat costing 5 thousand riyals, on sack of flour worth 2500 riyals, other food stuffs worth 10 thousand riyals and 8 thousand riyals for lodging, added to that payment of water, electricity, and telephone bills at an average of 5 thousand riyals. The total amounts to 30,500 thousand riyals.

Hose returnee families have clarified that the total assistance for each family is 36 thousand riyals sum a year offered in 12 installments and if the sum was paid in one month it would not pay for requirements of the family for thirty days.

Those families believe that the flaw is with the law of expatriates care that has limited the volume of assistance

with tightfisted sums of money despite the existing propaganda about the privileges mentioned in the same law.

It is to be noted that the families returning to the homeland live in poor residential quarters where there are no health, education, electricity and even water and telephone services. And this situation puts on them more suffering and homelessness. Some of these families that are well-to-do usually build for themselves houses in areas ate the outskirts of the cities and rarely their situations are treated or assistance is offered to them to face the difficult living circumstances.

On the other hand the returning families that possess financial assets deposited at the national banks, even if they faced distressed states in the courtiers of expatriation, they have a chance at home to re-adapt their life to the new circumstances and to begin running new investment projects by which they can gain profits supporting their general expenditures.

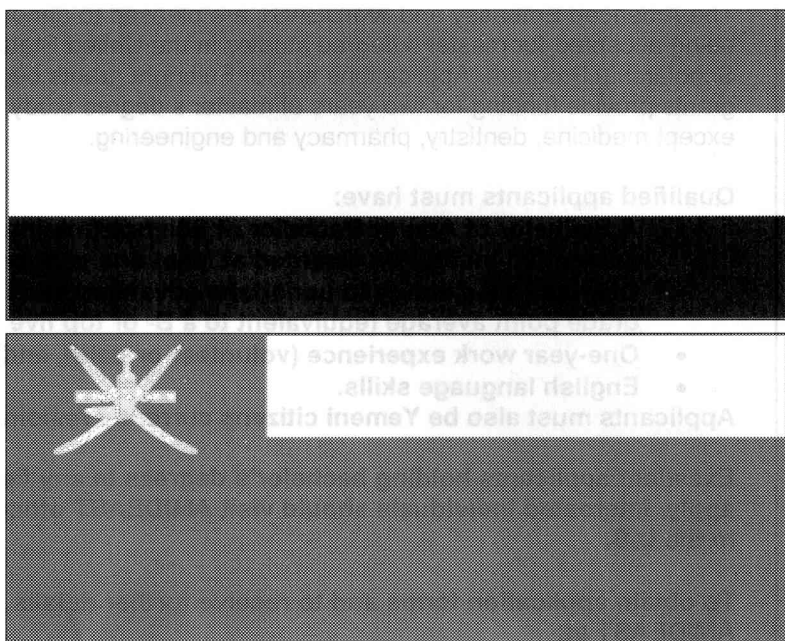
According to those returning families, there is a necessity to reconsider the amount of monthly financial assistance decided for the distressed families and the concerned authorities have to work in this direction to ensure the minimum level if living for those back home.

## Yemen and Oman, Exchange of expertise in fish research

BY MAHYOUB AL-KAMALI  
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

Yemeni-Omani talks held by an Omani delegation headed by the minister of agriculture and fish wealth Sheikh Salem bin Hillal, during a recent visit to Sana'a, focused on the two countries cooperation in fish research, studies on fish reserve and cooperation in monitoring and inspection as well as quality in fish production.

The Omani side agreed during its meetings Yemeni officials in Sana'a on exchange of expertise in the area of fish wealth and the two sides reviewed the areas where the private sector in both countries can invest as well as industrialization and marketing. During a meeting with Mr Mohammed Mujwir,



Yemen's minister of fish wealth, the Omani delegation got acquainted with areas of cooperation and discussed the best ways for enhancing relations and partnership in investment in available for businessmen in both countries.

Yemen's fish market is considered an extension of Omani markets and here are good opportunities for increasing exports of the two countries and also the volume of trade exchange, especially that the Omani products receive a good demand from the Yemeni consumers.

Trade indicators in the two countries reveal that Omani imports from Yemen during the period 1998-2002 has grown at an average of 36.8% while the Omani exports to Yemen dropped by annual rate of 22.2%.

Yemen has jumped to occupy the 49<sup>th</sup> instead of the 52<sup>nd</sup> of the coun-

tries that export to Oman. This progress has contributed to an increase in the value of revenues from the Sultanate by 97.7% amounting to about 2.9 Omani riyals in the year 2001. This proportion represents 0.1% of the total imports of the Sultanate of Oman, amounting to OR 2309.1 million.

Yemen had in 2002 retreated from the third position to the 12<sup>th</sup> in the arrangement of the 125 countries importing from the Sultanate. The value of non-oil exports has then dropped by 72.2%.

It is to be noted that the balance of trade between the two countries was, in the period 1998-2002, tilted in favour of the Sultanate of Oman. The surplus in the balance of trade of Oman in Yemen was; OR 51.6 million, 34 million, 57.2 million, 67.9 million and 16.4 million consecutively.

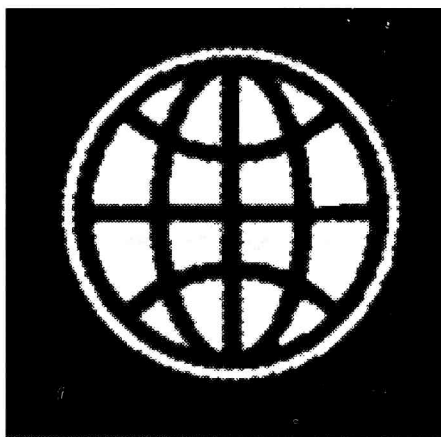
## WB Announces Global Learning Conference to Fight Poverty

Sana'a, March 23, 2004. As part of a global learning process that aims to step up efforts in reducing poverty by assessing best practices and sharing valuable knowledge among developing countries, officials from the World Bank and the Government of China today announced a conference to be held in Shanghai next May 25-27.

The World Bank, along with its partners, is sponsoring this conference because it is critical to "unlock" knowledge in order to expand or "scale-up" development results across regions and countries. For the first time developing country practitioners and policy makers from around the world will share their expertise about what works, what doesn't, and why, analyzing 70 cases of poverty reduction, and identifying key success factors throughout those efforts.

In the Middle East and North Africa region, case studies are being drawn from Egypt, Iran, Morocco and Yemen where efforts to address the needs of poor communities in health, education, micro finance and rural infrastructure have yielded concrete results. The case study of Egypt, for example, demonstrates how girls' school enrollment in rural areas increased in the late 1990s as a result of government efforts to build schools for girls in remote areas and raise local communities' awareness about the benefits of girls' education.

The main goals of the Conference are to uncover the economic, social, and governance components that enabled some countries to reduce



field visits to project sites in Bangladesh, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Turkey, Uganda, and Yemen.

The field visit to Yemen took place earlier this month in which local and international development practitioners toured projects supported by the Social Fund for Development—a leading development agency in a country where nearly half of the 18.8 million people live in poverty. During the three-day learning event, development practitioners from countries like Japan, Nicaragua, Bangladesh and Morocco had a first-hand glimpse of how the Social Fund mechanism adopted by the Government of Yemen since 1997 has been successful in delivering basic services to the poor with the participation of local communities.

The Conference in Shanghai is expected to bring some 600 participants together around a series of case studies illustrating successful and not so successful examples, providing high visibility to approaches that really worked in reducing poverty on a large scale within various economic, social, and institutional contexts.

### Yemen: Social Fund for Development

Constrained by weak government capacity to deliver social services, the Government of Yemen developed an effective way to provide basic services through the Social Fund. This case study reviews the impact of the Social Fund's support to education, health, and water supply and sanitation in poor communities.

Exchange Rate for the Yemeni Rial		
Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	184.4400	184.6700
Sterling Pound	336.4600	336.8800
Euro	225.1700	225.4500
Saudi Rial	49.1800	49.2400
Kuwaiti Dinar	625.6900	626.4700
UAE Dirhem	50.2200	50.2800
Egyptian Pound	29.7900	29.8300
Bahraini Dinar	489.2300	489.8400
Qatari Rial	50.6600	50.7300
Jordanian Dinar	260.1400	260.4700
Omani Rial	479.1100	479.7100
Swiss Franc	144.1100	144.2900
Swedish Crown	24.2900	24.3200
Japanese Yen	1.7436	1.7458

Source: Central Bank of Yemen

# Diversity of Animals and Wildlife in Yemen



BY YASSER AL-MAYASI  
YEMEN TIMES STAFF

**B**iological diversity refers to the many kinds of species living in land and marine ecosystems. It is known as the various natural operations of which living things are integral parts. Human's daily life depends on this biological diversity,

through having healthy environments and a number of natural resources used as sources of food, medicine and important products.

In order to protect this vital diversification, to maintain sustainable uses of the natural resources and to share fairly and justly the consequent benefits of using genetic resources the International Biological Agreement, in its final form reached in Nairobi, Kenya, in May 1992, became effective as of 29 December 1993. The process to the agreement had begun in July 1992,

during the United Nations Development and Environment Conference (Earth Summit), held in Rio De Janeiro. The Republic of Yemen subscribed to the agreement and became the 118<sup>th</sup> state to join the agreement.

Yemen possesses a unique environmental system consisting of many environments and it is considered to be of the richest countries of the western region in terms of biological diversity.

The different environmental systems, due to the special geographical location

of the country, provide Yemen many with many natural environments and a high degree of biological diversity. There are more than 3000 kinds of heterogeneous plants in Yemen. According to a recent study, there are 850 different plants in Socotra Island alone, of which 293 settled plants are known. Many of these plants withstand severe climatic changes whilst settled on mountainous regions.

The location of Yemen at the junction of three vital regions and the large number of environments, from high mountains, valleys, deserts, swamps, oases and coastal regions to volcanic islands, are factors contributing to Yemen's rich animal diversity. There are 71 kinds of mammals descending from 8 different animal species and five kinds of deer registered in Yemen. About 370-400 kinds of birds have been spotted in Yemen, whether nesting or resting during birds' migration in different seasons.

Few studies have been conducted on amphibians and reptiles. 117 and 109 amphibians and reptiles respectively have been spotted in Yemen nevertheless.

Yemen has now six natural protected areas with high significant characteristics for tourism. They are Ottemah (central), Hawf Al-Sahel (near Oman), Bara Mountain, Beer Ali, the Sharmah coastal region (west) and the Socotra Archipelago.



A view of Utma wildlife

## Honoring Novelist Lila Othman in Aden

**A**den University honored Kuwaiti novelist Lila Othman last Monday in a ceremony during which Dean of Aden University Dr. Abdulkareem Rasa presented the novelist with the University Merit award.

The Dean in his address pointed out that this honor was in appreciation and acknowledgment of her respected status as a writer and novelist. She has enriched Arab libraries with important books placing her in the front row, not only at the level of her home country but also at the Arab and international levels. She stands beside the impor-

tant Yemeni poet Zaid Damaj in the list of major Arab novelists.

The Kuwaiti novelist valued and appreciated the honor. She talked about her long experiment and suffering in writing stories and read some excerpts from her works.

The ceremony was attended by the Deans of the Aden Faculties.

## Yemen-European Jazz Musical Band

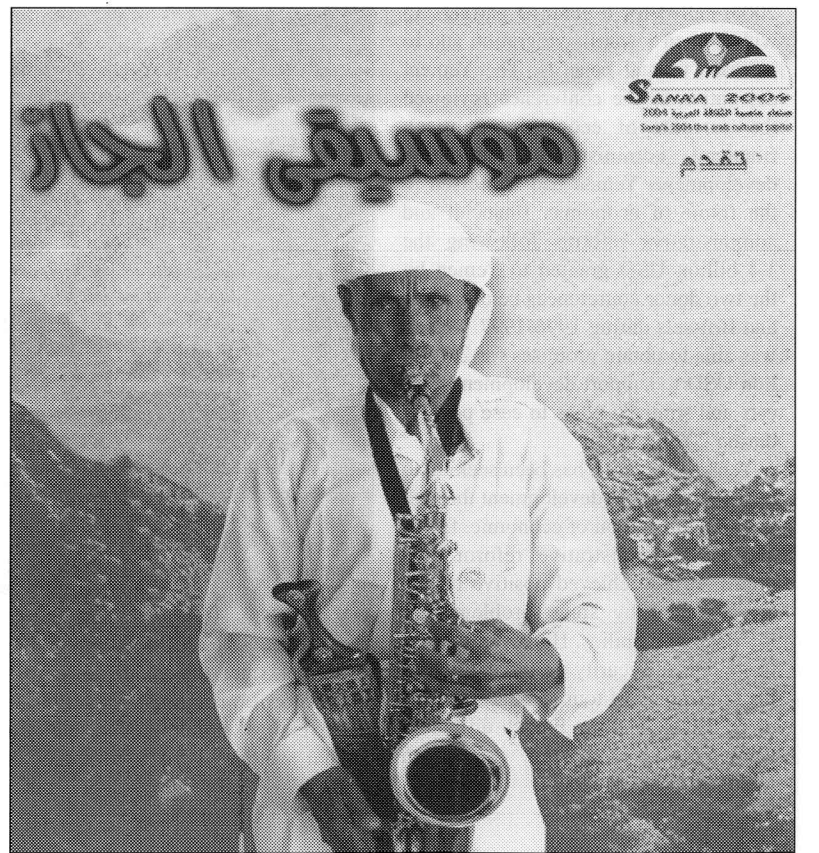
BY YEMEN TIMES STAFF

**O**n Saturday 27 March, the Ambassadors of Italy, France, Germany and United Kingdom announced, during a press conference, the launch of a jazz musical project in Yemen as a European contribution to the activities of Sana'a, the Arab Cultural Capital. The project will create a cultural affinity and dialogue between civilizations through music, said the French Ambassador.

The statements of the Ambassadors confirmed that this exciting musical initiative developed following a previous experiment in October last year when two musicians, from France and Germany, came to Sana'a and worked

with Yemeni musicians and created a unique mix of Yemeni folkloric music and European jazz. This year, it will be repeated on a larger scale by five of the best European jazz musicians, representing four European countries.

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the above-mentioned Embassies, Artists Tommy Smith (Scotland), Furio de Castri (Italy), Oliver Steidle (Germany) and Loic Dequid and Bastien Lagatta (France), along with Roweida Al-Haj (Aden), Ali Al-Assadi and Jaber Ali (Sana'a), Shubeily Mohamed (Hodiedah) and Adel Hassan Othman (Hadramout) will conduct live and free musical performances in Sayoun, Hodiedah, Taiz, Aden and Sana'a during 29 March - 8 April 2004.



## وظائف شاعرة في مجال الطباعة

توجد وظائف شاعرة في مجال طباعة أوفست بآلات حديثة في مدينة صنعاء.

على أن تتوفر في المتقدمين الشروط التالية:

- 1- خبرة لا تقل عن خمس سنوات في مجال الطباعة.
- 2- معرفة ولو متوسطة بكيفية تشغيل آلات التعطيف والقص وتنوير معالجة البليتات.
- 3- الإستعداد للعمل في أوقات متأخرة من الليل إذا إقتضت ظروف العمل للسهر ومتابعة العمل.
- 4- معرفة كاملة بمواد الطباعة (أحبار وأحماض وزيوت...) وكيفية تبديلها.
- 5- خبرة في صيانة وتنظيف آلات الطباعة.

هناك إمكانية تدريب المقبولين للوظيفة.

على من يستوفي الشروط أعلاه ويجد في نفسه الكفاءة أن يتقدم للوظيفة

عبر الاتصال على الهاتف التالي ٧١٩٤٨١٤٠ لتحديد موعد للمقابلة

FULBRIGHT

AMIDEAST  
اميداست

STUDY IN THE USA!  
MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS

The American Embassy and AMIDEAST are pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted for master's degree studies in the United States under the J. William Fulbright Scholarship Program. Applications are for Fulbright grants beginning January 2005. Fulbright grants provide funding for two years of master's degree study in the U.S. in all fields of study except medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and engineering.

Qualified applicants must have:

- A Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science (minimum four-year degree) from an accredited institution awarded at least one year prior to application,
- Demonstrated ability to undertake advanced studies with "Very Good" or higher grade point average (equivalent to a B- or top five percent of graduating class),
- One-year work experience (volunteer or paid), and
- English language skills.

Applicants must also be Yemeni citizens currently residing and working in Yemen.

Excellent applicants holding bachelor's degrees in any field of study are welcome to apply. Interested individuals should visit AMIDEAST offices to learn more about studying in the U.S.

To obtain application forms and to receive further details, please visit or contact AMIDEAST at:

► AMIDEAST Sana'a: Algiers St. #66, P.O. Box 15508, Sana'a. Tel. 01-400-279. Fax: 01-206-942. E-mail: [yemen@amideast.org](mailto:yemen@amideast.org)

► AMIDEAST Aden: 162 Miswat St., P.O. Box 6009, Khormaksar, Aden. Tel/Fax. 02-232-345. E-mail: [aden@amideast.org](mailto:aden@amideast.org)

Complete application submissions must include:

1. The Fulbright application form, available at AMIDEAST;
2. Contact information, including phone number(s) and mailing addresses;
3. An International or ITP TOEFL® score of 550 (scores may not be older than 2 years from date of application);
4. Certified copies in English of all undergraduate transcripts and undergraduate diplomas or certificates of graduation;
5. Three letters of recommendation in English from individuals familiar with the applicant's achievements; and
6. Three recent passport-sized photos.

NOTE: Applicants who do not have a valid Paper-Based TOEFL® score should contact AMIDEAST immediately to arrange for an ITP TOEFL® examination.

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**Contraception in Yemen:**

# Challenges and strategies for intervention

By DR. NABIL AL-SOUFI  
USA

According to UNICEF, Yemen has the second highest fertility rate in the world. The population has doubled in the last 15 years to become 20.5 million and it is estimated that the current number will double again in 20 years. We get a better feeling of how serious this number is if we remember that the population of Sweden (8.5 million) is expected to double in a period of 4077 years. High child-bearing rates have adverse health effects on women's and children's health as it is well known that such rates lead to higher infant mortality and higher maternal mortality rates. Bigger families also reduce the chances for adequate nutrition, adequate education, and the overall parental and societal care for children. A woman with more children has diminished chances for education and employment. As Yemen has limited natural resources, the exploding population is a serious problem that challenges successive governments. This problem has aggravated the economic effects of the unreasonable misunderstanding of Yemen's position towards the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the dishonorable divisive war in 1994.

At the 1991 population conference Yemen adopted a national strategy to reduce fertility rates to 6.5% and raise

contraception use from 10% to 35%. While fertility rates had dropped from 7.5 to 6.5 (it is debatable whether or not this was the result of the government-adopted policy), rates of contraception use were still only at 20% according to the Health and Demographic Survey in 1997. Furthermore, only 50% of these women were using modern methods. The most popular contraception method is the pill (40%), followed by intrauterine device (30%), female sterilization (14%) and injections (12%).

**Percentage distribution of currently married women who are non-users,\* by reason for nonuse, according to age.**

*Yemen Demographic and Health Survey, 1997*

\* Refers to women who are not using contraceptives and who do not intend to use them in the future

The leading reported reason for Yemeni women not to use contraception is their desire to have more chil-

Reason for non-use	Age		Total
	< 30	30+	
Wants children	33.7	13.4	22.6
Religious prohibition	17.1	17.3	17.2
Fears side effects	11.4	12.4	11.9
Partner opposed	10.6	7.8	9.1
Lacks knowledge	6.4	6.9	6.7
Health concerns	5.8	9.3	7.7
Opposed to family planning	2.3	1.8	2.0
Knows no source	1.4	1.2	1.3
Up to God	1.4	2.3	1.9
Difficult to obtain	1.2	.06	.09
Menopausal/hysterectomy	.3	8.2	4.6
Cost	.6	1.2	1.0

In order to craft a good public health intervention, we should first look at the reasons that make Yemeni women reluctant to use contraception. Those reasons, reported in Yemen's Demographic and Health Survey (YDHS) of 1997, are shown in the table below:

YDHS does not show the rural-urban differences as to why those women want many children. The reasons that compel rural women to have more children may differ for urban women, and any intervention should be attuned to peoples' specific situations. It is well established that high infant

mortality rates lead to high fertility rates, in part, because couples try to compensate for infant deaths they have witnessed or experienced. Large families, in turn, reduce the ability of poor parents to invest adequately in the health and education of each child. A reduction in infant mortality can create an environment in which couples feel less compelled to maintain high fertility levels to ensure the survival of at least some children. As a result, parents will be able to invest more in each child at any income level. On the other hand, women who practise family planning can avoid high-risk births and therefore reduce their chances of having a baby who will die in infancy. While it is true that infant mortality can be reduced through providing better health care, another important factor is the educational level of mothers. The Yemen Demographic Survey of 1997 showed that education level was negatively correlated with infant mortality rates. This is because educated women are more likely to provide good care for their children and are more likely to seek medical help for a sick child. According to the World Bank, educated parents have better nourished children who are less likely to die in infancy than the children of uneducated parents. On average, one additional year of schooling for a mother results in 9/1000 reduction in child or infant mortality. Whilst this may be accurate to some extent, we should be careful in



generalizing in all situations. This is because some people can't afford adequate nourishment for their children regardless of the educational level of mothers. In addition, Yemeni men usually make decisions as to what food items to buy for the family or when a sick child should be taken to the clinic. Women may have the right knowledge about such matters, but they may be unable to implement their ideas without a man's permission.

There is considerable research showing that factors such as education, female empowerment, female employment, access to health service-

es etc. are positively correlated to women's use of modern contraception methods regardless of the reason reported. There should be a broad campaign that involves local leaders promoting small families, religious referents explaining Islam's permissive law with regards to contraception and doctors informing the public about modern and safe methods. Family planning is not an issue that can or should not be dealt with by the Government alone, it is a matter of family affair that should get a great deal of public involvement.

**Shura council**

# Health insurance on the way

By FAHMIA AL-FOTIH  
FOR YEMEN TIMES

The idea of health insurance has been established for 15 years and the competition was between the Health Ministry and the Social Affairs Ministry to adopt and implement the idea. They settled that the Ministry of Social Affairs would take care of the project. However, the project of health insurance did not see the light for a number of reasons and the lack of human resources, funds and experience of the employees of the Ministry of Social Affairs then.

Nowadays, the Al-Shura Council, headed by Mr. Abdulaziz Abdulghani, the Chairman of the Council, started on 22 March discussion of health insurance report that was prepared by the Committee of Health and Population at the Council.

The members of the Council listened to the report presented by the Head of the Health and Population

Committee, which explained the necessity of implementing the health insurance system in Yemen to ensure developed health services for all the members of the society.

The report also pointed to the importance of health insurance socially and its advantages and merits in improving the quality of health services and deepening the concept of partnership between the state and the citizen.

Moreover, the report mentioned the successes that have been achieved in the medical field through the past two decades due to the attention that President Ali Abdullah Saleh has paid to the health sector.

The report further revealed in the attached charts and tables how much the government pays to the health sector in Yemen and the number of the qualified medical cadre, as well as the specialists who work in this field. It showed also how much the government spends on medical projects spread over different governorates in addition to the providing primary instruments and devices to offer excel-



Panel chaired by chairman of the Shura Council Abdulaziz Abdulghani during discussion of health insurance report prepared by Health and Population Committee at the council

lent medical services to citizens.

The report pointed to the importance of the health insurance in Yemen due to the speedy changes that the society has witnessed, besides the increasing population growth and grounding on the constitutional items that stress that education, health and

social services are essential elements to build the society and provide for its development, and that government and society should take part in providing them.

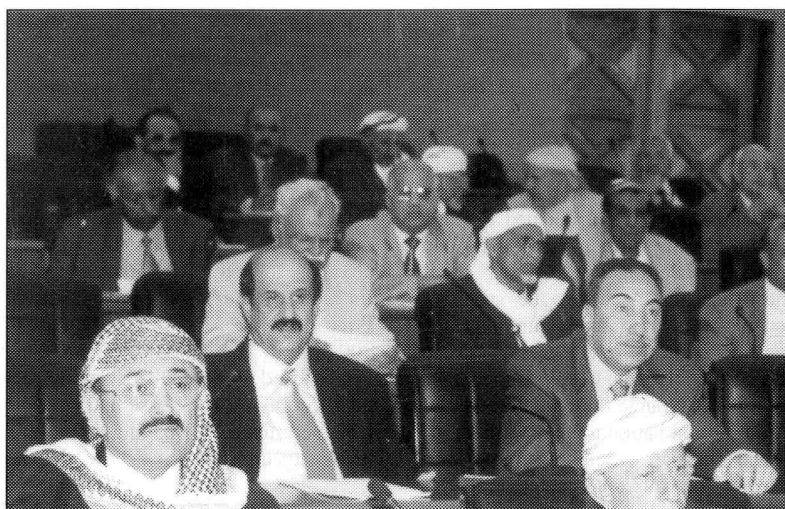
The report indicated that the insurance system should be applied gradually due to the capabilities and capaci-

ties of citizens.

Moreover, the report mentioned the steps that governmental and concerned bodies had taken to pave the way to the health insurance project to meet the plan of medical development, as well as the treaties that emerged from

the national conferences, workshops and consulting meetings.

The recommendations of the report stressed the importance of quickly ratifying the health and social insurance proposals to offer services with standard conditions and levels.



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**Note :**

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# Local Press

Prepared by Mohammed Khidhr



26 September weekly,  
organ of Yemen Armed  
Forces, 1 Apr 2004.

## Main headlines

- Vice-president stresses on Sudan's territorial unity and stability
- Ali Abdullah Saleh and Putin discuss bilateral relations and regional and international developments
- On conclusion of his visit to China, PM Bajammal: Yemeni-Chinese relations strong, discussing investment projects worth half billion dollars
- Fund for combating smuggled medicines
- Accuses of terror issues sent to court
- Inauguration of the third deployment plan within two weeks

Columnist Yahya Saleh al-Shawkani says in his article the dispute that happened at the Arab foreign ministers conference in Tunis and resulted in postponing the convening of the summit has reflected clearly the very bitter reality the Arab nation has reached and has never witnessed even in the darkest circumstances the nation experienced before. Our country has realized this regrettable reality and the dangerous situation. In an attempt to reform that reality president Ali Abdulla Saleh launched our country's initiative to reform the situation of the Arab League with the aim of salvaging the nation from its reality and mending the structure that gathers it before its collapse. Regrettably the chance for our initiative to see the light was not provided in the floundering summit.



Annas weekly, 29 Mar 2004.

## Main headlines

- A gang of teenagers kills a child, motives unknown
- Deputies and officials in local governance in Jawf demand investigation into embezzlement of YR 850 million
- Medicines makers participate in smuggling them
- Yemeni businessmen met the Thai trade delegation at Sana'a chamber of commerce and industry
- Yemeni customs stops shipments of Saudi potatoes at two border crossings

Columnist Dr Hassan al-Jawshaia says the fall of the Spanish prime minister José Aznar in the elections in his country was a shock by all means not only for the conservatives party in Spain but also to his colleagues of the trio of tyranny, Bush and Blair who are waiting the same destiny of Aznar. In America it was an eye-catching development concerning the successive victories of the Democratic Party candidate for the American presidential elections John Kerry, and none can be suspicious that he would be the next American president, especially after the disclosure of Bush's policy and his non-truthfulness before his people. Observers believe that the year 2004 would see great global changes especially for trio of tyranny. It has begun with Spain and surely would continue through Washington and rest in London. The changes may include Canada, Australia, Japan and the rest of the countries that fell to the tricks of that trio and got stuck in the Iraqi quick sands.



Al-Wahdawi weekly,  
organ of the Nasserite  
Unionist Organisation,  
30 mar 2004.

## Main headlines

- Soufan justifies rise of diesel price to avoid water exhaustion
- Mysterious disappearance of a student from Aden University
- Soldiers storm a citizen's house in Hodeidah
- Regional workshop for creating partnership between humanitarian and media work

Columnist Abdurraqeab Saif Fateh writes saying since the beginning Tunisia was hesitant regarding the holding of the summit on its territories and after deliberations it has accepted under pressure of the Arab League. Though we are aware of the importance of the venue of holding the summit and its impact on its decisions and its success or failure but the responsibility for the failure of the meeting of the Arab rulers is mainly on the rulers themselves not only Tunisia whose share is bigger as it is the host country. We acknowledge that the Arab rulers are coming under pressures, whether they are in orient or in the west, particularly

## Main headlines

- Al-Zindani criticizes the American ambassador, YSO confirms the presence of terrorist organizations working underground
- Opposition studies an initiative for political reform
- President Saleh visits Germany for routine medical check-ups and visits Russia
- Postponement of the Arab summit, one of two bitter options
- Parliamentary committee inspects prisons
- Yemen-China, Signing seven development agreements
- FM: Postponement of the Arab summit won't affect Arab joint action
- Sisterly countries ask Yemen's help in demining
- Yemen, Omani businessmen demand removal of existing impediments and implementing agreements
- Saudi promises for dealing with Yemeni labour situation
- Parliamentary report: Yemeni universities drowned in corruption
- Postponement of the Arab summit disappointed the Arabs
- Polluted waters raise proportion of fatality in Yemen
- America's Arabs aborted the summit in Tunis
- The government carries out its dose in April
- Advocates of political reform in Saudi Arabia arrested
- In Falluja confrontations, the resistance kill 20 Americans, capture 30, among them a general
- Security foils promotion of sex trade between Sana'a and Baghdad
- Sharm el-Sheikh meetings to determine fate of the Arab summit
- Under absence of national initiatives GPC prefers the European initiative, opposition rejects any external initiative
- Ben Ali refuses to meet the Arab foreign ministers after his postponement of the summit
- Cairo holds Tunisia responsible for postponement of the summit
- Collapse of the Arab Order, state of quietness engulfs the Arab capitals
- Yemeni-Russian summit in Moscow
- New oil discovery in Hadramout

after the Libyan retraction and its regime's keenness to join the west. The core is that our rulers have been prevented even from holding a mere meeting whose results are known beforehand as we regretfully realize that the ban was external.



Al-Nahar weekly, 1 April 2004.

## Main headlines

- Al-Zindani renews his readiness to stand before court to confute American charges
- UNESCO's regional symposium on governance and alleviation of poverty
- Training course for economic editors concluded

Columnist Abdulbari Tahir says in his article the Israeli and American terror is stepped up and their feeling increases that the resistance in Iraq and Palestine embodies the national and Islamic dimension and the international that refuses occupation and colonization. Israel intends to destroy the Palestinian resistance and efface the Palestinian cause and impose surrender on the Arab nation. America, meanwhile wants to market the logic of preemptive war and impose domination of the one pole on the globe and monopolize the logic of power in facing various peoples and nations of the world.

What arouses our surprise and astonishment is the obtuseness of the feeling of the Arab ruling system. This system perceives well that majority of its states came to power for Factors such as resisting colonization and liberation of the land, restoration of the Palestinian land and preservation of sovereignty and independence. Continuation of the aggression and colonialist war on Iraq and Palestine does undermine the legitimacy of their system and prepares the land for new forces and new legitimacies now being under establishment amidst the cauldron of the war that would surely not be confined to the boundaries of Iraq and Palestine. The Arab region is prepared for inflammation and what is perpetrated by Israel and America is pouring more oil on a burning land and ready for explosion because of the aggression on the national and human dignity and because of the corruption and surrender of the outdated and despotic Arab regimes that fall to their knees before the invading armies but act ferociously in confronting the will and aspirations of their nation.



RAY weekly, organ of  
the Sons of Yemen  
League party, 30 Mar 2004.

## Main headlines

- Postponement of Tunis summit disappointed the Arabs and increased divi-

sion and differences

- The Woman Forum breaks silence

Columnist Faisal al-Soufi says in his article the process of reform in the Arab world is demanded and necessary. The reforms are wanted regardless of who are demanding the regimes; peoples and domestic forces or foreign forces. Those who are demanding the Arab regimes to effect internal reforms do not go beyond from providing the opportunity of participation, equality and recognition of the principles of freedom and the people's rights to elects their rulers and their right to improve their situations and opening horizons for the poor to change their situations that have been as they are for hundreds of years.

These are very ordinary demands and the Arab regimes should feel ashamed that they have not allowed the achievement of these demands fifty years before.

The Arab regimes are demanded to realize freedom, justice, equality and human rights that no individuals, organizations and religions differ about. They refuse reform and frighten America that if it puts pressure on them that would result in enabling and strengthening the psalmists. They tell America that if they carried out reforms and allowed even one of the rights as that of elections the extremist psalmists would attain power at least in half of the Arab countries.



Al-Balagh weekly, 30 Mar 2004.

## Main headlines

- Tunisia decides postponement of the Arab summit
- Amr Mousa warns against dangerous consequences of postponing the summit, denies his resignation
- Tunisia drives a nail for undermining the next summit after postponing its convention
- Justice Minister says it is expected to begin work in two judiciary complexes
- Threat messages to officials in Mahweet
- In Taiz an "anti-violence against woman" training course
- Parties of the JMP hold Arab regimes responsible for assassinating Sheikh Ahmed Yassin
- Journalists Syndicate calls on Arab leaders to boycott the Zionist entity.

The newspaper's editor in chief says the Tunisian president decided to postpone the Arab summit individually and without consulting the member states and when the Arab League secretary general wanted to meet him after the decision to know the causes the Tunisian president apologized by claiming to have cold. It is a strange thing that the fate of a 300-million nation to be unheeded.

The Tunisian official statement indicated to the causes of postponement as

SKEETCHED OPINION



because the variance in ideas and for not accepting the Tunisian ideas concerning organizations of civil society, human rights and woman freedom and democracy. Tunisia is the country where human rights are daily violated and the woman is fought in her freedom if wanted to put

on the veil. The woman freedom in Tunisia means adorning herself and nakedness but if she wanted by her own to wear hijab it would be prohibited. Human rights in Tunisia are fully violated and it has a well-known record and the case is the same for democracy.

Tunisia wanted to send a message to the United States that it is ready to be the first to call for implementing the American proposals calling for "Great Middle East" and ready to thwart the summit and would focus on passing on the American demands.



By Yahya Al-Olfi  
alolfi@hotmail.com

## Reflections

### The wide gap

### Between a Yemeni Civil Servant & His Boss

It is with great reluctance that I write about a repeatedly discussed subject: the seemingly unbridgeable gap between a regular Yemeni civil servant and the position i.e. his boss. I used to know an employee, who happened to be my work place neighbor, but now, no more. This acquaintance of mine used to come up to me repeatedly asking to borrow some money until he received his meager governmental salary, under various excuses.

Sometimes, he used to say that he needed the money in order to purchase a bunch of Qat, pay the house rent, complete the price of something etc. When the debt kept growing and no payment was received I stopped lending to him and asked him to expedite payment of his debts. Because I did not trust him any more, I made him introduce me to his employer's cashier who used to pay me back my money in the form of monthly installments. This agreement was not easily reached.

After I got back all my money, I refused to lend him again and tried to evade him whenever I came across him so as to avoid further headaches. If I had to encounter him, I just uttered the usual Salamalaykom (Hello), and that was all.

Out of the blue, to my extreme surprise I saw him one day in one of Sana'a's many crossroads. There he was driving a luxurious car and believe it or not smoking a cigar instead of his usual cheap type of cigarettes. I was really stunned to notice this sudden makeover, for he was wearing a nice up-to-the-minute suit. Although he saw me in the neighboring taxi he pretended that he did not see me. Away went the taxi and I am totally absorbed thinking about what I have just seen. How come! How did the man come to be smartened up like this? From a poor fellow in filthy rich in a matter of few months!

On many other occasions I have been accustomed to seeing the man going out from or entering a prestigious men's & women's clothes boutique accompanied by as it seems one of his employees, carrying different types of suits and clothing. I ventured one day into this boutique only to be taken back by the exorbitant amounts asked for a man's suit or a woman's dress. Prices for the suits range from YR 200,000 to YR 400,000 (i.e. \$1086-\$2172) and even higher. Seeing the man leading a life of ease and comfort I blamed myself for having gained his animosity unnecessarily. Now, that he

has become a government responsible I would have been able to get my rights with his help, because no-one gets his rights nowadays without help from such people. How ill-stared I am! I cannot approach him any more after all I have done for him. So I resigned myself to my lot, but still, I was never convinced how it all happened! I was completely curious to know the reasons behind such a transformation. Until one day, I met one of his closest friends who did not know about our story and asked him how it all happened. The man was delighted to brag about his friendship with the then newly promoted friend of his and thus blurted out everything he knew. He told me that his friend had suffered a lot and that he deserved what he has attained. According to him his friend was always at the beck and call of the boss and with time the boss entrusted him many tasks, to the extent that they chewed Qat together. That he was the boss's right hand man, and as the boss is of elaborate connections, when the boss moved to a higher position, he decided to intervene for his friend in order to allow him take up his place. He said that his friend deserved to be promoted because of his loyalty to the boss. That they pilfered together, went abroad on missions for the sake of gaining travel fares, helped him with futile facade symposiums, seminars etc. (in Yemen, certain people boast pilferage of public moneys and consider that as a type of personal intelligence for which any given perpetrator ought to be praised and the word Red-Eyed (in Arabic Ahmar Aain) has been coined as an attribute of such an individual, I guess that the Red-eyed is called as such because of drinking too much in order to silence his conscience if he has any).

It is worth mentioning that the man occupies now a position that is in high demand, for cohorts of people keep coming and going in order to complete their formalities and in addition to the privileges of cars, travels etc. the man also uses his position to get lucrative bribes. I asked him, "haven't you noticed that your friend has become so haughty?". He agreed with me and added that the man has become totally conceited and is full of lies. On a steady basis he pays for certain journalists in order to write about his establishment and its make-believe accomplishments in order to avoid attempts by covetous individuals to take his position and that he cannot imagine himself added to the bin of state consultants (Mustashars) whom he referred to as Mustashals i.e. a rhyming word meaning "unseated"

instead of Mustashars. His fear of losing the position has made him divorce his poverty-time wife and has married a daughter of one of the influential people so that he can have enough backing if push comes to shove.

From the above, one can infer the wide gap between a normal civil servant and another of the same level who happens to either be promoted due to fraud or being a son of a chieftain or an everlasting responsible. I do not think that the same gap exists in governmental departments in the developed world because salaries are supposed to cover the needs of the employee for living and relevant bills. That small differences are due to rightful promotions only, within the parameters of the law, for when one becomes responsible in those countries, he cannot act according to his own whim, as is the case with us, but rather must abide by the rules and laws. Promotions unfortunately in Yemen are based on tribal or family bias rather than real qualification: so do not ever think that our responsibilities are our elite. Furthermore, salaries are not sincere quotations, in that they do not cover the employees' daily needs and this in itself is an open invitation for pilferage so people can make ends meet. Because, managers and chairmen are in control they steal public money in millions and hence they have private businesses, hospital, multi-story buildings, villas, and different types of cars etc. If they are not real thieves please convince me, how their petty salaries, which cannot cover the electricity bills, are able to purchase them such assets. How come they have bank accounts in Switzerland, London, Cyprus, Paris, etc? Please, do not tell me that they hail from rich families and what they have are merely family riches, because this is the repeated cliché. Why not give the employees enough salaries and most importantly the higher administrators, and then exercise strict restriction on the withdrawal and spending of public finance. We should have a unified wages system because now each establishment has its own and salaries do vary a lot from one institution to another. Sufficient salaries and the principle of competitiveness should be applied in all fields for things to become better. Salaries should not be left for managers to decide, they should be an established right and measures should be taken for individuals not to receive multiple state salaries, as is the case nowadays. Actually, the whole Yemeni administrative system needs a total shake up because in my modest opinion it is totally rotten.

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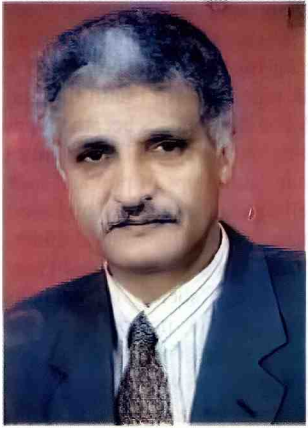


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# Aden Hotel Holds Celebration for Staff



Sheikh Mohammed Abdul Qawe Al-Maflahi, the representative of Aden Hotel owners



Mr. Fadhel Al-Hilali, Director General of Aden Hotel

Management of Aden Hotel and Arabian Investment & Tourism Corp, Ltd. held on Tuesday, 9 March 2004, a celebration for its staff and employees, in the presence of Dr. Yahya Al-Shaibi, Governor of Aden, and a number of officials and directors and members of diplomatic corps in Aden.

Mr. Fadhel Al-Hilali, Director General of Aden Hotel, expressed his happiness at this party, where all employees and workers were gathered. As usual, the hotel administration is keen to give special attention to this day. We notice this development and the attention and care of the political leadership represented by H.E. Ali Abdullah Saleh President of the Republic.

He stated that the celebration today has special taste since the first man in the governorate is taking part in it, Dr. Yahya Al-Shaibi, the Governor of Aden who has honored us by his visit and sharing our annual Aden Hotel employees and workers celebration.

The Director confirmed that the administration has trust in its workers and employees and it is proud of what the hotel has contributed to the promotion of tourism in Yemen through hosting a number of activities that have contributed increasing tourism. The Director concluded by expressing his hope that 2004 will be a year of

prosperity and more exerted efforts and activities for the interest of tourism.

On the other hand, Sheikh Mohammed Abdul Qawe Al-Maflahi, the representative of Aden Hotel owners said, "Today is a beautiful day and we celebrate all of you. We are keen to have the Governor of Aden, who is sharing our annual celebration, to be among the attendants, to meet and share with you and to get closer to you.

He pointed out that the Hotel Administration does not hesitate to provide for your best interests and we know that workers and employees of Aden Hotel are of the elite cadres. This celebration is for all of you and that the Hotel's management will be close to its employees every day and not just today. He concluded by saying that Yemen is a tourist country being visited by tourists from all countries of the world.

A number of employees expressed their joy and happiness of the special and big interest taken in them by the Hotel's administration, represented by Mohammed Sheikh Abdul Qawe Al-Maflahi, representative of owners and by Mr. Fadhel Al-Hilali, the General Manager of the Hotel.

Following that, Aden band commenced the artistic festivities, consisting of various items, comedy plays and then the drawing of valuable prizes including travel tickets.



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ITS Global Logistics 208998-408518  
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Yempac Sana'a 208998-408518  
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E-mail: felixpene@hotmail.com Fax: 601889  
The First Consultant center for the skin, 205517-73807737  
Hadda Town: 615402-615400  
Al-Jelani Hospital 274285  
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looking for job in hear field. pls contact : 416215. (3/29) e-mail: bnbo2001@yahoo.com  
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# A phenomenon called "Amr Khaled"

A. Sallam Qasem  
 sallah\_8@hotmail.com

Amr Khaled has started a new movement that none of the traditional Islamic and non-Islamic leaders ever thought of. The truth is that the current limiting factors are crumbling, and those who want to still join the wave of the future had bet-

ter be prepared to do better than what they have done so far.

You could actually feel the vibes and the buzzing of over a hundred thousand Arabic youths visiting Amr Khaled's website (www.AmrKhaled.com). For those youths have been given what they have been denied for many years. They have been given a belief in their abilities to change and to act. For the first time we could notice how



the true change came into existence, not by restricting thought and forcing direction, but by accepting accountability and believing in one's ability.

In a few weeks Amr Khaled was able to break the first limiting behavior of many of the Arabic youth: passivism. Yet, he is still determined to break all the rest and to bring a dream into reality. The dream is of knowledgeable and an aware Arabic youth working together for a much better future.

Thirsty to be active and to be empowered, Arabic youth flood the Amr Khaled's forums with over 4000 comments about the show and over 3000 posts about the weekly homework. Their initiatives covered a wide range of areas, from starting online magazines and newsletters to starting

charity programs and free educational institutes.

The youth of Amr Khaled could be described as inspired and ambitious young people who believe that creating a positive change is much better than criticizing a negative reality. They are fed up with the traditional political and religious disputes, and are not willing to waste anymore time arguing.

www.AmrKhaled.net

Amr Mohamed Helmy Khaled

Place & Date of Birth: Alexandria, September 5th, 1967  
 Country of Residence: Moving between Lebanon and UK

Education: Bachelor of Commerce - Cairo Uni - 1988  
 Islamic Studies Diploma - 2001  
 Studying his PhD at Wales University

Job: Auditor and Partner in a Famous Egyptian Auditing Office, member of the Egyptian Auditors and Accountants Association

Marital Status: Married to a professor at the faculty of Applied arts, has a two years old boy named "Ali".

Hobbies: Football, former member of the AHI Youth team.

اللقب: Amr Mohamed Helmy Khaled  
 تاريخ ميلاد: 5 سبتمبر 1967  
 محل الإقامة: حاليًا متنقل بين العاصمة البريطانية لندن والعاصمة اللبنانية بيروت  
 المؤهلات الدراسية: دبلوم معهد الدراسات الإسلامية - سنة 2001  
 بكالوريوس تجارة - جامعة القاهرة - سنة 1988  
 المهنة: مراجع حسابات وشريك بمكتب مراجعة وتدقيق المحاسبين والمراجعين المصريين  
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