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Perceptions on price hikes

Yemeni female journalists challenge, impress U.S. ambassador

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, Jan. 9 — Around 30 female journalists were invited by the Women Journalists Forum for an exclusive session with the US ambassador to Yemen, Stephen Seche. The Jan. 7 session was the first of its kind, in which a high-ranking diplomat dedicated his time strictly to female journalists.

Despite the fact that most of the journalists had their faces covered as per traditional Yemeni customs, they displayed clear knowledge of political issues. A journalist himself, Seche acknowledged the level of professionalism the female journalists exhibited.

"I never know what to expect when I get into a room full of journalists, but being with you today, I realize how informed female journalists are and the clear understanding and concern for their country's welfare they have," said Seche at the conclusion of the conference.

After introducing the ambassador, Rahma Hujaira, director of the Women Journalists Forum, explained that the purpose of the conference is to give female journalists a head start over their male colleagues who often get advantage in the media. US ambassador had agreed to dedicate the conference only to female journalists, and use the opportunity to introduce himself and remind the media of US poli-

US Ambassador (center) enjoying Yemeni female journalists' enthusiasm to visit the United States of America, at the press conference exclusive for female journalists organized by Women Journalists Forum.

cies and projects in Yemen.

The question and answer session of the conference began aggressively, when a female journalist asked the ambassador what the U.S. position is regarding Yemeni prisoners in Guantanamo and how sheikh Abdulmajeed Al-Zindani is classified

according to the U.S. government. Seche explained that the U.S. wants to close down Guantanamo; however, they need to ensure that the released prisoners will not resume terrorist activities once they are back home.

"We want to return the detainees, but previous experience has told us

that some of them returned to terrorist activities. We also need guarantees that the detainees will be give fair treatment," he stated.

According to Seche, Al-Zindani is wanted by the U.S. government for financially supporting terrorist activities. Seche responded similarly to questions about Sheikh Al-Moaid, currently serving a 75-year sentence in a Colorado prison. He was charged with funding Hamas, and for conspiracy to fund Al-Qaeda. Seche explained that Al-Moaid is benefiting from the U.S. legal system and is appealing his case according to U.S. law.

"We will inform the media and public on the proceedings of this case," he said.

Currently, Yemeni lawyer and activist Mohammed Naji Allaw is in the U.S. defending Al-Moaid. Allaw said that although the Shiekh's health is deteriorating, his spirits are high and he hopes to be able to return to Yemen soon.

Some political analysts claim that an agreement between Yemen and the U.S. can be made for Al-Moaid to be sent to Yemen in return for Yemen to hand over Jamal Al-Badawi, a Yemeni citizen currently serving a 17 year sentence, of which he has spent 5 years, for his involvement in the 2000 USS Cole bombing, in which 17 U.S. marines were killed.

In response to Seche's comments, the media reported that Yemeni Foreign Affairs Minister Abu Baker Al-Qirbi stated that the Yemeni constitution does not allow surrendering its citizens to foreign countries. He insisted that there is no way Al-Badawi would be handed over to U.S. custody.

However, Seche's answer to the same question posed by one of the female journalists at the conference was that because Al-Badawi is responsible for killing U.S. citizens, he should be tried by a U.S. court.

The journalist also asked the ambassador to clarify the security relations his government has with the Yemeni government. He replied that Yemen and the U.S. have a partnership regarding intelligence and information exchange. The U.S. supports Yemen with funding and training for the special forces, anti-terrorism unit and coast guard in order for Yemen to secure its borders and ensure stability of the country.

"It is known that there is an Al-Qaeda presence and extremists in Yemen who do not intend good for Yemen or Yemeni stability. The U.S. aims at helping the Yemeni government deal with such threats," he said.

Development support

Not all the discussion revolved around Al-Qaeda and its so-called affiliates.

USAID director Dr. Mike Sarhan explained that the organization supports Yemen with regard to development work, fisheries, agriculture, and most recently an on-going project in support of the Anti-Corruption Committee.

"We are supporting them in order that they establish premises for their operations, and we will be sending them to Malaysia in order for them to learn from their experience in fighting corruption," mentioned Sarhan.

The U.S. government not only sends MPs and activists for training, it also empowers Yemeni journalists, both men and women, through media exchange programs in the U.S.

However, female journalists complained that they view the embassy's scholarship policy as biased towards men. Ryan Gliha, a public affairs officer present at the conference, explained that fewer women are sent to the U.S. because of the fact that there are few female journalists who agree to travel there on their own. This answer did not get much appreciation from the other journalists, who claimed that they would all travel if they were given the opportunity. Eventually, the embassy promised to give more consideration in their scholarships and training opportunities to females, a promise that the journalists said they would put to the test.

Random assaults leave four dead, two injured

By: Mohammed Bin Sallam

SA'ADA, Jan. 9 — Military forces deployed in Haidan district of the rest-less governorate killed four people among them two women, and left another two, one of whom is a child at age 4, injured during their random strikes and assaults of the district's villages, tribal sources said Tuesday.

The sources added that the military operations reached the Dhera'a village that witnessed nothing of such events during the straight four day attacks and strikes against Al Al-Jaon village with heavy machine guns and mortars because its inhabitants celebrated the Ghadir Day.

In Al Al-Jaradi village, two people were shot dead and others wounded the same day when the army troops fired at a Toyota car driving the victims on the feeder road to their village. According to the local sources, two homes were completely destroyed in the most recent military strikes. They told that military forces took control of citizens' homes in Safia area of Haidan, which have been deserted by the horror-stricken families since the most war broke out after weeks of

sharp tensions between Houthis and government troops in the area.

The tragic developments also reached Al-Sha'ab area of Saqain district and other areas in the neighboring district of Majaz where tension between citizens and military troops has grown sharper as the troops were allegedly scolding the villagers.

In a related context, eyewitnesses noted that the government is increasing its military presence in various areas, south of Sa'ada city, and supplying field troops with tanks and armored vehicles to restrict movements of Houthis.

"A group of Houthis set up an ambush against a military vehicle driving eight soldiers to Haidan after the soldiers arrested a woman on suspicion of supporting the Houthi move-

ment. Houthi loyalists available at the scene fired at the military vehicle, leaving the eight soldiers dead, freeing the captured woman and stealing away the vehicle," Al-Wasat Weekly reported on Tuesday. It mentioned that Houthis controlled Bani Hedhaifa and Mehdaida mountains two days after the area's tribal sheikh was killed.

"Other Sa'ada areas witnessed skirmishes between the army personnel and Houthi followers over these past few weeks," the weekly continued. According to a tribal source with a closer relation to Abdulmalik Badraddin Al-Houthi, the field leader of Houthis, the government troops raided homes in Haidan's Al Ja'wan area in retaliation for citizens' engagement in the Ghadir Day celebrations.

He further told that the government sent a large military campaign which, upon its arrival to the governorate, exchanged gunfire with Houthi followers in the area, adding that the clashes terribly extended to the distant village of Dhera.

The presidential committee, authorized by President Ali Abdullah Saleh to investigate facts behind breaking the Sa'ada truce, has just returned to Sana'a after its head, Sheikh Faris Mana'a, an arms tradesman, met Abdulmalik Al-Houthi and BG. Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, Commander of the Northern Military Flank.

One of the committee's members said, "when we met Al-Ahmar and told him about the violations, he replied that the committee's members have to carry blankets with them, hold

positions on the top of mountains and closely observe the situation if they want to identify those who violate the truce."

Regarding trials of suspects accused by the government of backing Houthis, the Supreme Court assigned its next Tuesday's sitting for discussing the evidence file due to be submitted by the defense team of the journalist Abdulkarmi Al-Khaiwani, one of the suspects.

The defense team claims that the State Security Penal Court (SSPC), in charge of trying the journalist, is not, by the constitution, entitled to receive such cases, which are beyond its jurisdiction. The team earlier challenged the SSPC's legitimacy, saying it is not the relevant judicial body, concerned with handling its client's case.

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In brief

International conference for closing Guantanamo prison launched

The First International Conference for Shutting Down the US-run Guantanamo prison launched on Wednesday in Sana'a with participation of Yemeni, British and US human rights organizations.

Before launching the conference, Minister of Human Rights Huda al-Ban said Yemen's hosting for the conference proves Yemen's commitment to applying human rights principles and its adherence to all international pacts concerning human rights.

Al-Ban denied claims that Yemen didn't accept to receive its Guantanamo-jailed citizens.

During the conference, Yemen would renew its calls for the USA to release the Yemeni detainees in Guantanamo.

Speaker of Canadian senate to visit Yemen next Thursday

A Canadian Senate delegation headed by the Speaker of the Senate of Canada Noel Kinsella is to begin Thursday an official four-day visit to Yemen.

Kinsella will hold talks with the chairman of Shoura Council Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani on strengthening mutual cooperation between the two councils aiming at serving and developing cooperation relations between the two countries.

The talks would also deal with issues of democracy and human rights.

In remarks to Saba, Abdul- Ghani welcomed the Canadian visitors, considering this visit would take part in enhancing the efforts were achieved by the two councils in both countries.

Abdul- Ghani praised the adherence of Canada to support the Yemeni-Canadian relations and develop them.

Gulf Group for investment to set-up financial and business city in Yemen

Chairman of the Gulf Group for Investment and Real Estate development in Saudi Arabia Kaleb Bin Hamad al-Saadun announced that the group plans to set-up financial and business city in Yemen.

Upon his arrival on Tuesday at Sana'a, al-Saadun said to Saba that the city is to include banks and stock markets in addition to housing classical complex attaches to the city.

Al-Saadun stressed that he would hold talks with some officials of General Authority of Investment on completing necessary procedures and determining the location of the project.

He made it clear that the delegation is to acquaint closely with available investment opportunities in Yemen and facilities offered to investors on other investment fields, specifically real estate investments in the purpose of setting-up a number of investment projects.

113 violations against freedom of expression in 2007

Women Journalist without Borders Organization has affirmed that violations committed against freedom of expression doubled in 2007 compared with the last year.

The annual report of the WJWB said that infringements practiced against press in 2006 were 67 and they are 113 in 2007.

In addition to that, the report said that the Information Ministry refused 68 applications of having authorizations for new newspapers and magazines.

It further noted that correspondents of newspapers and the media were more subjected to violations this year than editors and writers due to widespread protests and sit-ins in various governorates.

Japanese businessmen to visit Yemen on February

Industry and Trade Minister Yahya al-Mutawakel held talks here on Tuesday with the Japanese ambassador to Yemen Masakazu Toshikage on arrangements for the Japanese businessmen visit to Yemen next February to get acquainted with the investment opportunities in Yemen and to form commercial partnerships with their counterparts here.

The talks also dealt with the Japanese offer to finance and implement the project of al-Barh Cement Factory expansion as well as the Japanese support for Yemeni efforts to join the World Trade Organization (WTO).

During the meeting, the minister pinned his hopes that the coming visit would contribute to reinforce the mutual commercial ties, emphasizing importance of enhancing the commercial exchange rates

and strengthening the investment partnership between private sectors in the two countries.

Yemen celebrates Arab Illiteracy Eradication Day

TAIZ, Jan. 9 — Yemen marked Arab Illiteracy Eradication Day Jan. 8 in Taiz, during which it was announced that the city would be illiteracy-free within the next few years.

The authority stated that of Yemen's 22 million residents, five million are illiterate, 33.3 percent of whom are male and 66.7 percent female.

In this regard, attendees at the event ensured the importance of launching workshops and conferences to fight illiteracy and increase public awareness of the importance of education for both boys and girls.

According to Sabah Sa'eed, head of the Illiteracy Authority's Taiz branch, many areas in Mauia and Maqbana districts will be illiteracy-free by the end of this year. "Taiz ranked first among other Yemeni governorates regarding the highest number of students enrolled at illiteracy eradication centers," she noted.

Last year, the authority's Taiz branch registered some 15,788 students distributed among 400 centers and studying in 676 classrooms in every district of the governorate.

In this vein, a new illiteracy fighting strategy will be implemented that requires high school dropouts to teach at illiteracy eradication centers as compulsory service.

Alongside such efforts to fight illiteracy are added difficulties inhibiting such centers from performing well, including weak official interaction or involvement with them. "It's difficult finding locations for the illiteracy eradication centers, especially in rural areas, which forces us to open them in homes or mosques," Sa'eed complained.

Additionally, there's an absence of motivation and lack of awareness by some officials and civil society organi-

While illiteracy in the Arab world remains at more than 43 percent of the total population – mainly involving women – some older women maintain that it's never late to learn, thus starting from the bottom of the educational ladder.

zations regarding the importance of fighting illiteracy.

This past November, the National Committee for Education, Culture and Science, in cooperation with the Islamic Organization for Education, Science and Culture, organized a conference involving 11 Arab nations to enhance human resource capacities seeking to improve the funding of illiteracy eradication programs in Yemen.

According to the United Nations Development Program's 2007-2008 report, elevated illiteracy rates are a worldwide concern and particularly prevalent in the Third World, especially in developing Arab nations, which still have high illiteracy rates and often the worst facilities and the least concern to educate their populations.

Sana'a University teachers praise settlement

SANA'A, Jan. 9 — Teaching staff and assistants at Sana'a University are praising a settlement reached with the Ministry of Civil Services and Insurance regarding their numerous issues and concerns.

Abdullah Fare' Al-Azazi, who is in charge of culture and media for Sana'a University's Teachers Syndicate, declared that the two-month talks concluded today as both sides agreed to rectify the imbalances and infringements that accompanied the lengthy process of teachers accessing the 2005 wage strategy involving their settlements, promotions and hardship allowances.

He noted that they have agreed that teachers and assistants will be granted their rightful salary increase under a second wage strategy, in addition to the hardship allowance under 2005's Wages and Salaries Law No. 43, adding that the second strategy includes all Yemeni university teachers and assistants. The raise will be paid retroactively from October 2007.

Al-Azazi further indicated that the two sides will thoroughly discuss the employment and wages system regarding Yemeni university teaching staff and assistants. Such a system ensures academic positions while regulating the rights and obligations of those

staffers.

He stressed that continuous follow-up by Prime Minister Ali Mujawar, in addition to great cooperation by Civil Service Minister Hamoud Khalid Al-Soufi and his deputy, Nabeel Shamsan, achieved positive outcomes, thus ensuring thorough remedies and solutions to the teaching staff's current issues.

The settlement ends a year of protests and talks conducted by government universities, Al-Azazi concluded, thanking all media outlets for interacting with the teaching staff by covering and thereby publicizing their struggles and activities.

Al-Ahqaf University launches electronic library

HADRAMOUT, Jan. 7 — Al-Ahqaf University has launched an electronic library project to obtain transcripts, printings and scientific research.

General supervisor Zain Salem says the library contains several electronically photocopied transcripts, some original manuscripts and electronic and print indexes – both in and out of print – as well as some master's and doctoral theses, in addition to rare and old book editions.

He continued, noting that the electronic library contains more than 3,030

electronic manuscripts (the rest will be added later), 13 original manuscripts and 1,027 electronic books, of which 12 are electronic indexes.

Salem stressed that the electronic library contains 107 original indexes of printings and manuscripts from libraries worldwide, seven master's and doctoral theses and seven editions of old and rare printings.

Such books and manuscripts are photocopied by the team from Al-Ahqaf University's electronic library. The books and editions come from public

and private libraries including Al-Mehdhar, Ba-Sudan, Ba-Junaid and Al-Shehr, among others.

Some photocopied manuscripts are purchased from libraries such as Al-Zaidiya, Al-Hashimi, Al-Thari, Al-Hadi, and A'nthari, and Al-Azhar Al-Sharif in Egypt, as well as from other libraries all over the world.

Al-Ahqaf University's team indexes original and electronic manuscripts and then installs them in PDF format, first photocopying the materials and then accessing them with PDF programs.

Private sector ranks high in employing women

By: Fatima Al-Ajel

SANA'A , January, 5 — The latest study done by the Women's National Committee in 2006 found that, generally, women comprise 23 percent of the Yemeni labor market.

The private sector had a high percentage regarding employing women in various fields, with 28 percent of women working in the private and non-governmental sectors, as compared to the official sector, which had 9.3 percent.

According to the study, 85 percent of rural Yemeni women participate in their areas' economic activities, compared to 15 percent in urban areas. WNC general director Hana Hoiadai notes that there's a small increase in women's involvement in the Yemeni labor market, adding that her committee is about to prepare its report for 2007.

In this regard, the Women and

Children's Circle within the General Union of Yemeni Labor Syndicates, in cooperation with the Norwegian Labor Union, organized a workshop this month for some 30 female participants from Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait and Tunisia.

The workshop sought to discuss how to develop the skills of women involved in labor syndicate activities, as well as raise awareness about their rights and international agreements protecting the rights of both male and female workers.

A study last year by Hassina Al-Khadery, head of Sana'a University's Women's Center, found that lack of government jobs, poor economic circumstances at home and the desire to own and operate an independent project are the main reasons Yemeni women break into the labor market and operate their own businesses.

Finding that most Yemeni businesswomen are between age 20 and 40, the

study noted that not all such businesswomen register with the Chamber of Commerce; thus, the number of businesswomen registered doesn't reflect the actual number of businesswomen operating in the Yemeni market. According to the study, most Yemeni businesswomen don't register so as to avoid taxes, as well as for social reasons. Al-Khadery's study further disclosed that Yemeni businesswomen invest in various sectors, including services, education, agriculture, banking and entrepreneurial ventures.

Concluding recommendations from the WNC's third national women's conference in March 2006 included increasing women's participation in the Yemeni workforce to at least 30 percent of the labor market, in addition to providing them economic opportunities and adequate vocational and technical training, as well as improving the working environment and infrastructure.

Official stats: Traffic accidents rose in 2007

SANA'A, Jan. 9 — The General Traffic Administration's most recent report for the period December 2006 through December 2007 reveals an increase in traffic accidents.

The governmental body's Deputy General Director Salim Awad stated that according to its latest official statistics, there were 10,439 traffic accidents nationwide, killing 2,892 and injuring 20,224.

Such accidents claimed the lives of 50 children – 30 boys and 20 girls – in addition to 2,436 men and 406 women. Some 9,619 citizens were injured seriously, some of them fatally, while 10,605 sustained only minor injuries.

Total financial losses from traffic accidents in 2007 were more than YR 3.6 billion.

To solve this problem and decrease the instance of traffic accidents, Yemen's Interior Ministry, in cooperation with the private sector, will begin instituting a mechanical checkpoint project for all types of transportation, whereby, "Owners of any mode of transportation will be obliged to check their equipment," Awad explained.

He further clarified that, in most cases, the primary reason for the increase in traffic accidents was faulty or unqualified tires due to the fact that most imported tires aren't up to standards.

Traffic accidents have been on the rise, causing more injuries and taking more lives. Yemen's deteriorating roads, especially those linking its governorates with the nation's main cities, play a part in increasing such tragedies, which ensure much pain and suffering for those injured.

Additionally, Awad noted, "There's a lack of traffic signs, especially on Yemen's main roads. Such signs help drivers determine their direction."

Official figures show that more than 2,000 people die annually in traffic accidents in Yemen.

The nation's General Traffic Administration specifically attributes the increased number of accidents to eid holidays due to crowded roads – especially those between the major cities and various Yemeni governorates – by an increased numbers of citizens traveling to their native or ancestral villages.

New movement to fight violence against women

SANA'A, Jan. 1 — A homegrown movement called "Difa'a" has launched within the first few days of this new year with a mission to fight violence against Yemeni women. Meaning "defense" in Arabic, Difa'a was established by several Yemeni activists living both inside and outside Yemen.

"We aim to support Yemeni women, who are violated in everyday life, but most especially during conflicts. We'll monitor the circumstances women are

experiencing in Sa'ada, where atrocious violations are occurring, but no one is saying anything about them," the movement's director Ismail Al-Mutawakil says.

The group also has a web site: www.wr-yemen.org.

In its press release, highlighting the reasons Yemen needs such an organization, the movement cited violations against female journalists, as well as abuses by authorities in women's prisons.

Whale beached on Socotra's Delisha Coast

SOCOTRA, Jan. 6 — A 10-meter long whale has beached itself on the Delisha Coast 10 kilometers from Socotra's Hudaibo city. The reasons for this annual occurrence haven't been identified yet.

Yemen's General Authority for Environmental Protection and the Socotra Conservation and Development Program both were informed. Headed by Nadim Taleb, the program's resident director, a team quickly was dispatched to the location to take appropriate action.

Taleb reported that the

forementioned mammal is a sperm whale, further indicating that its body has some gashes due to fishing vessels passing through Socotra archipelago and hunting such whales for their oil. Such gashes are only made by modern and sophisticated fishing vessels.

Several fishermen headed to the coast to remove the oil substances. Additionally, some cut the mammal's lower jaw to remove its teeth, which are sold to tourists for high prices.

For example, a large canine weighing 1 kilogram is worth YR 12,000.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
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WHAT IT MEANS...

Yemen-DPI partnership: where to now?

What it means is an analytical feature of Yemen Times, in which Yemeni topics are discussed and analyzed by Yemeni and international experts. Contributions and comments are welcomed, they could be sent to the feature's coordinator: Dr. Abdullah Al-Faqih (dralfaqih@yahoo.com).

Following several years of unresolved issues regarding the fate of Aden Port, Yemen's government recently agreed with Dubai Ports International, or DPI, which operates the United Arab Emirates' Jebel Ali Port in addition to several other ports in the area and around the world, to establish a 50-50 Yemen-UAE joint venture to run Aden Port.

This partnership comes three years after the Yemeni government twice invited international bidding to operate the port. According to the government announcement published at that time, the Tender Assessment Committee found that the bid from Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport Co., or KGL, was more feasible for the Yemeni government in the long run, whereas DPI's bid was more feasible in the short term.

According to government documents, a consulting firm Yemen's government appointed to manage the tender process recommended the short-term option - DPI's bid - although expected revenues were no better than those expected from the Kuwaiti firm's bid.

The issue stirred much public controversy at that time, with talk of a "suspicious" deal between the consulting firm and pro-DPI state

officials involved in the tender. Some pointed to a conflict of interest between Aden Port and others DPI operates, i.e., Dubai's Jebel Ali Port, Djibouti Port, Oman's Salalah Port and Jeddah Port's South Terminal.

Some were of the opinion that DPI's bid to run Jeddah's South Terminal was better than its bid to operate the strategic Aden Port, despite the fact that the former is less significant and dynamic. They maintained that DPI's bid offered the Saudi government as much as 65 percent of revenues, with DPI bearing all other expenses.

That bid came after DPI failed to win the operations tender for Jeddah Port's North Terminal, losing the deal to KGL, which at that time offered the Saudi government half of revenues, whereas DPI offered only 35 percent.

DPI didn't offer the Yemeni government a share of the revenue, in contrast to its Kuwaiti competitor, which offered 80 percent of revenues by the end of the 30-year contract.

Signs of parliamentary refusal of the agreement with DPI surfaced in view of terms and conditions considered to be disadvantageous to Yemen. On the other hand, the rival Kuwaiti

firm objected to the appointment of its competitor. All of these events compelled Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh to revoke the DPI agreement before Parliament began discussing it. The problem currently isn't limited to the Kuwaiti company's relentless claim to receive the concession to operate Aden Port or the Yemeni government's persistence to work with DPI.

Another considerable hurdle obstructing any agreement between the Yemeni government and the giant Emirati firm is the claim of the Bawazir family, which established Yemeninvest Company in association with Saudi Bin Mahfoudh Group and constructed Aden Free Zone in the wake of Yemen's 1990 reunification. The Bawazir family demands their share in the port, which their claim is as much as 30 percent, submitting several documents to corroborate their standing. Additionally, they've filed suit against the Yemeni government, first, to stop any disposal of the port, as disputes are being examined by the judiciary, and secondly, to regain their claimed rights.

Just a few decades ago, Aden Port was the world's third most important port, the first two

being the United States' New York Port and Holland's Rotterdam Port. For a host of reasons, Aden Port still maintains a strategic location among other terminals in the region and the world. For instance, it is only four nautical miles from an international navigational channel, the nearest distance within the region. The port also enjoys natural protection in the form of a mountain chain. Additionally, its naturally deep waters can receive supertankers, a characteristic unavailable at any other regional ports.

Particularly when it's of the same caliber as DPI, a company wouldn't dare involve itself in any deal involving a project in such circumstances. Nevertheless, DPI's tireless attempt to strike a deal to manage and operate Aden Free Zone may be attributed to the fact that it and the Emirati government understand well the vitality of Aden Port and that, if professionally managed, it would pose a threat to the Emirates' own Jebel Ali Port in Dubai and other regional ports DPI operates, such as Djibouti and Salalah. The Yemeni government's persistence in entrusting the running of Aden Port to DPI is attributable, as it states repeatedly, to DPI's international reputation. Some state officials hope DPI will catapult Aden Free Zone, Aden Port and even the city

of Aden itself into an era of prosperity.

Following the government's announcement of another agreement signed with DPI to establish a Yemen-UAE joint venture, it seems that the agreement itself remains mysterious and "confidential." Of course, that's not in the interest of the Yemeni government, which has committed itself to transparency in tenders and competitions. Continuous gossip about the port will distort the Yemeni government's image in the eyes of Western donors. Amid its attempts to prove its concern about the future of the Free Zone and Aden Port, the Yemeni government needs to ameliorate the agreement's terms and conditions in order to ensure its rights and sovereignty and clarify its relationship with DPI and its local and regional partners.

Secondly, it must invite international bidding from major qualified firms in the field of ports management in order to obtain the best offers for Yemen to receive the utmost benefit.

The author is a correspondent of Sawa American Radio, and founder of the first independent news site in Yemen *altagheer.net*. He had been working with Yemeni and regional newspapers for the last 15 years. He is member of the Arab and International Journalists Syndicate.

Their News

Yemen, Japan sign two treaties worth \$1.3 mln

Aden Sanitation and Improvement Fund and Hadramout Program for Combating Malaria, and the Japanese embassy signed on Monday two cooperation treaties for supporting the fund and the program with \$1.3 million.

The two projects aim at improving sanitation in Aden's districts, providing better

health to people and protecting children and pregnant women against malaria in Hadramout.

It is worth to mention that the Japanese government, in its fiscal year 2007-2008, has supplied 17 projects in Yemen in fields of basic education, health and rural water.

During Visit, President Bush Should Discuss Lack of Democracy with Middle Eastern Leaders

While visiting the Middle East later this week, President Bush should call on leaders in the region to reform their media policies and release jailed journalists, Freedom House wrote today in a letter to the president.

The organization also encouraged the president to meet with human rights advocates while in the region, and to speak out in favor of increased religious freedom and women's rights.

"This is the first time you will have visited most of these countries, and your presence there can have an enormous influence," wrote Freedom House Executive Director Jennifer Windsor in the letter. "At a time when freedom is under attack worldwide, we hope that during your trip, you will continue speak for those who are striving for democracy in the Middle East."

The text of the letter is below. January 7, 2008

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

In light of your upcoming trip to the Middle East, I am writing to request that you use this important opportunity to address some vital concerns about the state of human rights and democracy in the region.

Your passionate commitments to brave activists struggling to expand freedom in their countries have given heart to reformers around the globe. At a time when freedom is under attack worldwide, we hope that during your trip, you will continue speak for those who are striving for democracy in the Middle East. As the world's least democratic region, its leaders have favored short-term security gains over genuine investments in democratic systems. The result has been a serious stagnation of the growth of freedom in the region.

Freedom House is particularly concerned about restrictions placed on the media, as well as limits on women's

rights and religious freedom, in the countries you will be visiting. A leading Saudi blogger, Fouad al-Farhan, recently made headlines when he was arrested in early December for criticizing the government of Saudi Arabia in his blog posts. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Abdel Karim Suleiman is serving a four-year jail term for blog posts that "insulted Islam," while in Bahrain, Mohammed al-Maskati, an activist and blogger, was sent to prison merely for failing to obtain a registration for his human rights organization. Like others who have been detained for publishing their views in newspapers or speaking their minds publicly, these men have been arrested simply for speaking out about the lack of freedom in their countries.

Bahrain, Egypt, the Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are all ranked "Not Free" in Freedom House's annual survey, Freedom of the Press. We strongly urge you to ask for the release of these journalists and activists, as well as to press these countries' leaders to reform their media policies.

In a similar vein, women continue to face institutionalized oppression and discrimination in each of the countries you plan to visit. Freedom of religion also remains a grave concern for the region, particularly in a number of Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Mr. President, this is the first time you will have visited most of these countries, and your presence there can have an enormous influence. We urge you very strongly to ask the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain to release the

jailed bloggers, and call on them to lift their governments' restrictions on press freedom, religious freedom and women's rights. We also urge you to meet not only with heads of state, but with civil society activists and human rights advocates as well, to demonstrate that the United States is serious about its support for reform worldwide.

As an ardent supporter of freedom, you know that genuinely representative government is achieved incrementally. Without independent voices that can criticize and endeavor to build the societies they envision—that is, without freedom of speech and of belief for all people—a country can never become democratic.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Windsor
Executive Director

Web Site Launched for Cross-Media Measurement Initiative

The World Association of Newspapers has launched a new website to support and promote the use of cross-media audience measurements that will allow publishers to provide a more complete picture of their reach than print circulation alone.

The website for the Media Measurement Initiative Task Force, at <http://www.wanpress.org/MMITF/home.php>, contains the latest research and insights regarding the rapidly changing landscape of online media measurement and the development of standardised print and web measure-

ment practices. "Newspaper companies are expanding their audiences through digital publishing platforms, yet their reach is often not reflected in the standard print circulation measurements that are used to determine advertising rates," said Timothy Balding, CEO of the Paris-based WAN.

"While acceptance of the need for cross-media measurement is growing among publishers and the advertising community alike, how to go about it remains an open question. The Task Force, and this new website provide a forum for encouraging best practices and for standardising and integrating print-web measurements."

The Media Measurement Integration Task Force, created by WAN in February 2007, includes some of the world's most prominent media measurement organisations. Its mission statement says, "Our role is to explore, communicate and promote the opportunities to measure and report audiences of newspapers brands across multiple platforms to industry stakeholders."

Members include: the International Federation of Audit Bureaux of Circulations; ABC UK; BPA Worldwide; the Brazilian Newspaper Association; ComScore; Interactive Media Services Inc.; Interactive Advertising Bureau; Media Rating Council; the Newspaper Association of America; NADBANK; Nielsen//Netratings; the Newspaper Society (UK); PubliGroupe; and Scarborough Research.

The Paris-based WAN, the global organisation for the newspaper industry, defends and promotes the professional

and business interests of newspapers world-wide. Representing 18,000 newspapers, its membership includes 77 national newspaper associations, newspaper companies and individual newspaper executives in 102 countries, 12 news agencies and 11 regional and world-wide press groups.

TOTAL Group to expand its oil and gas operation in Yemen

The senior vice-president Middle East of TOTAL Group Mr. Ladislav Paszkiewicz said in a meeting he held on Monday January 7, 2008 with H.E. prime minister, Dr. Ali Mujawar, that TOTAL Group plans to keep expanding its oil and gas operation in Yemen. Mr. Paszkiewicz emphasized TOTAL's keenness to have all the component of the Yemen LNG project completed in consistency with the project's timeline. He also confirmed the company's commitment to explore not only new oil reserves but also gas. On his part, the Prime Minister Mujawar pointed out to the importance of the existing cooperation between the Yemeni government and TOTAL Group and importance for both parties to further this cooperation. He expressed his satisfaction that the agreements establishing the relationship between SAFER and YLNG had been finalized. Last Saturday, Mr. Paszkiewicz met with Minister of Finance, Mr. Noman Al-Suhabi, and discussed with him the different cooperation relations between YEMEN and TOTAL.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
(Date: 10th/01/2008)

Title of Post: **Senior Protection Assistant**
Post Number: **Funded by ECO 30%**
Category / Level: **GL7**
Location: **6DD0a**

Entry on Duty: **01 February 2008**
Duration: **One Year**
Closing Date: **24 January 2008**

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:
Under the direct supervision of the Senior Protection Officer in the Branch Office Sana'a, the incumbent is expected to perform the following duties, guided by the humanitarian principles and values of the United Nations, and adhering to the UN Code of Conduct:

Terms of reference (Duties)

1. Contribute to the development of strategic protection framework in the country;
2. Assist in refugee status determination by gathering information, e.g. from country of origin in order to make recommendations based on UNHCR guidelines;
3. Follow-up on protection issues with relevant local authorities, including court cases involving refugees;
4. Maintain liaison with camp officials, other officials concerned with protection issues, including those in the judicial system;
5. Assist in monitoring and analyzing country specific and international legislation and practices to ensure that up-to-date information is provided to the Office;
6. Assist in the promotion on international refugee law, capacity building and training of Government officials at the country level;
7. Maintain good relations with members of the legal profession and the civil society as well as with local authorities; &
8. Perform other duties as may be requested from time to time.

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS
Education: Completion of Secondary Education. Possession of a Certificate in International/Refugee Law will be an added advantage.
Experience: At least eleven years of previous job experience relevant to the function.
Others: Possession of good computer and communication skills is essential.
Languages: Very good knowledge of Arabic and English.

For internal UNHCR candidates:
Staff may apply to vacant posts at their own level at any time. Under the reduced seniority requirement, staff who have completed at least half of the required seniority in grade will be considered. Candidates whose grade is two levels below that of the post may also be considered. Candidates who do not meet the criteria as internal candidates can be considered as external candidates.

For external candidates:
While priority will be given to Internal Candidates as per UNHCR guidelines, suitable External Candidates will be considered.

IMPORTANT:
Applications received after the above mentioned closing date will not be considered. All applications should be sent to:
The Administration Officer,
UNHCR BO Sanaa
P.O. Box 12093, Sanaa.
Tel. Contact: +967-1-469771/2

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Title of Post: **Admin. Assistant**
Position Number: **10008210**
Category & Level: **GL6**
Location: **Aden**

Entry on Duty: **01 Feb. 2008**
Duration: **One year**
Closing Date: **21 January 2008**

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Under the direct supervision of the Admin Officer, in the Sub-Office Aden, the incumbent is expected to perform the following duties which include Finance roles, guided by the humanitarian principles and values of the United Nations, and adhering to the UN Code of Conduct:

1. Performs personnel administration tasks including interpretation and processing entitlements, issuance of contracts and maintenance of various personnel records and files;
2. Assists in conducting preliminary interviews of candidates, administering typing exams and recruiting of GL staff;
3. Conducts surveys of local cost of living, DSA rate and servicing staff, housing rental and collects information on the above-mentioned;
4. Prepares travel authorizations, ID cards and other personnel related documents for staff;
5. Record vouchers in MSRP Finance and Supply Chain application, prepares monthly replenishments, maintains Petty Cash, enters Requisitions and Purchase Orders. Prepares monthly reports on accounts for submission, as needed. If required, assists in preparation of ABOD and submission along with Country Operation Plan (COP);
6. Prepares, updates, maintains inventory records of non-expendable equipment for submission to the main office. Orders and controls stationary supplies;
7. Attends meetings and participates in discussion of new or revised procedures and practices on administration and finance matters; interprets and assesses the impact of changes and makes recommendations for follow-up action; and
8. Performs other duties as may be given from time to time.

Education: Should have at least completed post-secondary courses in Accounting or Business Administration and have good knowledge of UNHCR and UN rules and regulations. If the candidate has completed UNHCR Management Learning Programme, it may be an asset.
Experience: At least six years of previous job experience relevant to the function.
Others: Possession of good computer and communication skills is essential. Excellent interpersonal skills are necessary. The candidates also need to have demonstrated ability to work with others in a team environment.
Language: Very good knowledge of Arabic and English.

For Internal UNHCR Candidates:
Staff may apply to vacant posts at their own level at any time. Under the reduced seniority requirement, staff who have completed at least half of the required seniority in grade will be considered. Candidates whose grade is two levels below that of the post may also be considered. Candidates who do not meet the criteria as internal candidates can be considered as external candidates.

For External Candidates:
While priority will be given to Internal Candidates as per UNHCR guidelines, suitable External Candidates will be considered.

IMPORTANT:
Applications received after the above mentioned closing date will not be considered. All applications should be sent to:
Head of Sub-Office
UNHCR Sub-Office Aden
P.O. Box: 6090, Aden
Tel No.: 235111/231441 Fax No.: 02-234406

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Title of Post: **Driver**
Position Number: **New**
Category & Level: **GL 2**
Location: **Aden**

Entry on Duty: **01 Feb. 2008**
Duration: **One year**
Closing Date: **21 January 2008**

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Under the direct supervision of the Admin Assistant in the Sub-Office Aden, the incumbent is expected to perform the following duties, guided by the humanitarian principles and values of the United Nations, and adhering to the UN Code of Conduct:

1. Drives office vehicles for the transport of authorized personnel and delivery and collection of mail, documents and other items;
2. Meets official personnel at the airport and facilitates immigration and customs formalities as required;
3. Responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the assigned vehicle, checks oil, water, battery, brakes, tires, etc., performs minor repairs and arranges for other repairs and ensures that the vehicle is kept clean;
4. Logs official trips, daily mileage, gas consumption, oil changes greasing, etc.;
5. Ensures that the steps required by rules and regulations are taken in case of involvement in accident;
6. Performs other duties as required.

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS
Knowledge and Skills: Primary Education, possess a valid Driving licence and have knowledge of driving rules and regulations and be able to undertake minor vehicle repair.
Experience: Two years of previous job experience
Languages: Good knowledge of local language and knowledge of the working language of the duty station (English)

For Internal Candidates:
Priority consideration will be given to staff members whose grades are equal or below that of the post advertised. Only candidates who have served one year in their present post will be eligible for consideration as internal candidates in connection with the vacancy. Candidates who do not meet the criteria as internal candidates can be considered as external candidates.

For External Candidates
If no internal candidate is qualified, external candidate will be considered.
If you wish to be considered for this vacancy, please submit your application and UN P11 form or a well elaborated C.V. to the Administration Section, UNHCR, Sub-Office Aden P.O. Box 6090, Aden before the closing date.

IMPORTANT:
Applications received after the above mentioned closing date will not be considered. All applications should be sent to:
Head of Sub-Office
UNHCR Sub-Office Aden
P.O. Box: 6090, Aden
Tel No.: 235111/231441 Fax No.: 02-234406

Ancient Yemeni storage method is being replaced

By: Ismail Al-Ghabri

Since ancient times, Yemenis have known the proverb, "Provision is half of the living." While storage isn't a complicated art, it makes up part of the carved works by which Yemeni civilizations were characterized in pre-Islamic times.

Ancient Yemenis would dig storage cavities deep within a rocky surface, most often on the mountaintops where they built their homes. They wouldn't dig them in the valleys because those areas experienced massive flooding.

Such storage took the shape of a barrel, with a narrow top and base and a wider middle, and is topped by a stone cover slightly larger than the top opening. However, they were different sizes, with the largest holding more than a thousand kilograms.

Basically, Yemenis used such stores

Grain Market in Sana'a. Yemenis historically used to store grains underground fearing famine.

to hold grains such as corn, barley and wheat, plugging any holes with clay in order to keep out air and water, which can cause spoiling or decay.

Most such stores were dug in safe and unobservable areas, which was attributable to Yemenis' fears of wars and incursions, to which most tribes

were exposed, as the defeated side's property became the winners' booty.

Such storage was particularly distinguished for preserving grain three or more years due to the high temperatures arising from the ground, which prevents bacteria from living or propagating there. Some Yemenis even mixed salt or coal into the grain to ensure its longevity.

In his book, "Delights of the Eye in Yemeni History," Judge Ismail Al-Akwa' writes that if a man closes the store's hole for one or two months and then returns and opens it, his skin will be burned off due to the intense heat from it. He further maintains that this high heat is the key reason such grains remain safe and edible.

Through field research conducted in several areas, two types of storage were discovered, the first being small or medium-sized. Residents dug such stores inside their homes or in nearby

areas in anticipation of or preparation for future drought or famine.

The second type of stores were large and mostly owned by the state or sheikhs. Massive quantities of grain, which supplied state forces and employees, were stored there and taxed or fined by the state. Some of these authoritative bodies dug several large stores interconnected via canals to ensure that grain was poured into each until they became full.

Such stores can be found in factories previously used for caravan transfers and trading commodities. Ancient civilizations also would dig large stores inside fortified castles and forts to supply defense forces during times of war. Spanning the nation, most such stores date to the Himyarite state, whose successors subsequently used them for the same purposes.

However, modern Yemenis recently have begun refraining from or aban-

doing such a custom. Such stores now are being replaced by manufactured products able to achieve the same results. This is also due to the expansion of markets, which allow citizens to abandon their worries regarding any shortage or lack of grains.

Ancient Yemeni civilizations were highly skilled in carving, as evidenced by various decorations carved inside homes and sitting rooms, as well as on stairs and roofs, in addition to their carving small cavities into their walls in which to store money or jewelry.

Additionally, small holes called "almadaq" were carved into the floor of a specific place, such as a kitchen, to grind grain, with some plugging them to keep salt and spices.

Ancient Yemenis refused to surrender to the mountainous terrain; rather, they utilized all natural resources to provide themselves good and sustainable living standards.

Egypt's cartoon revolution

The success of Egypt's opposition newspaper Ad-Doustour is partly the result of its policy to attract the best of the country's cartoonists. But do cartoons have the power to change people? 'Perhaps not but at least we are doing what we can.'

By: Andrew Stelzer

About 50 meters from the banks of the Nile, a mass of dreadlocks is hanging over a drawing of a man and a cow in a hospital waiting room. The dreads belong to Makhrouf, and right now, he's putting his politics on paper.

"You can see the poor man with a cow; he's talking to someone, and he's saying: 'Me and my cow are sick and we need free medical services,'" explained the 25 year-old cartoonist.

"The other man hasn't said anything yet, but I think he will say no....The idea is that the man and the cow have the same disease. They are all working class, animal working class."

There are several desks in the room, and a whole lot of graffiti on the walls. Down the hall, the journalists and editors of Ad-Doustour newspaper are strug-

gling to find the words to describe what they say is the failed presidency of Hosni Mubarak - without going too far. In here, however, the ink pens are for sketching, and the rules are quite different.

"Cartoon is an art of assault. You are attacking something negative you see," said Qundeel, who at 21 years old, is the youngest of eight cartoonists at Ad-Doustour. (Both Qundeel and Makhrouf use only one name.)

While Mubarak claimed no involvement, Qundeel said it was clearly a tactic, orchestrated from the top, with the aim of "annoying" the paper and its editor - quite possibly in retaliation for a publication which spends a lot of its time doing the same to the president.

"We are against [Mubarak] because he ignores peoples' needs, and because he is so arrogant and undemocratic," Qundeel said. His personal complaints

in basic services, including clean water. In the editorial, he lamented that neglect by the government was the cause of the unsanitary conditions. A lawyer from the part of town being discussed filed suit against the editor, claiming that he had insulted president Mubarak.

(Note: Issa and four other newspaper editors are appealing a one-year jail sentence after Egyptian authorities charged them in September with "humiliating the symbols of the ruling National Democratic Party.")

Originally from a small town on the Mediterranean coast, Qundeel started out at age 17 with a drawing for a children's magazine. There was no pay, but his mother, a well-known poet and author herself, paid him a 10 pounds (less than \$2) as encouragement. Two years later, he got his first month's salary from Ad Dustour - less than \$40.

Makhrouf was paid 30 Egyptian pounds (about \$5) for his first cartoon at a small newspaper. He spent the next few years making ends meet by drawing portraits for people and doing small jobs here and there, then got a break and was hired by a book publishing house for the equivalent of \$80 a month.

Finally, the call came from the newly reformed Ad Doustour, and while he's still not making a lot of money, "the experiment is working."

He means not only for the paper, but for him as well. Makhrouf's work has been noticed, and he's gotten work at other publications. Best of all, he hasn't been pigeon-holed yet as an "anti-regime cartoonist."

Originally from a small town on the Mediterranean coast, Qundeel started out at age 17 with a drawing for a children's magazine. There was no pay, but his mother, a well-known poet and author herself, paid him a 10 pounds (less than \$2) as encouragement. Two years later, he got his first month's salary from Ad Dustour - less than \$40.

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Kept out of this week's paper was a drawing of two dogs: a big one, with a metal safe in its jaws, and a smaller pooch with a key in its mouth. To an Egyptian eye, there can be no doubt that Makhrouf is talking about Mubarak and the son to whom he wants to transfer power some day.

But the editors told Makhrouf that portraying Mubarak as a dog could be seen as offensive, and over his objections, the cartoon was shelved. Instead readers were treated to a drawing of a king with a crown pushing an angry-looking, screaming baby in a carriage, also wearing a crown.

Makhrouf said the censoring of his cartoons has increased in the three years he's drawn for the paper, but he doesn't blame the editor in chief.

"He's not banning because he wants to. He's banning it because the society and the conditions are not OK with you saying these things. He's being careful, not trying to control us."

Editor In-Chief Issa has good reason to be careful. Ad Dustour (translated: 'The Constitution') was originally started up in the 1990's and shut down by Mubarak's government for a decade.

Originally from a small town on the Mediterranean coast, Qundeel started out at age 17 with a drawing for a children's magazine. There was no pay, but his mother, a well-known poet and author herself, paid him a 10 pounds (less than \$2) as encouragement. Two years later, he got his first month's salary from Ad Dustour - less than \$40.

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the topic of blogs; Qundeel gets to do the cartoons that accompany them.

One recent paper featured drawings of one computer spying on another, a mouse challenging a police-looking watchdog, and a policeman standing behind a PC monitor, which reveals his underwear.

"I wanted to say that blogging is revealing how weak our police really are. Lots of bloggers have posted videos of people being beaten up in police stations. I want the policemen to know that they are being watched and that people know what they are doing."

But the problem these days is that it's the bloggers who are being watched, and sometimes jailed.

"If I was scared to go to jail for a blog I wouldn't even work for the newspaper," says Qundeel. And he has hope that there are many others like him.

"Blogging will grow and create a new generation of people who are more used to expressing themselves and less scared. Our parents are scared, and older people in general are scared because they have witnessed many things and they never had the opportunity to express themselves. They just lived their lives silently and never tried to talk, so they are too scared to try now. But our generation is I think, more brave."

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Egyptian cartoonist Makhrouf at work at Ad-Doustour newspaper

Copycats

Ad Doustour, meanwhile, is selling 50,000 copies a day, and the weekly edition (the one filled with dozens of cartoons) moves more than 120,000. According to Qundeel, the paper is now 'second in sales, and third in importance.'"

In Egypt, seeing Ad Doustour's success, other newspapers are hiring their own cartoonists. Qundeel is glad the other papers are recognizing the power of the cartoon, but warns that if it's not done with solid politics behind it, they are doomed to fail.

He used the example of Al-Ahram, a pro-government paper, with the highest circulation in the country. They had several cartoonists, but having to back the government line, "made (the artists) take their teeth off and cut their claws."

So are these young mavericks making a difference?

"I wish I could really change people [with my cartoons], but I don't think they are going to," Makhrouf said. "I may be in conflict with reality, I may confront it and assault it. I may tell the people what's bad about it, but I can't change it, not in Egypt."

Qundeel added that, "people might know that if they went out and had a revolution, they could change the president and the government, but they don't. Maybe they are too scared, maybe they just don't care anymore and they think that living in bad conditions is better than going to jail or getting killed."

But, Makhrouf said: "At least we feel we are doing what we can. And when I'm asked, I can say that the failure of our government is not my fault."

Dr. Mohammed Salem Noman to the Yemen Times:

Pesticides are responsible for 95% of liver diseases

According to health experts, some foodstuffs, whether imported or locally produced, can cause liver diseases such as hepatitis and cirrhosis. Pesticides used on fruits and vegetables have yet another effect upon the liver, as they contain toxins. What's even more worrying is chewing the mild narcotic qat, whose cultivation requires using dangerous pesticides like dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, or DDT.

While some pesticides used on fruits, vegetables and qat are internationally banned, they are smuggled illegally into Yemen.

Khalil Al-Qaheri interviewed liver consultant and assistant professor at Sana'a University's College of Medicine, Mohammed Salem Noman, to obtain more information and details about the causes and symptoms of liver disease in Yemen.

According to Noman, the liver is a refinery that receives all food and liquids coming into the stomach orally. If such intakes are clean, the liver will be clean too; however, if they are unclean, they can cause numerous hepatic infections.

How do liver diseases and infections begin?

Hepatic diseases have many symptoms, the most prominent of which are jaundice of the eye and skin, change of urine color and feeling listless after any effort, in addition to abdominal pain, nausea and skin irritation. All of these are early symptoms of the disease, while later symptoms include vomiting blood, increased gas production or flatulence, foot tumors and hepatic coma.

While some liver patients don't experience such symptoms, they complain of constant listlessness when exerting even simple efforts, with subsequent medical checkups revealing that such individuals suffer hepatic diseases.

Patients with jaundice of the eye are considered to be in the disease's acute phase, meaning the early stage of infection, which should be treated immediately following diagnosis. Those patients experiencing the vomiting of blood, hepatic coma, increased flatulence or severe listlessness seem to be in the late phases of hepatic infection called "cirrhosis."

Does this mean that late stages of liver infection can't be treated?

Treating liver diseases in the early stages, as mentioned above, is possible; however, if a patient is in the critical stage, he or she requires almost constant medication thereafter, in addition to regular contact with an appropriate physician.

Are there specific causes for such detrimental diseases?

The causes of liver disease differ across countries and areas. For instance, in the Arab region, bilharzias is one primary cause, followed by hepatic viruses, specifically B and C. Such causes are noticeable in Yemen, in addition to the accumulation of alcohol, iron and copper, which also are responsible for liver infections.

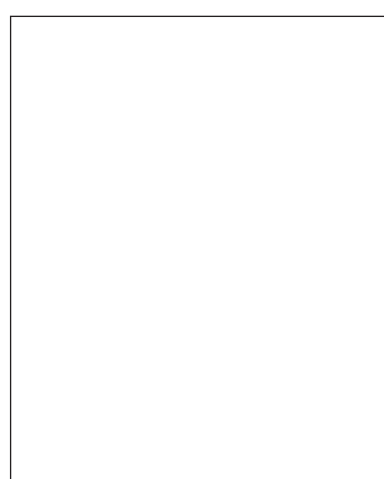
Toxins are another primary cause of illness due to the heavy use of pesticides in growing qat and other agricultural crops.

Yemen's environment appears to be responsible for hepatic infections, with bilharzias being a common cause in nearly all governorates.

As long as the environment and pesticides used in growing qat and other crops are responsible for the proliferation of liver diseases in Yemen – where there's no close monitoring of harmful factors to public health – does this mean qat consumers are most likely to experience hepatic infections?

By observing various patients' conditions, I've found that some come to me for an ordinary checkup and complaining of no illness; however, following examination and an ultrasound, their livers appear to be affected by toxins.

While the effect sometimes is clear, at other times it is potential (expected to



Dr. Mohammed Salem Noman

appear later on), and a patient may come to us very late with cirrhosis, which is disastrous, as the damage from such a deadly disease is impossible to reverse or completely cure without a liver transplant.

Who is accountable for such an unhealthy situation?

The Yemeni government and society both are responsible for the illegal trafficking of chemicals into Yemen without any oversight criteria. Internationally banned pesticides have become commonplace among Yemeni farmers, who use them in cultivating agricultural crops and qat, which Yemenis chew daily. The Yemeni government is supposed to ban the import of such harmful products, in addition to punishing those who bring them into the country.

All those who grow, sell or consume qat know that dangerous and harmful pesticides are used in its cultivation, while the toxins in such pesticides are primarily responsible for hepatic infections and destroying citizens' lives.

Qat growers, sellers and consumers should be aware of the harmful consequences of qat consumption.

A further result of the absence of

oversight is that citizens eat and drink expired products, with which Yemeni markets are flooded, while the concerned government authorities pay no attention.

Amid such a dire situation, we seem to be threatened by liver diseases and other illnesses. How can ordinary Yemenis protect themselves from such infections?

Every authority, institution and corporation must play a major role in spreading awareness among the public about the causes of hepatic diseases. Those who sell cooking oil, meat, chicken and qat should have clear consciences when informing consumers about the condition of their commodities.

Additionally, we must be careful when testing any products we consume, whether they are manufactured or agricultural.

Do liver infections affect men and women equally?

Since toxins are the cause, both men and women appear to have similar illness-related symptoms and consequences, with only a slight difference due to the fact that qat consumption is lower among women. Consequently, men are more exposed to liver disease than women due to the high qat consumption rates among Yemeni men.

Are there any statistics regarding current actual or potential liver infections in Yemen?

Based on our observations, we've found that pesticides are responsible for 95 percent of Yemen's hepatitis and cirrhosis cases, with at least 20 percent of Yemenis infected with liver diseases. Such terrible numbers clearly are remarkable, as opposed to just indicating the potential.

What's the difference between liver infections caused by viruses and those caused by toxins?

Hepatic diseases caused by viruses are totally different from infections caused by toxins, as the virus often damages the liver only after dozens of years following the infection's discovery. Such patients sometimes don't develop hepatitis until between the ages of 40 and 60, whereas pesticides destroy the liver within a matter of months up to a maximum of two years.

When pesticides are the cause, patients typically develop hepatitis between the ages of 15 and 20 and find that their livers are terribly damaged. Such patients then find themselves unable to lead happy lives, even at a younger age.

Acute hepatitis brought on by toxins can be treated, with patients gradually returning to normal on condition that they must stop chewing qat. Infections resulting from pesticides can be treated as soon as patients give up chewing qat; however, if they resume, they risk hepatocirrhosis, which doctors may find difficult to treat. In cirrhosis, the liver shrinks over time and becomes unable to perform its job.

What about treatment?

Treating the disease at an early stage is quite feasible, but it becomes more difficult or nearly impossible during the later, critical stages of infection.

Why are there symptoms such as foot tumor flatulence and hepatic coma?

When the liver ails, it leaks water and other fluids into the abdomen and feet, thereby causing swelling and increased gas production, or flatulence. A cirrhotic liver may have tumors, causing the patient to become comatose and maybe transported to the hospital unconscious. In such a condition, 85 percent of cirrhosis cases may risk death.

Are herbs and honey effective in treating cirrhosis and other liver infections?

None of these have anything to do with

hepatic diseases. If herbs and honey were effective at treating infections, we wouldn't see hepatocirrhosis patients in those areas famed for their honey production, which means that they ate honey since their early years, but they still suffer liver problems. This further implies that neither honey nor herbs are effective medicines for treating hepatic infections; in fact, honey may be a cause of such diseases.

Known as *hijama* in Yemen, even blood cupping [extracting blood through a small cut on the skin and then attaching a cup over it that forms a tight seal] has nothing to do with treating hepatic infections and actually may transmit viruses between individuals.

Infections resulting from viruses can be treated with drugs, while those caused by qat consumption are possible to treat after giving up the habit. Had herbs proven effective in treating hepatic infections, the West would have discovered that before us.

While many are hesitant or fearful of medical checkups, it may be good way to discover liver infections at an early

stage. Why do people behave this way and what's your advice to them?

Many people fear checkups, however, those living in areas known for the spread of bilharzias or qat consumption are advised to have checkups because the earlier infection is discovered, the easier it can be treated. Patients must search for specialized and experienced doctors in order to diagnose them thoroughly.

There's an effective vaccination for the hepatitis B virus, which may be transmitted via barber's tools or toothbrushes used by more than one individual. Additionally, surgical instruments also may be responsible if not used carefully or in a scientific manner. Vaccination against this B virus provides 100 percent immunity.

Checkups are necessary and citizens are advised to have the required checkups at anytime. Government vaccination campaigns offer immunization and protection from one of the causes of hepatic infection. If bilharzias is the cause of a hepatic disease, medicines to treat bilharzias are available on the market and they are 100 percent effective.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

PROJECT TO SUPPORT ANIMAL PRODUCTION (PADZEY)

The PADZEY Project is resulting from the cooperation between French Government (French Development Agency - AFD) and Yemeni Government.

The project aims to support rural development in animal production areas in order to alleviate poverty in pilot rural areas of Yemen.

The PADZEY Project is looking for a driver in its head office in Sana'a.

Required Qualifications:

- Minimum 3 years experience in similar field (Project, NGOs, Institutional).
- Effective driving License.
- Young, dynamic, hardworking, and to work in the afternoons form 8:30 a.m. to 04:00 p.m.
- Ability to travel according to the project needs.
- Good in English.

Interested applicants, must send their resume (C.Vs) within 10 days of this advertisement to:-

PADZEY Project

Fax 01- 561 913 Tel: 561 914.

E-mail - PADZEYPROJECT@YEMEN.NET.YE

Only short listed will be contacted.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

(This announcement is replacing the announcement of 3-1-2008)

The Dhamar Health and Population Office (DHO) wishes to recruit a Senior Technical Adviser and an Administrative Assistant/Translator for the implementation of the Dhamar Reproductive Health Programme 2008-2012.

Senior Technical Adviser

The Senior Technical Adviser is responsible for:

- Providing technical assistance and in-service training to the DHO and the District Health Management Teams on Health System Strengthening, Reproductive Health and Primary Health Care.
- Contributing to comprehensive planning and integrating vertical programmes while encouraging teamwork.
- Preparing and coordinating high quality training and workshop activities.
- Coordinating the hiring, timing and inputs of consultants and assisting consultants in the preparation and execution of their assignments.
- Assisting with the further introduction and improvement of quality assurance, HMIS, supervision and monitoring, logistics support, etc, and with the incorporation of new policy directions and successful experience from elsewhere.
- Assisting with the preparation of annual and quarterly plans and reports and the monitoring of quality and progress of implementation.
- Writing reports, minutes of meetings, letters and notes.
- Any other duties as assigned by the DG/DHO.

Essential competencies and skills:

- Health specialist, preferably a public health specialist with a minimum 5 years of relevant experience.
- Prepared to participate in field visits and in-country travel.
- Good communication skills, good team-working skills and flexibility.
- Fluent written and oral Arabic and English.
- Computer literacy.

Administrative Assistant/Translator

The Administrative Assistant/Translator is responsible for:

- Organizing the flow of correspondence.
- Coordinating and preparing meetings and arranging for necessary follow-up.
- Writing reports, minutes of meetings, letters and notes.
- Keeping the DHO calendar updated and keeping relevant persons informed.
- Translation and word processing tasks.
- Maintaining an effective filing system.
- In-service training of DHO and DHMTs staff on secretarial tasks, archive keep-up, computer use/skills and e-filing.
- Any other duties as assigned by the DG/DHO.

Essential competencies and skills:

- BA or BSc level of competence and a minimum of 5 years of relevant experience;
- Good communication skills, good team-working skills and flexibility.
- Fluent written and oral Arabic and English.
- Computer literacy.

Please send your application in English, including an up-to-date CV and contact details, to: dhamarhealth@hotmail.com and aalabsab@yahoo.com.

Deadline for application: 16 January 2008.

Only short listed candidates will be invited for an interview.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) invites **Yemeni Nationals** to apply for the following position with The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Post Title: FIELD PRESENCE OFFICER (FPO)

Duration: two years

Responsibilities:

YEMEN

- The person will be responsible for providing strong implementation support and facilitation to all on going operations, both loans and grants, in the country with strong result based focus.
- In addition the FPO will be involved in a pro-active pro-poor agricultural and rural sector policy dialogue articulation with government and donors, participate in country level harmonization activities among development assistance partners and more specifically manage the key policy reforms negotiated during the design of individual operations of the IFAD program in the country as well as.

Qualification:

- The candidate will be holding at least a masters degree in economics, agricultural economics or related discipline.
- Good knowledge of both the Arabic and English languages.
- He/she will have at least 10 years experience in areas of policy and institutional analysis, rural Development and poverty reduction programmes, gender analysis and change management and an in depth knowledge of economic, social and political transformation in Yemen.

Interested candidates are requested to visit our website at: <http://www.undp.org/ye/undp-vacancies.htm> or www.ifad.org for detailed terms of reference of the positions and may submit their applications indicating the title of the post applied for by mail to Human Resources Unit and response will only be made to short listed candidates.

UNDP, P.O.Box 551 Sana'a/Fax: 448892/E-mail: hr.ye@undp.org

The deadline for receiving applications is Wednesday, 23 January 2008

UNDP is an equal opportunity organization and qualified female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply.

Job vacancies

Relationship Manager

Present in Yemen for more than 30 years, Calyon Yemen is a branch of Calyon Credit Agricole CIB (the Corporate and Investment Bank of Credit Agricole). Credit Agricole Group is French largest bank and one of the world's most powerful financial institutions. <http://www.calyon.com/>

Calyon Yemen portfolio of activities covers the areas of Corporate Banking and International Trade Finance whilst providing its Corporate Clients with access to Calyon and Credit Agricole's broad international networks.

Calyon Yemen also offers Retail Banking products and services.

We are operating through 5 branches in Sana'a, Aden, Taz, Hodeidah and Mukalla

Job responsibilities

- o Manages and drives the development of a portfolio of large corporate customers,
- o Follows up the daily transactions & requests of the customers under his responsibility,
- o Ensures that all commercial issues are properly and efficiently processed,
- o Applies by the internal regulation of the Bank and by the international banking standards and best practices
- o Carries out thorough analysis of his customers' financial statements and prepares the related credit applications and reports,
- o Wins new customers & seeks for new business opportunities.

Requirements

- o Yemeni citizenship,
- o University degree and minimum of 5 years in banking or auditing sector,
- o Fluent English (spoken & written),
- o Sound understanding of his customers' needs,
- o Solid negotiation skills,
- o Commercial dynamism and motivation,
- o Strong ethics.

Submit a current CV + related documents (awards, recommendation letter, copies of degrees earned) to CALYONYEMEN@y.net.ye or FAX: (1) 274 501.

Sheikh Al-Ahmar, Shammakh and Benazir Bhuto

By: Dr. Raofa Hassan

I have become deeply sad over demise of the three because I did meet them in person and I still remember the days when I sat with each of the three. What has combined the three personalities in one article is that the year 2007 closed with their departure from this short life, and grieves and sorrows over their deaths came at a time.

The Sheikh: critical experiences recollected

While attending my preparatory school classes in the 1970s, I met him for the first time in Egypt after he visited the Arab country as part of a delegation, made up of more than 130 participants, among who were 15 ladies. We then stayed in Egypt for one week before we left for Algeria to attend the First Arab Youth Festival. At that time, the delegation had attended a festival in Egypt in the Sheikh's presence and he was engaged in talks with us, which made him closer and closer to our hearts.

Then the roads between us and him crossed much, thus meeting at one point and differing at another. Before Yemen's Reunification was established in 1990, I had a televised interview with the late Sheikh in his house under the title "ID Card". The interview was aimed at introducing fifteen great personalities in North Yemen and the same number of personalities in South Yemen to the public, as part of an official effort toward unifying the two parts of the country.

After the interview was over, I discovered that Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmar was not satisfied with conditions, listed by the Yemeni

Socialist Party, not to allow tribal leaders join institutions of the unity state. He was stunned by my high interest to meet him, as he was not holding any government's post at that time. That interview has lengthy details, contained in my diary and it revealed that life has its ups and downs.

My last meeting with the Sheikh was when he attended the concluding functions of my First Exhibition for State Employees' Uniform and Components of Identity. At the event, the Sheikh gave a kind speech in which he urged all the philanthropists to donate to the project and support it. We together toured the exhibition and had some photos in front of the exhibition's wing that contained some of his popular and locally reputed dressing style components. We were accompanied by his elder son Sadeq, who is now replacing his father as Sheikh of the Hashid Tribe.

I wanted to convey my heartfelt condolences to his daughters, wives and sons. But, having seen that solace and mourning are being made in multiple venues, I chose this page to present my cable of condolences to family members and relatives of the late Sheikh, who proved to be a kind father for all the Yemeni people including me.

Shammakh: Businessman and civil community philanthropist

It is voluntary work that brought me together with the late businessman Mahfoudh Shammakh, however, that was short-lived. We both contributed to founding the Yemeni-American Friendship Society, established in 1992 as an attempt to replace the tense relations between Unified Yemen the west by intimate ones. In the early

years of the past decade, Yemen experienced poor relations with the west, mainly the United States, over its position about the Gulf War.

Numerous are the discussions that forced us to demonstrate similar positions toward the different national issues, even if others' attitudes have been contradicting ours. Shammakh's initiative to establish Hadramout Charitable Society, which contributed much more to development programs and various works of charity, helped enhanced the spirit of joint work and cooperation between us. This society brought us closer with one another in running several activities.

The last time I met him was at the Big Economic Forum, organized by the Investment Foundation in cooperation with the International Finance Corporation and World Bank. We sit together shortly, recollecting those whom we missed along with their efforts and dedication. I did not expect that talk about the death of others will be my last personal debate with the late businessman, who never engaged himself in other private and personal activities at the expense of charity works and functions.

Bhuto: A lady that threatened the presidential institution

I recognized Benazir Bhuto in person when I participated in the Forum of Muslim Writers and Intellectuals, which was held in Islamabad upon an invitation from the lady, who was at that time serving as Prime Minister in the Pakistani government. In principle, the invitation was sent to Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Maqaleh, who was then working as President of Sana'a University.

Dr. Al-Maqaleh had not desire to travel to Pakistan due to his

engagement in other liabilities. Instead, he appointed me to attend the event on his behalf. In Pakistan, I met the lady who gave a nice address amazing all those attending the event. Other participants, including me, had another short meeting with her during days of the event. That short meeting was organized by a group of women activists, who were not satisfied with Bhuto over her poor support for women's issues in Pakistan, according to their viewpoints.

After that, meetings have shifted into other international venues in different world countries, which all encouraged me to pay closer attention to the circumstances of her life and contemplate on the lives of leading women in other parts of the world. After Bhuto returned to her home country, I became proud of her brave as she was to have been treading over mines and standing firm when hearing sounds of guns.

There has been no glimpse of hope that the woman may change her strong positions and stands. Whether the woman advocated peace in her speeches or declared her strong rejection of the schools of weapons, her motorcades have been ever exposed to blasts since the early days of her return to the country. Survival of the great woman, had she escaped assassination, would have meant a strong threat to Pakistan's presidency because of the high likelihood of her win in the country's presidential elections. Despite demise of such great people, they are believed to have left behind strong echoes in their home countries as models for bravery, generosity and kindness.

Source: Al-Thawar State-run Daily.

COMMON SENSE

In Yemen and most of the Arab World

We also cry out for a change

It is becoming indeed that after almost eight years of sloppy governance in the United States, the American people are relying on their genuinely democratic institutions to come out of the abyss brought on by the incompetence and sheer arrogance of the Bush Administration (and the Zionist machine behind it). Yes the word "change" is having strong resonance in the pre-election primaries by which the leading American political parties are choosing their favored candidates for the office of the Presidency in the United States. It is imperative that we just do not recognize this as a significant development for the United States, but an important lesson by which to learn that unless the people have the final say in the adjudication of their leaders there is no sense in believing that indeed governance is meaningful otherwise. The significance of the current American political exercise is that the word "change" is the dominating influence in creating the choice of the electors. Even the candidates from the party of the incumbent President in the White House are unflinching in detecting the widespread desire for a change for the better, and they are quick to also adopt the platform of "change" to respond to this broad based desire.

By: Hassan Al-Haifi

In Yemen, and almost all the rest of the Arab States, change has become almost a forgotten phenomenon as die-hard regimes continue to eat up or waste the wealthy resources of the land leaving the rest of the people in the country wretchedly poor and helpless in the quest to improve their livelihood and advance the overall progress of their respective countries as well as to advance the national causes that give homogeneity to our genealogical and ethnic associations. The decades old regime that continue to hold the noose tight around the necks of their people from Yemen to the ends of the Maghreb (save for Mauritania) insist on dealing with the idea of change as a heresy and thus persist in the use of the overall machinery of statecraft to repressively quell any popular cries for change and political evolution towards free democratic and peaceful transformation of political authority. It is understandable that regimes that have relied for so long on the forceful detention of the political will of their people would not succumb to the right of their subjects to adjudicate the performance of their leaders. However, it borders on hypocrisy and deception when these leaders continue to proclaim that they are the epitome of democratic governance and the reflection of free public political will. In addition, the leadership's recent bellicose cries among the security and military rank and file on a relatively unimportant occasion that every form of opposition to the horrendous performance of the regime is tantamount to treason leads one to wonder how these regimes can consistently proclaim such outlandish hypocrisy, when even the chairs in their offices have cried out demanding for change in the personnel that are occupying them until their linings have eroded. Indeed, the observer is not blind to the facts and the nation is unduly suffering great economic hardships, when the resources of the land tell us we should be in a totally different venue. Who are these fossilized leaders think their people are anyway? Their people are asking this question very earnestly as they find that no matter how hard they work in honest enterprises or occupations, their earnings simply never manage to meet the basic costs of living, while their leaders and their cheaply bought cronies continue to live high on the hog, with their bellies swelling and their eyes hidden by the awesome rings of fat that surrounds them.

The leaders have even gone to the point of allowing prices to quietly rise on even such basic commodities as cooking gas and flour, which the state has some control over, while later declaring that this is in keeping with the international trends in prices. It is amazing that the trend in the price of human beings (labor input) finds it difficult to keep pace with that enjoyed by the nearest geographical neighbors (who are ethnic brothers of Yemenis) let alone with that of the poorest of the developing states, where Yemen is now placed among the honor roll of the poorest states, primarily due to the incompetence of the present leaders, who fail to see that sooner or later, change is inevitable and healthy for the wellbeing of their people and even for themselves.

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

considerable posts in the Ministry of Justice and Public Prosecution. Experienced staff should be given precedence over new employees who still need a longer period of time to know about the nature of work in the judicial system.

It is illogical for the updated information center in the Ministry of Justice to lack the qualified technical staff because the center is supposed to have gained experience during the long time period since it was established. It has so far produced many effectively technical pieces including a legal encyclopedia, in addition to a mechanism connecting some of the specialized courts with a unified internal

system and organizing extensive computer training courses for judicial sector servants, among them the SJC Secretary-General and other senior workers.

In order to ensure a fair distribution of judicial reforms over all the judiciary organs, all those concerned have to draw closer attention to the nature of administrative work at the various organs and support them with the necessary decisions and viewpoints to bridge the persisting gaps. This should be done, based on the concept that success or failure of the judicial system is the responsibility of everyone.

Source: Al-Sahwa.net.

A call to review the Supreme Judicial Council's structure

By: Khalid Abdullah Al-Jamra

Despite regularity of its meetings, the Supreme Judicial Council is still unable to touch upon the real situation in courts and prosecutions in an effective manner. The main reason behind such a limitation is that the most prominent judicial authorities seem to be far away from the appropriately required performance.

Noticeably, the SJC General Secretariat demonstrates a modest level of performance, mainly as the secretariat doesn't contain all the council's administrative components in its specializations. Numerous are the council's departments that failed to make use of the available contents, e.g. the administrations for judiciary members' affairs and oversight, plus office of the Secretary-General, which is supposed to lead the active administrative work. Currently, these

administrations are only engaged in marginal works that have nothing to do with people's affairs and issues.

Additionally, the council experiences incomplete administrative structures like the ones related to its secretariat, and public relations, legal affairs and database departments, which the council mostly relies on, to collect the required data about judiciary members. The council can then make use of these data while enacting its legislations and resolutions, specifically the ones

associating with the transfer and appointment of judges and prosecutors, withdrawing judicial immunity from them and holding them to account.

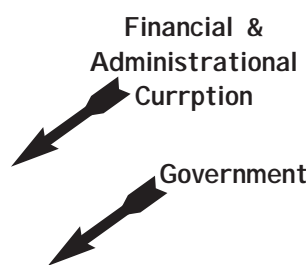
Additionally, we should not ignore the official and main role of the Judicial Inspection Authority in this respect, which the council must not dispense with.

The dynamics we hope to take place within SJC originates from the fact that dynamism is key to implementing the required judicial reforms, particularly as the most recent presidential initiative laid more emphasis on reforming the judicial system. So, the relevant authorities have to accelerate utilizing the jurisdictions delegated to them before they expire. Expiry of such jurisdictions is an expected matter, taking into consideration that they are based on trust of relevant people at the current SJC, starting with its chairman and then the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General. These officials are primarily responsible for carrying out the prospective judicial reforms.

These officials are also required to reform SJC administrative system and then let the council exercise all its jurisdictions in accordance with the constitution that stipulates independence of the judicial authority. This can not be achieved unless the council has strong administrative personalities to work according to a joint responsibility and partnership. No new employees occupying oversight, financial and statistical posts can perceive and understand the real nature of the judicial authority's business immediately after they join the council.

The situation necessitates qualified and experienced staff to occupy

With a brain tumor!



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2007: The year of assassinations

By: **Rachelle Kliger & Yaniv Berman,**
The Media Line

The year 2007 ended in the Middle East on a dramatic note, with the assassination of Pakistani opposition leader, Benazir Bhutto. Bhutto's killing by a gunman last Thursday was no isolated assassination.

This year was marked by a number of political killings, which could shape the political future of the region and affect the rest of the world.

Pakistan

Bhutto's murder has already thrown Pakistan into political turmoil. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) estimates that the parliamentary elections, originally scheduled for January 8 2008, will be postponed for at least three months.

Sher Jan Marri, 32, a prominent Pakistani politician of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League, was shot to death on October 10. Unidentified attackers on a motorbike ambushed his car and fled after shooting him. Marri was the former deputy mayor of Kohlu district, where tribal rebels have been active.

A car carrying tribal elders associated with the Pakistani government was the target of a motorcycle bomb in Sui on March 7. One of the elders was killed and 12 others injured. The perpetrators have not been identified. Experts have pointed their finger at local Taliban operatives.

On February 9, six members of the PPP were killed when unidentified gunmen opened fire on their vehicle in Attock. The attack may relate to the parliamentary elections scheduled for January 2008.

Two days earlier, a Pakistani Intelligence Bureau official, Naza Muhammad, was killed when suspected Taliban gunmen on motorcycles shot him in his car.

Lebanon

In Lebanon, a spate of politically motivated assassinations has continued since

the murder of former prime minister, Rafiq Al-Hariri, in February 2005.

Lebanon lost two lawmakers in political assassinations this year:

MP Walid Eido, 65, killed in a car bomb in Beirut along with his son Khalid and eight others on June 13. Eido represented the anti-Syrian Al-Mustaqbal (The Future) Party, headed by Sa'ad Al-Hariri, Rafiq Al-Hariri's son. Eido was a prominent critic of the Syrian-backed Hizbullah.

MP Antoine Ghanem was assassinated in a bombing in Beirut's Christian neighborhood Sin Al-Fil on September 19. Ghanem represented the Kataib party, which lost another of its members, Pierre Gemayel, in an assassination in November 2006.

Ghanem was considered an anti-Syrian legislator. In September 2004 he voted against extending the term of Syrian-backed Lebanese President Emile Lahoud.

Ghanem actively participated in the Cedar Revolution after Al-Hariri's assassination in 2005.

Not only politicians were targeted in Lebanon.

Brigadier General Francois Hajj, a senior Lebanon Army commander, was killed in a bombing in a Beirut suburb on December 12. Hajj had been named a possible replacement for army commander Michel Suleiman, who is expected to be elected the next Lebanese president.

Hajj was active in fighting Hizbullah control in southern Lebanon and had fought against the Islamist Fatah Al-Islam organization.

Syria is largely believed to be behind these assassinations in Lebanon as it seeks to eliminate opposition in the neighboring country. Damascus denies all involvement in the killings.

Also in Lebanon, on April 26, Ziad Ghandour, 12, and Ziad Qabalan, 25, were kidnapped and murdered in Sidon. The crime was described as revenge for the killing of 'Adnan Shamas, a 29-year-old Shi'ite, during the anti-government demonstration in January 2007.



The Shamas family denied involvement in the murder. Qabalan and Ghandour's fathers were both members of Walid Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party.

Iraq

Brigadier-General. Qeis Al-Mamouri, Chief of Police of Babil Province, was killed on December 9, when five successive roadside bombs exploded hitting his armored vehicle. The attack occurred 45 minutes after Major-General Rick Lynch, commander of Task Force Marne, a combined U.S.Iraqi force responsible for Babil, completed a press conference in Baghdad praising Al-Mamouri.

"I see amazing momentum on the local level. Let's focus in on General Qeis of the Babil police. He is Iraqi, and if you are anti-Iraqi, he is anti-you," General Lynch told a group of reporters the same day.

Six days earlier, Major General Fawzi Muhammad Hussein, was killed by gunmen in Baghdad's Al-Jami'a district. Hussein was a senior adviser to Interior Minister Jawad Al-Bolani, a Shi'ite who was unaffiliated with any of the Shi'ite parties.

The governor of Al-Muthana Province, Muhammad 'Ali Al-Hassani

was killed by a roadside bomb on August 20, in an attack that Iraqi officials called the result of an internal power struggle with a rival Shi'ite armed group, the Mahdi Army. Al-Hassani was a member of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, one of Iraq's main Shi'ite parties. He was the second governor of this powerful party to be killed within 10 days.

On August 11, the governor of Qadisiyya Province, Khalil Jalil Hamza, and his police chief, Major General Khalid Hassan, were killed by a roadside bomb. The two were returning to the provincial capital, Diwaniya. Qadisiyya has been the site of battles between the police and the Shi'ite Mahdi Army.

The Councilor of Faouja City, Sami Naib Al-Jumeili, was killed on April 21 in a drive-by shooting outside his home. Suspicion fell on Al-Qa'ida, which was orchestrating terror attacks against politicians cooperating with American and Iraqi officials.

Algeria

On February 6, the mayor of Benchoud, Algeria, was assassinated outside his home. No one claimed responsibility for the attack but the Al-Qa'ida

Organization in the Islamic Maghreb (QOIM) has been active in the area.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has seen a spate of attacks against high profile figures:

Mawlawi Fazel Ahmad Muslim, a top security council official for the Kamdesh and Barikot districts, was killed by unidentified attackers on April 30 when traveling between the two.

Abdol Manan, a Daman Province council member, was killed in his home on February 27. It is unclear who was responsible for the attack.

Fatanah, the daughter of former Afghan president Borhanuddin Rabbani, and her husband were attacked by unidentified gunmen in Kabul on January 27. Fatanah was injured, but her husband was killed in the attack.

Mawlawi Muhammad Islam Muhammadi, an MP from Samangan, was killed by unidentified attackers on his way to a mosque in Kabul on January 26. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Ahmad Shah Wakilzada, the deputy chief of the Nurestan Provincial Council, was shot and killed by unidentified gunmen while traveling in Nangraij on January 15. No one has claimed responsibility for the killing.

Bangladesh

A Bangladeshi public prosecutor, Hyder Hussein, was shot dead by suspected members of the Jama'at Al-Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB) Islamicist group in Jhalakathi on April 11. Hussein, presided in a case against JMB members suspected of killing judges in Jhalakathi.

On January 6, two politicians were killed in Kushtia. Afaz Uddin, a Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) activist and Abu Daud of the Jama'at-e-Islami Party. Members of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) were suspected of carrying out the attack.

Somalia

Neither has the media emerged unscathed from the chaos. In Somalia,

where the government has been fighting Islamists for over a year, seven journalists were slain in 2007. At least three of them were deliberately targeted, supposedly because of their coverage, which angered some parties to the conflict.

Mahad Ahmed Elmi from Capital Voice and Ali Sharmarke from HornAfrik were killed in Mogadishu in two separate attacks on the same day, August 11.

Elmi was shot in the head four times at close range. Sharmarke was killed after attending Elmi's funeral that day. His car was hit by a remotely detonated landmine.

Bashir Noor Gedi, the acting manager of Radio Shabelle, was assassinated outside his home in Mogadishu on October 19. The station had been attacked and threatened in the past by both government forces and Islamists.

Turkey

In Turkey, managing editor of the Turkish-Armenian Agos newspaper, Hrant Dink, was shot dead outside his Istanbul office on January 19. He had previously received death threats for his articles on the mass slaughter of Armenians in the early twentieth century. Armenians say these killings constitute genocide, whereas Ankara rejects this definition.

Beyond the killings

Beside the politically motivated blood-bath witnessed in many Middle Eastern countries, their regimes also impose restrictive laws and political arrests are part of daily life. In Egypt, Iran, Bahrain, and other states, political activists are picked up from the streets and incarcerated, usually without trial.

In Pakistan, according to many analysts, the month-long state of emergency imposed in November 2007 clearly sought to hamper proper democratic processes.

And there are those who would argue that the execution of former Iraq dictator Saddam Hussein and other officials from his regime could also constitute an assassination.

The United Nations, India & Kashmir

By: **Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai**

If promises are made to be broken, then Kashmir may be summoned to prove the treacherous proposition. Broken promises haunt Kashmir's history, and explain its tragedy.

The United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) passed a resolution on January 5, 1949 wherein it was agreed that "the question of the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan will be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite." The resolution was negotiated with both India and Pakistan and accepted by all five members of the Commission, Argentina, Belgium, Columbia, Czechoslovakia and the United States. Professor Joseph Korbel, father of Dr.

Madeleine Albright was the Chairman of the Commission at the time.

Sir Benegal Rama Rau, the Indian delegate spoke during the 399th meeting of the Security Council on January 13, 1949, "On behalf of my Government, I can give the assurance that it will not only cooperate to the utmost with the Commission itself towards a settlement in Kashmir, but also with the United Nations in securing peace everywhere, because it believes that this organization offers the only hope for peace for future generations, on a secure basis."

Sir Rau further said at the Security Council on March 1, 1951, "The people of Kashmir are not mere chattels to be disposed of according to a rigid formula; their future must be decided on their own interest and in accordance with their own desires."

Mr. Setalwad, another Indian delegate

spoke during the 572nd meeting of the Security Council on January 31, 1952, "I was the first to declare that the people of Jammu and Kashmir should freely decide their own future."

India, however, was soon undeceived of its delusions over Kashmir's political yearning. Recognizing that its people would never freely vote accession to India, it contrived excuse after excuse to frustrate a plebiscite.

With the lapse of British paramountcy on August 14, 1947, broken promises over Kashmir came not like single spies but in battalions, to borrow from Hamlet.

Princely states enjoyed three options: accession to India, accession to Pakistan, or independence. But the choice, according to India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and tacitly endorsed by the British, was to be made

by popular referendum in cases where the creed of the ruler varied from the religion of the majority. That fundamental democratic principle had been sternly applied by Nehru with military means in Hyderabad and Junagadh where the rulers were Muslim but their inhabitants largely Hindu. Kashmir presented a converse case: the Maharaja was Hindu but the majority subscribed to Islam.

On November 2, 1947, Prime Minister Nehru reiterated, "We have declared that the fate of Kashmir is ultimately to be decided by the people. That pledge we have given and the Maharaja supported it, not only to the people of Kashmir but to the world. We will not and cannot back out of it."

In recent past, Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India and General Pervez Musharraf, the President of

Pakistan agreed at the United Nations on September 24, 2004 "to explore all the possible options to settle the issue of Kashmir." Then exactly one year later, Prime Minister said at the United Nations on September 16, 2005, "What I do believe, I have also said that borders cannot be redrawn but we must work together to make borders irrelevant." One fails to understand how can you explore all possible options when the only option available is to make borders irrelevant (status quo).

On September 5, 2005, Dr. Manmohan Singh promised Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Chairman, All Parties Hurriyet Conference that India will have zero tolerance on the human rights violations in Kashmir. Then he responded while replying to a question during a press conference in New York that "The fact that there is so much of violence (in

Kashmir), the fact that cross border infiltration continues, the terrorists are active, does impose some burden on the ordinary citizens."

The train of broken promises over Kashmir might be forgiven if the consequences were innocuous or inconsequential. But I submit the opposite is the case. India exerts an iron-fisted rule over Kashmir. With approximately 700,000 military and paramilitary troops in the territory, gruesome human rights violations are perpetrated with. Torture, rape, plunder, abduction, arson, custodial disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and ruthless suppression of peaceful political dissent have become commonplace. Let us hope that the last promise over Kashmir has been broken.

Dr. Fai can be reached at gnfai2003@yahoo.com

Afghanistan and the future of NATO

Things aren't going well in Afghanistan. Sometime at the turn of 2001/2002, the Bush administration concluded that the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan was no longer its top priority and decided to bet instead on military-led regime change in Iraq. Afghanistan can thus rightly be seen as the first victim of the administration's misguided strategy.

But the Bush administration is not the sole culprit for the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. It was NATO's job to ensure the country's stability and security, and thus NATO's weak General Secretary and the European allies, especially Germany and France, share the responsibility for the worsening situation.

Yet, despite all the difficulties, the situation in Afghanistan, unlike that in Iraq, is not hopeless. There was a good reason for going to war in Afghanistan in the first place, because the attacks of September 11, 2001, originated there. Once undertaken, the West's intervention ended an almost uninterrupted civil war, and is still viewed with approval by

a majority of the population. Finally, unlike in Iraq, the intervention did not fundamentally rupture the inner structure of the Afghan state or threaten its very cohesion.

If the West pursues realistic aims, and does so with perseverance, its main objective – a stable central government that can drive back the Taliban, hold the country together and, with the help of the international community, ensure the country's development – is still achievable.

There are four preconditions of the West's success:

establishment of Afghan security forces strong enough to drive back the Taliban, limit drug cultivation, and create domestic stability;

willingness on the part of NATO to remain militarily engaged without any national reservations – with Germany and France in particular giving up the special conditions of their involvement;

a significant increase in development aid, especially for the so far neglected Southern part of the country;

renewal of the regional consensus reached in Bonn in 2001, under which

the reconstruction of the Afghan state was to be supported by all the parties concerned.

The war in Afghanistan was never just an Afghan civil war; rather, for decades the country has been a stage of regional conflicts and hegemonic struggles. So, while the rebirth of the Taliban is in part due to the woefully neglected reconstruction of the Southern and Eastern part of the country, it also has external causes. Most notably, for more than two years now, Pakistan has been moving away from the Bonn consensus, betting on the rebirth of the Taliban and giving it massive support. Indeed, without Taliban sanctuaries on the Pakistani side of the Afghan border, and without Pakistani financial backing, the rebirth of the Taliban's armed insurgency against the central Afghan government would have been impossible.

Pakistan's actions are explained main-

By: **Joschka Fischer**

ly by its strategic readjustment in light of US weakness in Iraq and the region as a whole, and by the newly strengthened relationships between India and Afghanistan, resulting in an increased Indian presence in Central Asia. In this connection, Pakistan views the Karzai government in Kabul as unfriendly to Islamabad and a threat to its key strategic interests. Without Taliban sanctuaries on the Pakistani side of the Afghan border and the backing by the Pakistani intelligence service ISI, the rebirth of the Taliban's armed insurgency against the central Afghan government would have been impossible.

But, by aiding the Taliban, Pakistan is playing with fire, because there are now also Pakistani Taliban who pose a threat to Pakistan. US policy toward Pakistan is also dangerously shortsighted and reminiscent of the mistakes the US made in Iran prior to the 1979 Islamic revolution. Nevertheless, the US at least has a

regional consensus among all the players must be rebuilt, including Pakistan, Iran, and India, whose joint responsibility for peace, stability, and redevelopment in Afghanistan must be recognized by Europe and the US. To accomplish this, a follow-up conference to the Bonn Agreement is also required.

While the war in Iraq has been based on wishful thinking, the war in Afghanistan was necessary and unavoidable because it was there that the terrorist threat of September 11, 2001, originated. It would be more than a tragedy – it would be unparalleled political folly – if, because of a lack of commitment and political foresight, the West were to squander its successes in Afghanistan. Europe would have to pay an unacceptably high price, and NATO's future would likely be jeopardized.

Part of NATO's trouble stems from the fact that a number of member states insist on the right to make their own military and political decisions, and these "national reservations" severely limit NATO's ability to act. If NATO is to succeed, this must change without further delay.

A NATO summit, during which all members would take stock of the situation and draw the appropriate conclusions, is therefore long overdue. The national reservations must be gone, and a joint strategy for success must be adopted, including a massive increase in civilian and military aid for Afghanistan, if the country is to be prevented from descending into the same abyss as Iraq. Moreover, a regional consensus

among all the players must be rebuilt, including Pakistan, Iran, and India, whose joint responsibility for peace, stability, and redevelopment in Afghanistan must be recognized by Europe and the US. To accomplish this, a follow-up conference to the Bonn Agreement is also required.

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Joschka Fischer, Germany's Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor from 1998 to 2005, led Germany's Green Party for nearly 20 years.

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Job Vacancies

Weatherford International Ltd. (WFT: NYSE) is the forth-largest diversified upstream oilfield service company in the world. Our global network includes more than 34,000 people, 730 services bases, 87 manufacturing facilities, and 16 Technology Centers in more than 100 countries. Our products and services span the lifecycle of a well, including drilling, evaluation, completion, production and intervention. The Company's range of production-enabling technologies include evaluation services, directional drilling services, controlled pressure drilling (CPD) systems, cased hole completion systems, expandable technologies, intelligent completion technologies, production optimization systems and all major forms of artificial lift system.

Field Administrator (Ref # 12)

Job Description:

- To liaise with Well Site Supervisor and client representative on all administration aspects of the operation.
- Process Material and Purchase/Service requests, Flight and Travel Requests.
- To maintain constant operating records and data cards for all maintenance and certification of all safety equipment.

Required Qualification:

- Bachelor Degree in any administration field.
- Effective English communication skills.
- Must be computer literate.

Receptionist (Ref # 13)

Job Description:

- General filing and updating filing system.
- Answering phone calls, taking Appointment and follow up.
- Check all incoming and outgoing couriers and distribute accordingly.

Required Qualification:

- Bachelor degree in any administration field.
- Effective English communication skills.
- Must be computer literate.

Wireline Senior Operator (OH-CH) (Ref # 2/15)

Qualifications:

- High diploma education or equivalent.
- Effective English communication skills, both oral and written are essential.
- Basic QHSE training, H2S and Firefighting course.

Experience:

Minimum of 5 years experience in the Oil Field Service Company

Skills:

- Open Hole and Cased Hole wireline logging operation including Winch operation
- Conveyed Logging Experience
- Should be able to assemble, disassemble, install and maintain pressure control equipment.
- Working experience with hazardous materials including Radioactive materials

Wireline Hydraulic Technician (Ref # 2/16)

Qualifications:

- High diploma education or equivalent
- Technical Institute Diploma in Electrical/Mechanical field
- Minimum 5 years of working experience on a similar position with a reputed oil field service company.
- Effective English communication skills, both oral and written are essential

Experience:

Minimum of three years experience in a similar position.

Skills:

- Open whole and cased hole logging operations.
- Working experience as Hydraulic Technician for at least three years if qualified otherwise minimum of 5 years experience
- Should be able to read the hydraulic designs and can work independently.

Wireline TCP Specialist (Ref # 2/17)

Qualifications:

- High diploma education or equivalent
- Minimum of three years work experience as a TCP Specialist
- Effective English communication skills, both oral and written are essential

Experience:

Minimum of three years experience as a TCP Specialist

Skills:

- TCP Operations
- Cased Hole wireline logging operations
- 10K Pressure Certified

Wireline Field Engineer (Ref # 2/18)

Qualifications:

- Bachelor of Engineering
- Minimum of two years experience as a Field Engineer in the Wireline Services with a reputed company.
- Effective English communication skills, both oral and written are essential.

Experience:

Minimum of two years experience in Wireline Services

Skills:

- Compact Memory Logging and Well Shuttle
- Pipe Conveyed Logging
- Open Hole and Cased Hole Wireline Logging

Air Drilling Operator (Ref # 14)

Job Description:

- Submit Service Delivery Tickets to Field Service Supervisor after completion of each well.
- To maintain constant operating records and data cards for all maintenance and certification of all Hammers and equipment used in the operation.
- To assist in the inspection and repair of Hammers.
- Accurate logging of parameters well drilling..
- Compliance of all Q&HSE procedures during the operational project activity
- Document and distribute to all parties Safety meetings, toolbox talks and SAFE start cards
- Submit Final job report to Field Service Supervisor.
- Maintain computer records of all pertinent information.
- To assist in the recording of consumables, in accordance with regular system checks during the operations, ensuring that relevant records are completed and up to date.
- To notify the need of any consumables, in accordance with regular system checks during the regular course of duties.
- To liaise with the Company man on all activities well drilling.
- To actively participate in the Weatherford Safety program.

Required Qualification:

- Effective English communication skills.
- Minimum 3 years experience on the rig.
- High diploma education or equivalent.
- Evaluation of at least "Satisfactory" as an Assistant / Operator.
- Valid driving license.

Controlled Pressure Drilling & Test Services Operator (Ref # 3/19)

Job Description:

- Co-ordination of equipment, during the rig up and rig down under the guidance of the Separation Supervisor.
- To oversee the operational staff activity ensuring that all safety precautions and practices are followed at all times.
- To oversee and document all maintenance that is suitably performed in the field. To prepare and discuss all repairs/maintenance reports with the Separation Supervisor, prior to his signing and submission for filing.
- To advise and assist Separation Supervisor with pre-activity safety meeting preparation and action points to be discussed.
- To ensure further compliance, and assist the crew's implementation, of all Q&HSE procedures during the operational project activity.
- To oversee the crews, whilst assessing the correct ability is being applied during the operation of the various UBS system components during the project, relaying personal performance assessment information to the Separation Supervisor.
- To specifically co-ordinate all shutdown system, choke manifold, separation activity onsite, as per the drilling program requirements, and whilst under the direct guidance of the Separation Supervisor.
- To assist in the recording of consumables, in accordance with regular system checks during the drilling operations, ensuring that relevant records are completed for the Separation Supervisors post well reporting.

Required Qualification:

- Effective English communication skills.
- Minimum 2 years experience.
- High diploma education or equivalent.
- Evaluation of at least "Satisfactory" as an Assistant / Operator.
- Valid driving license.

Cementing Engineer (Ref # 20)

Job Description:

- Liaise with Drilling Engineers, Engineering Supervisors, and Engineering General Supervisors to discuss and prepare procedures for upcoming jobs
- Operations troubleshooting to address customers concerns and inquiries
- Liaise with Customer Engineering to identify opportunities for Trial Testing new equipment.
- Ensure sufficient numbers of properly trained service technicians to handle service jobs
- Advise clients of latest developments in technology, products and services.
- Know and participate in ISO and API "As required", and quality process, be a leader in development of ISO/API etc.
- Understand and comply with all safety rules and company policies of Weatherford.
- Supervise staff, training; prepare job descriptions, standards of performance and performance evaluations.
- Assure that customer down time is dealt with decisively and thoroughly.

Required Qualification:

- Degree in petroleum or engineering discipline.
- Knowledge and 5 years experience in running and operating different float equipment (float shoes, float collars, stage tools, inflates and surge reduction equipment).
- Knowledge and 5 years experience with different mechanical casing products, (centralizer, centralizer subs, different casing accessories).
- Familiar with Torque & Drag calculation software
- Familiar with Surge & Swab calculation software
- Familiar with centralizer placement proposals
- Candidate should be able to provide customers with recommendations and technical advice on different cementation equipment.
- Effective English communication skills, both oral and written are essential.
- Field experience between 3 to 5 years
- Competency with general MS Office application
- Computer literacy and mathematical skills

TRS Service Technician (Ref # 011)

Job Description:

- To report at the advised customer locations, at the required time and in a fit state to commence work or travel.
- Upon arrival at the location of work and in collaboration with the assigned Crew Leader/Job Supervisor, report to the Customer Representative and to establish detail of the job to be performed.
- At first opportunity and in collaboration with the Crew Leader/Job Supervisor check all Weatherford equipment to be in satisfactory condition to fulfill the specific job requirements.
- To attend on location pre-job safety meeting if so required and wear Personnel Protective Equipment issued by Weatherford during the job and when required by the customer.
- Report any operational problems which may occur before, during and after the job to the assigned Crew Leader/Job Supervisor as soon as possible.
- Make recommendations for the safe execution of the job and report any un safe acts or near miss accidents/ incidents. Attend all monthly HSE meetings and initiate changes to existing HSE procedures or initiate new procedures.
- On completion of the job; rig down the equipment, clean and prepare for back loading.
- Report any short comings or status of non-conformance of equipment on the Weatherford equipment fault report.
- If assigned as Stabber in collaboration with the Crew Leader, inspect the stabbing board, safety line(s) and safety points. Before commencing the job, discuss with the driller on signals and procedure to be used and repeat this each time the drilling crew changes.
- To attend HSE training, equipment training and medical checks as required and arranged by Weatherford.

Required Qualification:

- Effective English & Computer skills.
- Minimum 2 years experience on rig.
- High diploma education or equivalent.
- Evaluation of at least "Satisfactory" as an Assistant / Operator.
- Valid driving license.

Closing date: 15/2/08.

If you meet the above requirements please send your CV + covering letter with the reference number to: 01 426558

Management buyouts: an attractive alternative

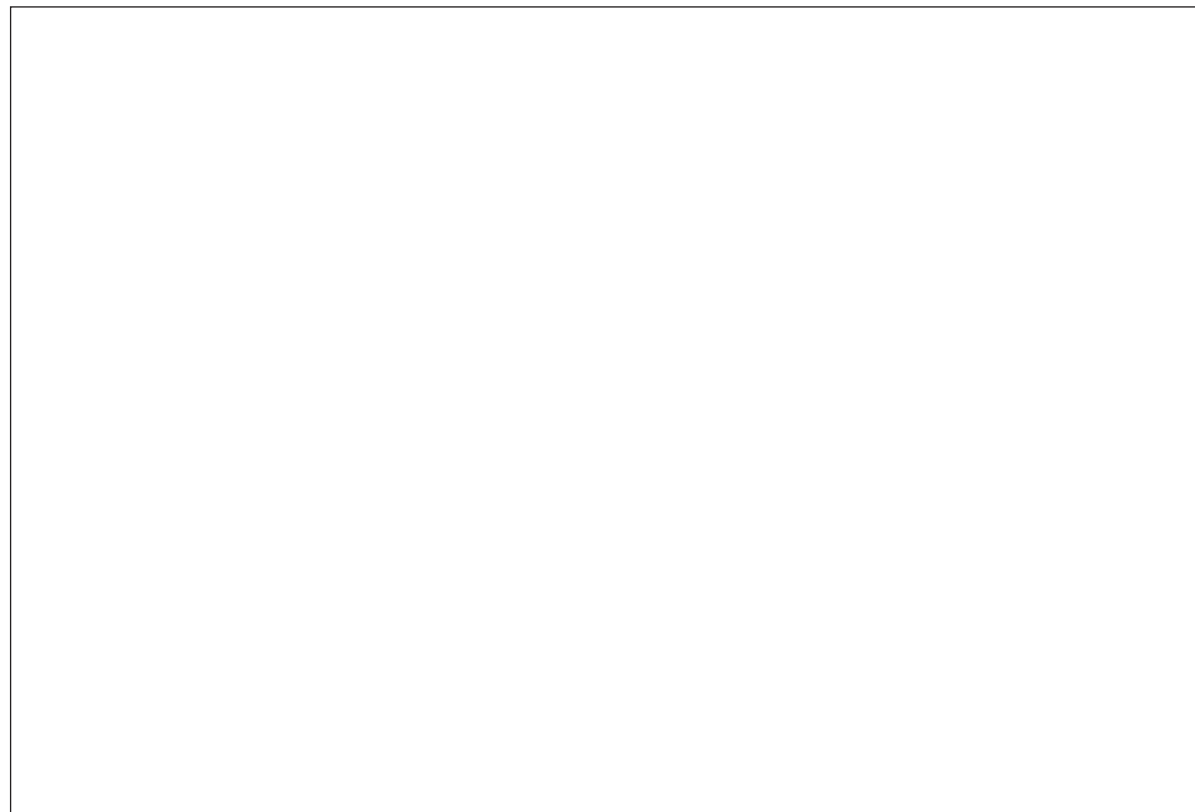
By Rami Bazzi
For Yemen Times

This article sets out a new possibility to finance growth of private companies in the MENA region, namely with Private Equity and through Management Buyouts ("MBOs") in particular. MBOs have established a presence in many other parts of the world and it is expected that this type of transaction will soon gain popularity in the emerging Middle East. MBOs have become possible in the MENA region following the rise of Private Equity ("PE") that supports managers to become shareholders through MBOs. MBO also represents a new attractive alternative for the various shareholders of the many state-owned and family-owned businesses in the Middle East to exit or rationalise their assets. To managers, an MBO can create the opportunity to execute their vital strategies for growth, aligning the interests of employees and business strategy through equity ownership.

Limited access to capital form hurdle for growth

Unlike other parts of the world, the majority of Arab businesses are family owned with only a few of the largest companies in the region listed on a stock exchange. The OECD reports that the largest twenty companies in Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia and in the United Arab Emirates are not listed on any stock exchange. In contrast, 17 out of the 20 largest corporations in Jordan have a listing on the Jordan stock exchange. The Saudi, Kuwaiti and Omani economy are dominated by few state-owned enterprises and privately owned companies such as Abdul Aziz Al Barahim, Abdullah Taha Bakhsh, Al Amoudi, Al Ghurair, Al-Waleed, Al Kharafi and family, etcetera. These businesses can be huge. The net worth of Al Kharafi and family, for example, is estimated to be over USD 5 billion.

These types of ownership often form a hurdle for the growth of private companies as expansion capital is often limited and room for entrepreneurship is restricted. Capital markets can offer access to resources that are crucial for growing companies to



MENA Region Private Equity Raised, 2000-2006 - Source Zawya/KPMG

establish the size it takes to succeed in the global economy. Besides the money to support growth, capital markets install proper corporate governance which in turn enables companies to become more transparent and efficient.

In emerging markets like the MENA region however, access to capital markets is not well developed yet and as such companies find it difficult to secure financing. The banking industry is conservative in the region with banks financing, for services companies for example, reaching only 20% to 40% of total capital or 3 to 4 times EBITDA while requiring in many cases personal guarantees of all shareholders. Companies that are fortunate enough to obtain bank financing are faced with high costs of debt reaching 9% to 14% or even higher.

The rise of the Private Equity sector

An alternative to bank financing and capital markets is provided by the Private Equity ("PE") sector which is becoming more popular in the region. Private Equity is provided by investment institutions and wealthy individuals who are prepared to back private

companies, some of them lacking proper structure, corporate governance and efficiency, in exchange for shares in the company. The equity provided is often coupled with the support of professionals that help institutionalise family businesses, implementing among others, a proper corporate governance framework that is key to sustainable growth of today's enterprises.

The figure illustrates the rise of PE in the MENA region as reported by Zawya in 2006. The 2007 Dow Jones Private Equity report an even sharper growth with a total of USD 16 billion of PE funds of which USD 10 billion in 2006 alone. Private Equity funds are surging as the number of funds and their sizes grow, both stimulated by the increase in liquidity in the region following high oil prices and government initiatives to foster privatisations.

Management Buyout – a major market in other parts of the world

The emergence of PE as a new form of capital for growth has also introduced a new phenomenon to the Middle East, namely Management Buyout ("MBO"). A Management Buyout is a

form of transaction whereby a company's existing managers acquire a large part, or all of the company, supported in many cases by PE.

European MBO market (€billion), 2000 to 1H2007

To date however, few MBOs have taken place in the Middle East even though this form of transaction has been rising globally over the last two decades. Besides the USA, where the MBO market first took off, buy-out markets are well established in Western Europe while growing rapidly in both Asia and Eastern Europe.

This global popularity of Management Buyouts is brought about by:

- Large conglomerates selling non core activities through MBOs;
- Managers who consider their company undervalued buying out existing shareholders;
- Managers of bureaucratic companies that can execute their growth strategies through MBOs;
- Incentive realignment through enhanced equity ownership of employees;
- Family owned businesses that

wish to exit or rationalise part or all of their assets;

- Strong financial results of the majority of post-MBOs;

Management Buyout – an alternative in the Middle East

So why have MBOs not previously been considered in the Middle East? To begin with, there were few financiers supporting such transactions. In addition, structuring an MBO transaction can be very time consuming and requires finance professionals to negotiate potentially complex financing structures, especially when leverage is involved. The rise of Private Equity funds as earlier described in this article, could easily solve this problem. A second reason refers to the simple fact that business owners never thought of their own managers as potential shareholders as they did not have the funds. At the same time, managers would not risk their jobs by discussing opportunities with investors with little knowledge about MBOs. This is all expected to change as family owned businesses are showing a growing interest in rationalising their assets while governments are liberating markets and preparing for the privatisations of state-owned enterprises.

A rare, but very successful example of an MBO in the region is ATOS Origin Middle East ("AOME"). AOME had all the right ingredients for a fruitful MBO; AOME was a commercially viable business, run by a capable, committed and well balanced management team. In 2006, AOME's parent company ATOS Origin France was willing to sell at a reasonable valuation price to its management, hereby supported by a Private Equity firm. The PE firm realised an exit through the sale of AOME to HP, securing an internal rate of return of 75%.

The Middle East, and the Gulf region in particular is ready for MBOs. With increasing pressure on family-owned businesses and governments to thrive in the global economy, Private Equity vendors may well hold the big shiny key to success.

Rami Bazzi is the Principal of Injazat Technology Fund, a USD 50 million private equity MENA-focused technology fund that is managed by Injazat Capital Limited, delivering innovative solutions to institutional and individual investors.

Business in Brief

43 billion Riyals in customs' income during 2007

Director of the customs authority Ali Al-Zubaidi stated that 43.67 billion Riyals is the total customs income during the financial year 2007, with an increase of 7.49 billion compared to income during 2006. He also added that this amount exceeded the expected income by 1.38 billion Riyals during 2007.

Al-Soufi: 70 percent of wage supplementation strategy implemented

Minister of civil service Hamoud Al-Soufi stated that 70 percent of the wage supplementation strategy (second phase) has been completed, adding that delays in implementation were due to technical aspects, calling on government workers not to resort to strikes or similar actions until the ministry sorts out the pending issues for the remainder 30 percent.

Yemen to establish three trade zones with Saudi and Oman

Director of Industrial zones in the ministry of trade Saleh Al-Sanabani has stated that Yemen will establish three cross-border trade zones with its neighboring Saudi Arabia and Oman. Adding that Al-Mazyouna trade zone is the first one of its kind with Oman and will expand trade channels with the neighboring country.

Agriculture Ministry warns farmers of using harmful chemicals

The Ministry of Agriculture has conducted a workshop to raise awareness of the negative impacts of using chemicals in agriculture. The workshop discussed the Rotterdam consensus relating to the limiting the use of chemical agents in agricultural productions, due to the negative consequences of these agents on agriculture produce and the health of consumers. A paper presented in the workshop pointed out that the number of chemicals used increased between the years 2004-2006 from 14 to 39 in spite of the ministry's efforts.

Capital secretariat bans street merchants

Capital secretariat is undertaking a campaign to remove all forms of street trading and unlicensed markets from popular locations in the capital, and force them to move into the designated locations for retail and public markets. Mayor of the capital Dr. Yahya Al-Sho'abi said that this measure has been done only after the designated locations are ready in order to reduce traffic congestion and to limit the pollution of these markets.

Hadhrumout development and investment expo scheduled

The Hadhrumout tourism development and real-estate investment exhibition has been scheduled from the 24 - 26 of March 2008. The exhibition aims at attracting gulf-based investors to invest in the real estate sector in Hadhrumout, mainly towards benefiting the tourism industry in the governorate.

Omani automotive oils to be retailed in Yemen

The Oman Oil Marketing Company has issued a statement indicating that its product line of automotive oils will be distributed in Yemen through its sole agent Nasser General Trading Company. The product line includes engine oil for diesel and gasoline, greasing oils, and other petroleum oil products for automotives.

Perceptions on price hikes

By: Yemen Times Staff

Inflation and increasing prices affect large segments of the society in Yemen and in other countries as well, however, the reasons for understanding why inflation happens. The Yemeni consumers are very price sensitive, and therefore are significantly affected by price increases. YemenTimes surveyed a random sample of consumers in different locations, attempting to cover a representation of most consumers.

The audience was divided into to categories, the first directly blames the government and government policies,

stating that the wrong policies of the government such as reducing the subsidies on food stuff and other products which are consumed by all levels of the society, as removal of these subsidies will affect the lowest segments far more than the well-to-do segments.

Moreover, government policies which has increased the dependence on the international market was also to blame, reiterating that in the pre-oil era Yemen was dependent on its own agricultural produce to feed its people, in fact, one of the respondents stated that during the beginnings of the 20th century Yemen provided food aid to the United Arab Emirates.

The Second category blamed the businessmen and the retailers for raising the prices, stating that the middle men claim that international prices rise and therefore raise the prices of everything, from foodstuff to clothing and accessories. A respondent claimed that a clothing item which cost 2000 in Eid-Al-Fitr four months ago, cost 3000 in Eid-Al-Adha, three months later, with a 50 percent increase which is absolutely not justifiable.

Additionally, importers of essential items such as foodstuff and wheat form an oligopoly where they "meet and agree on their retail prices" thereby creating an illusion that the price hike is universal across all businessmen, while it is a large-scale scam on the people of the republic.

Other respondents continued along the same lines, indicating that businesses overstate their operating and other costs in order to increase the overhead along with their profit margins, in turn increasing the prices by the day and the month, although the real costs do not change as such.

Another number of respondents blamed both the government and the privat sector for the increasing prices, adding that the real reason for increasing the prices is that there is no government monitoring controlling businesses, which allows them to run "free and wild" and augment the prices as they want. They claim that the govern-

Even locally produced products were over-inflated during the last few months.

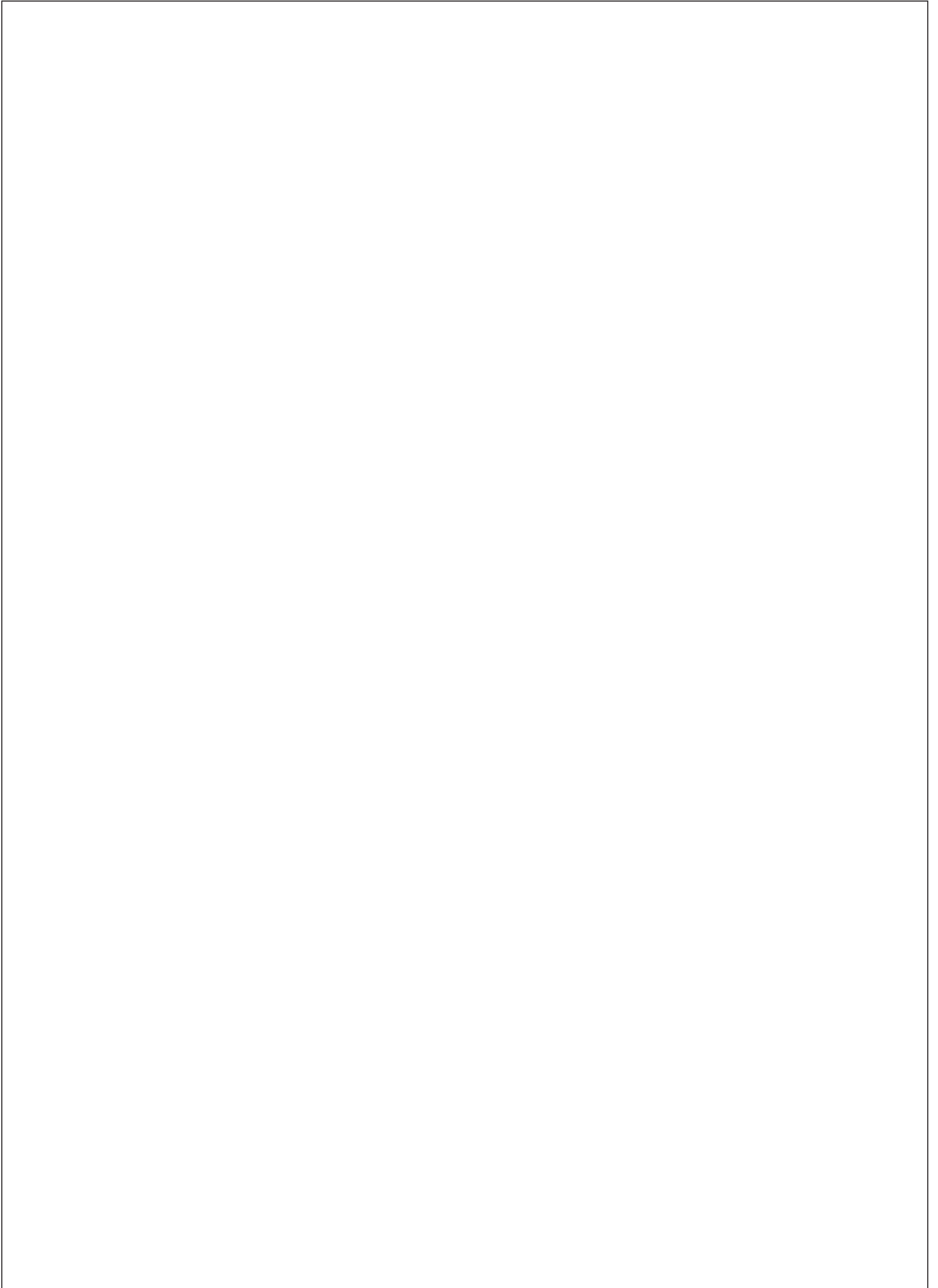
ment should protect the interests of the people against such businessmen, therefore maintaining the prices relatively stable.

When asked about the future of price changes, all respondents stated that they expect the prices to continue increasing cross all sectors, adding that they have extinguished all their coping mechanisms, and cut back on their expenses to the minimum possible.

Another similar survey undertaken by the public opinion polling center affiliated to the Yemeni center for

strategic research attributed the increase in prices to the following factors, as distributed by percentage of respondents:

- 31.2 % - corruption within the government and the privat sector
- 29.2 % - lack of effective government monitoring mechanisms.
- 22.8 % - because government officials are businessmen and serve their personal interests and business gains through price hikes
- 22.8 % - existence of monopolies and oligopolies.





You® View

Every month, there will be a fixed topic on which we would like to encourage Yemen Times readers to participate in. It could be an article, a short story, a poem, or even a picture. The person with the best contribution will receive a Yemen Times cap, T-Shirt or Mug. Send your contributions under the title of YOUR VIEW to: eljabree@gmail.com

This month is about: *An experience with a nutcase*

Have you ever encountered a crazy person and lived through a worth telling experience?

X-Nationalist

"One day while I was having dinner with my friend in a restaurant in Hadda city, we saw a mad man who used to walk around in that area. We called him and asked him, 'What made you crazy?' He got angry and told us that he was officer and a politician and started talking about nationalism and Arabism. When we told him that Arabism is dead, he lifted the plastic plate, banged it on the table and started cursing us very loudly. People gathered

and tried to calm him down. He was wearing a dirty white garment, black jacket, and a Jambia."

Hamed Thabet,
hamed_thabit@hotmail.com

Marry-go-round

"One day while I was on my way to my work, I saw a woman passing by a long dirty mad man wearing dirty clothes. He picked up a big stone and started chasing after the woman. Both of them were running circles around a parked

car. While chasing her, the crazy man was cursing the woman. I hurried and stopped the man and took the stone from his hand quietly. The man left but continued cursing that woman as he walked away. The ordeal made the women crumble in tears, she could hardly stand. I stopped a bus for her so that she can continue on her way."

Marwan Al-Saqqaq

Girl fighting with mad man

"One day my friend and I were walking

near Hadda Hotel. We came across a mad man wearing a worn out and dirty white garment and black coat. He had a terrible odor. While we were walking, he took the plastic bottle that was in his hand and threw it on my friend. She walked toward to him and wanted to hit him back. People gathered and prevented her saying, 'Hay you are a girl. Do want to fight with a mad man?!' I also stopped her and then we continued on our way."

Amel Al-Hebri

Response to Khuliady's article:

"There must be violence against women"

By: Atif Durrani
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First of all let me with all sincerity congratulate you on all your accomplishments, including being the first female editor of a newspaper in the Middle East. And that being a newspaper which is founded on supporting press freedom, respect for human rights, gender equality, political pluralism and democracy, while promoting the flourishing of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other forms of civil-society.

Your late father, Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaq, a leading economist and human-rights activist himself, laid the groundwork, may God bless his soul. In your paper's mission statement, he wrote that: "we use the Yemen Times to make Yemen a good world citizen."

Within that context, it is with tremendous disappointment that I write this letter. Being a father of two young girls and a husband to my beloved wife - I learn from them everyday and I attempt to instill in them an understanding of Islam which embraces gender equality and opposes any attempt to encourage

any form of violence, including violence against women. I can only assume you are getting countless letters from others who disagree with Majed Thabet Al-kholidy's perverse opinion in his editorial "there must be violence against women". I would urge you to counter his editorial with a piece which strongly advocates the opposite - "there must never be violence against women".

I know I don't have to lecture you on the rights of women in Islam. Islam has to be viewed in its entirety and not piece meal. If you look at the example of the Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him), you can't help but be awe struck by his absolute love for the women around him, his devotion to his wives, to his daughter and his very open and active advocacy of women's rights, from the banning of female infanticide; to the advancement of the rights of a wife over her husband; to the promotion of women's roles in many aspects of leadership. The best example in this regard is the Prophet's love for Khadija, his wife of 25 years. She was a leader in her own right, a strong woman who the Prophet respected without question. He never laid a hand

on women, and following in his footsteps, neither should we.

In his article Majed writes "dear readers - especially women - don't think that I hate or am against women; rather, I simply mean to preserve the morals and principles with which Islam has honored us." But he is hardly preserving the morals and principles of Islam, he is perverting them. This is not the legacy of Islam.

Perhaps he needs to be reminded that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said "the best of you are those who are best to their wives." Beating your wife, your daughter or anyone else, is hardly a part of the morals and principles of Islam - it is so far removed from the principles practiced by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that it should be viewed with disgust and discontent by any practicing Muslim. Unfortunately Majed's article serves to confuse Muslims already weak in their faith and discourage non-Muslims from exploring the beauty of Islam.

Rather than focusing his attention on the promotion of violence, of which the Muslim world has seen more than its share, Majed would be better to focus his attention on confronting and dis-

couraging violence, whether it be domestic or foreign.

Your paper under your leadership has been awarded the NPC's International Award for Freedom of the Press, as well as the prestigious Gebran Tueni award and the Pulitzer Prize for the Arab world. I hope its reputation is not tarnished by this warped and misleading editorial, which does nothing to advance the goals your father fought so hard to instill in his paper and in the press in general.

Majed's article is making its rounds, as such articles often do, in all sorts of right wing forums which are the breeding grounds for Islamophobia and the advancement of violence against Muslims. Articles like Majed provide the fodder to those who wish to promote violence and war in the Middle East, while suppressing the civil liberties of Muslims living in the West. Although I respect Majed's right to write this article and your paper for publishing it, I would strongly urge you to provide a counter opinion and let the world know that the majority of Muslims do not advocate or accept his warped opinion and neither did our beloved Prophet.

A day in a jail - Part 2

zBy: Ghaleb Hassan Al-Ahlassi
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"One day, just as I was ready to leave home for the store, Ala'a stopped me and ordered me to take the garbage with me."

"Excuse me, but I don't think I got you. You said your youngest brother ordered you?"

"Yes, he gave me an order."

"That's...that's really unbelievable. I mean...what did you do?"

"I told him to do it himself and he said, 'Are you crazy! Do you want me to smell bad and soil my school uniform? Do it, villainous one!' and he began insulting me and my dead mother."

"Well, that's bad," Ramzy replied, trying to calm me. "What did you do?"

"I slapped him, very roughly. He went to his mother and within minutes, the whole family was surrounding me."

"Even your father?"

"Uh-huh. He was the first. After telling him that he had insulted me and my mother, he said, 'So what? That's no reason to slap him.' His words made me crazy. When I heard his thoughtless words about my mother, I became beside myself and shouted at him, 'You know what? You're not a man! You're just a woman's ridiculous slave!' and then I ran. I ran for more than three hours without eating, resting or thinking."

I heard nothing except Ala'a's and my father's words ringing in my ears, over and over, until my legs could carry me no further. So I sat on a rock, buried my face in my arms and cried. I cried and cried until I was pushed from behind by a car for more than five meters, after which I became unconscious. When I awoke, I found myself in a hospital with a very respectable man sitting before me and a nurse injecting me. After she left, the man came beside me and apologized for the accident.

He tried to give some excuses, but I said 'Please sir, there's no need to apologize. I wish it to end.' After 10 minutes of silence, he said, 'Is there anything I can do for you?' I looked at him and then said

I'd be glad if he could help me find a job and a small room in which to live. He gave me a big smile and we made the deal. I left behind everything regarding the accident and he gave me a job, a place to live and helped me continue my education. And that's how it went. I finished high school, received a scholarship and traveled abroad to complete my studies, after which I returned and started the large company that you see."

"Well, that's great, but why are you here?"

"I'm coming to that. As you know, I left my old zone and friends more than 20 years ago. I missed them a lot. Last Friday, I met one of them and we agreed to pray in the zone mosque. While I was looking around and observing the 20 years of changes from the door to the mosque, I saw a dirty, old, tired and sad beggar whose face was very familiar, so I walked nearer to him, drawing closer and closer, until, unbelievably, I recognized him. It was an incredible surprise because it was my father!"

"What?!" Ramzy exclaimed.

"Yes, it was my father! I couldn't believe it! My heart and mind heart stopped working. He came to me, asking for charity, so I took his hands, kissed them and said, 'Don't you recognized me, father? I'm your son.'"

"My son?! he declared, turning his face from me, 'I have no children. You're mistaken.'"

"Father, I'm your..."

"I told you, I'm not your father!" he shouted at me, 'Are you giving me charity or not?'

"I'm Amir, father, I'm Amir Salem, your son. Don't you remember me?"

"Ten seconds passed without a word and then he looked at my face and said, 'Are you Amir, my son?'

"Yes father, I'm him! He threw himself at me and cried. I was so happy. For the first time in my life, I felt how warm and pitiful is a father's embrace. After praying, we went to my house and he narrated this story to me: 'After you left, your mother began insisting that I distribute my assets among her and her sons, day after day and year after year, until I gave in. I gave some to Sami when he was 18 and when Ridha became 18, I

gave some to him too and the same with Ala'a. The next year, I gave her the house as a birthday present. Not more than three months after that, we got divorced, as she wished. She kicked me out of the house and my sons disowned me. I became homeless, unemployed and all alone.' He cried and cried until I thought he wouldn't stop."

"And what did you do?"

"The next day, I sent a man to find out everything about her and her sons. He returned to my house at 10 p.m. with everything. After divorcing, she married another man, her childhood love, and they traveled to Paris for their honeymoon, but they never reached it because their plane crashed, killing them. Meanwhile, Sami, the oldest, was killed in a nightclub over a glass of wine. Ridha, who simply was careless and stuck up, committed suicide when he found himself totally broke and full of debt, while Ala'a, the most successful one, after collecting his mother's and his brothers' estates, opened his own large corporation. His firm was one of my company's best agents and largest debtors, owing me more than YR 2 million and I didn't know it was him!"

"Well, that's great. What did you do?"

"As the corporation owner, I phoned and summoned him to my office to discuss some account problems, but he excused himself, saying that he was too busy. However, he invited me to his house that night, which I found a very good opportunity to meet him and discuss everything logically."

"So, did you meet and discuss things with him?"

"No. When I went to his house as we agreed, I didn't find anyone. I tried his mobile, but it was turned off. I then waited more than an hour, but he didn't show, so I returned to my house, promising myself that I would call him the next day."

"Did you call?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because when I arrived home, my father was sick, so I took him to the hospital and stayed awake with him there the whole night. I went to my office that morning, but at 10 a.m., I went home and

slept four hours. When I awoke at 3 p.m., I found two police officers at my door, demanding that I go with them. At the police station was a very young, good-looking officer who questioned me about myself, my father and his family, concentrating much on Ala'a and what he had done to me. He then asked me if I'd met my father, so I told him how I'd met and took him in with me. Next, he inquired about my appointment with Ala'a and whether I had gone to it and then he said, 'You know, Ala'a was found dead this morning.' His words were as heavy as if a mountain had been dropped on my head. I couldn't stand it. How and why?!"

"You don't know anything about it, do you?" he asked maliciously with a sly smile. I looked at him and angrily replied, 'What?! You think I killed him?'

"Well, why not?"

"Are you crazy?! Why I would do something like that?"

"Well, revenge, for example, or maybe for his corporation."

"What are you talking about? What revenge and what corporation?" I shouted at him.

"Well, first, he was the reason you didn't complete your education and why you were kicked out of your home; second, because of what he said about your mother and what he did to your father and third, he took back your father's and your possessions. Isn't this true?"

"What the hell are you talking about?! You must be out of your mind!"

"Maybe. So tell me, why did you make that appointment to meet at his house?"

"I told you, there were some account problems and we agreed to discuss them."

"But as far as I know, those types of problems are discussed in offices, not at the agent's home."

"Our two-hour conversation ended with appeasing my family and then phoning my lawyer, who was outside the city, and ordering him to come as quickly as possible. I then was taken into a hot, dark, bad-smelling small room and that's my story."

"Wow, that's really an unusual story. Excuse me for the question, but you didn't kill your brother, did you?"

Through The Mind's Eye

By: Maged Thabet Al-kholidy
maged_thabet@hotmail.com

Dreaming as an escape from present failures

This article will address both young and old, male and female. It's about how dreaming sometimes is wrongly used as an escape from failures in reality. This is something common to all of us. This isn't a call to stop dreaming, but rather an encouragement to turn dreams into reality instead of the opposite.

All of us have the right to be ambitious. Such ambition is (and should be) like a torch in one's life to attain something. It's a key to success. It keeps one behaving and doing his best to achieve his life's ultimate aim.

When ambition becomes "only a dream," it remains as those things hardly achieved in reality. What I mean is that some people have ambitions to be something, thinking and talking about it constantly; however, they take no action to achieve it.

The worst case involves those who take no steps toward their ambition, but they also take no action in normal matters; consequently, they meet nothing more than failure. However, such individuals also fail to learn their lessons from this so as to avoid the same result in the future, instead claiming some other unreasonable reasons and justifying that they have even better ambitions to achieve soon.

Having ambition to achieve something encourages people to do their best to achieve that dream. For many, this is normal. However, fear of failure can haunt their minds and consume all of their thoughts, not regarding how to fulfill that dream, but thinking and imagining how it'll be if and when it becomes reality.

Such individuals continually justify themselves in this way and never get fed up; instead, they escape the bitter reality of their failures into a world full of dreams only to deceive themselves.

To illustrate this point, let's look at a real example. A friend of mine aspired to become a minister. Some used to laugh when he told this to others, but he didn't care about their ridiculous responses; instead, he concentrated on how to become a minister.

He determined that the easiest way to achieve this dream was to popularize himself as a good teacher, form relationships and then be nominated as a member of the local

council. He succeeded in doing so within two years.

As a local council member, he devoted his time and energies to helping people by chasing down projects for his region. During the election for members of Parliament, although he wanted to be nominated, he couldn't ask for that in order to avoid public misunderstanding.

However, the people themselves nominated him, providing him all possible means and propelling him to victory. Thus, he became a member of Parliament. He didn't forget those from his region, doing his best to offer them all facilities and assistance and supporting them at all times. He still aspires to be a minister, continually discovering ways to achieve that.

Another example involves those who use dreaming as a means to escape their failures in reality. It regards one who claimed that he wanted to be a great businessman. He sometimes worked to collect money to start his project, as he said.

After working a week, he took the next two to three weeks to "plan and think about" his project. However, during that time, he spent all the money he'd collected, only realizing it once the money was gone.

Penniless, he was forced to go anywhere for work, obtaining a job inferior to his qualifications and experience, but that was no shame. Instead, he justified it by maintaining that the job was only temporary because he still aspired to be a businessman and worked toward that ambition. However, he abruptly stopped working, claiming that it was time to initiate his project as an initial step toward achieve his ultimate ambition.

We may meet those from both of these cases. Regardless, only one of them should be a model for us; that is, the one from the first example, whereas the man in the second example must be avoided because he escaped his reality.

Such stories aren't merely for entertainment; rather, they are to be taken as practical lessons for each of us to contrast and then follow the better way - through our mind's eye...

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

I looked at him strangely and then said, "Of course I didn't! I'm not that foolish."

"I know, but... just..."

"Okay, no problem."

Three hours later, the cell door opened and the guard called my name. I stood, gave a surprised look at Ramzy and then went with the guard.

"Hi, Amir. How do you feel?" the officer received me into his office, smiling.

"Huh? How do you think I feel?" I answered ironically, "Tell me, sir, what do you want?"

"Well, I just want to tell you that your innocence has been proven."

"What?! My innocence? But...when and how?"

"Just an hour ago. We received a phone call from a man regarding two dead bodies behind his unfinished building, so we went there and discovered two old criminals lying dead. It was clear that they'd killed each other while dividing the large amount of money we found with them."

"Excuse me," I interrupted, "but I don't see how those criminals relate to my case."

"They are the entire relationship."

"How?" I asked in disbelief.

"The money," the officer replied, which I met with a querying look.

"After searching," he continued, "we discovered that the money belonged to a bank, so we went to the bank and after a lengthy search, we found that it had been

withdrawn by your brother Ala'a."

"Well," I said after a short silence, "then what?"

"After examining the guns and their fingerprints, we concluded that they were your brother's killers."

The officer drank a cup of water while I watched him sadly.

"Well, congratulations Amir, you can go home now. We're sorry for everything."

Not answering, I simply walked toward the door, but before leaving, the officer called out to me, "Don't forget to come with your father to take his body."

As it was too late to find a taxi and as I hadn't come by car, I decided to walk. I was so perplexed and sad. "What should I tell him?" I whispered to myself, "Your ex-wife and three sons are all gone. All died unnatural deaths and there are no killers. I should've told him everything at that time. Oh God, help me."

Before I could receive an answer, the muezzin called for the dawn prayer, so I went to the mosque and prayed, remaining there for hours and praying for Allah to help me.

At 7 a.m., I arrived home to find my wife and two children crying.

"What?...What's up? Why are you crying?"

"Father," my son began, "it's grandpa..." but I didn't wait for the rest. I just ran as fast as I could to my father's room, where I found him lying peacefully. One look was enough - he was dead.

Aden oil workers threaten massive strike

By: Hamed Thabet

Workers at Aden Refinery went on strike Saturday, Jan. 5, demanding the implementation of the second stage of the wage strategy and their professional allowances.

The three-day strike paralyzed Aden Port's shipping activities and halted work in all of the company's general sections at the refinery and its branches in Aden, including a government-owned petrol station.

According to Sa'eed Abdulmu'min, a member of the General Union of Petroleum, Mineral and Chemical Workers, the strike was conducted for two hours a day since Saturday; however, it's now been suspended for a week, during which all members have returned to work.

He notes that Yemen's oil minister, Khalid Bahah, has pledged to look into the workers' demands and form a committee comprised of union members and Oil Ministry officials to study and resolve the problem.

He further states, "If the Oil Ministry doesn't comply with our demands after a week, all members will cease working and implement a complete strike, which will incur many losses for the nation." The deadline is this Saturday, Jan. 12.

The strike time was from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., thereby showing that the workers do care about the national interest. However, as Abdulmu'min indicates, "This strike was a warning to the government to look into our demands. We're serious and will do whatever it takes."

The strike occurred nationwide, except in Hodeidah, as the former head of the union, who was against the strike, is from there.

Such action is being taken because

The petroleum sector provides 70 percent of Yemen's budget.

the company's employees seek a salary increase to offset rising daily living expenses. Aden Refinery currently employs 3,375, as compared to 2,400 in 1994. Workers note that they previously received many advantages, but the current situation is slipping from bad to worse; thus, they demand increasing their salaries.

Salaries were high when Aden Refinery Company was under British rule, but today's salaries are extremely low and insufficient to meet daily needs. The workers also are seeking a monthly incentive.

Because the refinery is Yemen's largest and therefore, must handle everything oil-related, its employees are requesting a salary increase for their heavy burden they must endure. Noting that the petroleum sector provides 70 percent of Yemen's budget, they hope to find a solution to their

problem.

Moreover, those forced to work in dangerous circumstances are seeking additional compensation for their difficult jobs. All the workers and especially those in dangerous jobs want their salaries to increase by 100 percent, whereas others seek an 80-percent increase, pointing out that Yemen's minimum wage is YR 20,000, which isn't enough to live on, while the highest salary is YR 160,000. Additionally, such workers' health expenses and living facilities aren't covered sufficiently.

There are directions from the prime Minister to meet the union in order to find a solution. Nevertheless, Bahah has the ministry's newly-formed oil committee to meet with the union members and all of the managers within the oil sector in order to conduct a real study and determine whether the

workers' demands are justified.

According to Iman Al-Qathi, a nurse at Aden Refinery's hospital, "Last year, the Oil Ministry promised to provide the hospital new materials, but until now, they've only repaired a few walls and rooms. We have a huge shortage of medicine, as well as new equipment. Added to these difficulties, the number of employees has increased and everyone brings their father, mother, etc., to the hospital for medication."

Another aspect of the workers' demands involves the refinery itself, whose conditions are detracting, as many things require repair or replacing. As Abdulmu'min notes, "The refinery isn't as it was in the past and its capabilities worsen every day. All of this is because there's no real service and the mechanisms are getting to break down in the Refinery and will stop operating and working if it doesn't get any care."

Numerous sources confirm that when the striking employees refused to obey the company's orders to cease doing so, its administration resorted to threats in an attempt to stop them. As Al-Qathi responds, "Some of our managers attempted to threaten and stop us, but they didn't succeed."

The union is appealing to Bahah to come up with a serious solution to the problem. In this regard, the oil minister has requested the union provide him all of their demands and strategies, promising that he'll look into the matter, as well as share it with Prime Minister Ali Mujawar.

"Bahah assures that the new committee will consider all of the demands given to him in order to determine the best solution. During the next week, we'll see whether our demands are approved or not; otherwise, we'll continue striking," Abdulmu'min concludes.

Sociologists conclude first conference

By: Ismail Al-Ghabri

Sociology scholars and researchers on Monday concluded the region's first sociology conference in Sana'a held Jan. 5-7 by Sana'a University under the title, "Science is the foundation for the present and the way of the future".

The conference sought to consolidate sociology concerns regarding contemporary and vital issues, as well as activating its role toward them. Around a hundred participants attended from Yemen and overseas, including sociology scholars and specialists representing numerous Yemen and Arab universities, as well as centers specialized in that regard.

Three themes were discussed, the first of which regarded sociology's scientific and intellectual breakthroughs at the theoretical, methodological and

practical levels.

The second theme addressed the field's most important and vital issues, including women, the environment, globalization, human rights concerns, civil society participation, gender employment, global terrorism, cross-cultural dialogue and sustainable development at the local, regional and global levels.

The third theme discussed updating and developing curricula for study in sociology departments, colleges and other faculties in Yemeni and Arab universities in order to keep pace with rapid scientific breakthroughs, as well as to spread and deepen the use of technical information in the field of social research, in particular, and human sciences at large.

Thirty-five studies were presented at the conference, discussing various contemporary social issues such as family in Arab nations, the horizons of the

transformation of fatherhood into partnership, nomads in Yemen, components of social structure and an anthropological study, among others.

Conference rapporteur and Sana'a University sociology professor Hamoud Al-Awdi noted that holding such a conference not only was a pioneering initiative for Yemen, but also for the Arab world.

He further stated that the conference was important for shedding light on an important area which is the crux of national and international concerns that remedy political, media and military decision-making.

Higher Education Minister Saleh Basurra stressed the importance of holding this first regional conference for sociology scholars and researchers because it examined both positive and negative human behaviors and the circumstances shaping them.

Likewise, Sana'a University Rector

Khalid A.Tameem emphasized the necessity of the conference, which addressed important social issues, indicating that it is a must to take care of the sociology departments at all universities, as they yield creative youths in the field, he pointed out.

The conference concluded with several recommendations stressing the importance of encouraging studies and addressing those social issues that have become real problems, both regionally and globally.

Participants advised countering all forms of extremism, poverty, child labor, unemployment, rural development, violence against women, tribal conflicts, crime, perversion and backwardness.

They further emphasized the necessity of outlining, studying and remedying the negative aspects of Arab communities' progress in order to cement national unity and mutual development.

A celebration of human rights

By: Nawal Ali

A group of young Yemeni leaders recently celebrated International Human Rights Day in Sana'a. The two-day event commenced Jan. 2 in the presence of numerous youth, government officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

Entitled, "Together Toward a Better Yemen Full of Rights and Freedoms," the event was organized by the Young Leaders Development Foundation, a local NGO based in Sana'a.

The first day was devoted to human rights and included educational games, such as movies and puzzles, organized

by several local NGOs.

Seeking to enhance human rights issues, the games were a mixture of entertainment and seriousness, as the youth received small prizes, but also benefited in a different way, as every game contained ethical concepts.

"The entertainment is gone in a moment, but the benefit remains forever," one female participant stated.

Most participants and coordinators were human rights activists and students from the foundation's Human Rights and Democracy Program.

The second day, participants celebrated the graduation of this program's last class. The Young Leaders Development Foundation will suspend its activities in Sana'a in order to trans-

fer them to Aden and Hodeidah governorates.

They are doing this due to their belief in the importance of youth awareness regarding human rights concepts, which is why the foundation has a specialized human rights department because it seeks to train and qualify more Yemenis, especially youth, in human rights.

This is the Human Rights and Democracy Program's fifth year and including its recent graduates, there are now 120 qualified human rights activists. All human rights advocates gathered at the foundation to participate in the two-day celebration.

"One of our most important duties is to spread human rights concepts

among youth because human rights simply means one thing - man himself," explains Iman Al-Tawqi, head of the foundation's Girls Communication Center.

Another local NGO, the Ibar Foundation for Childhood and Creativity, organized a similar event Jan. 3 in Sana'a to promote children's rights and present its institution's role toward healthy children in Yemen.

The group also used the opportunity to announce the new edition of "Steps," a book project that encourages youth to compose stories advocating human rights concepts. One of the foundation's primary activities is to publish and distribute the best stories from those submitted.

Odd News

Girls who feel unpopular more likely to get fat

Adolescent girls who rank themselves at the bottom of the social totem pole are more likely to gain weight over time than their peers with a more positive view of their social standing, new research shows.

Based on these findings, programs aiming to prevent overweight and obesity in teen girls should focus on helping them feel better about themselves, as well as improving their eating and exercise habits, study co-author Adina R. Lemeshow told Reuters Health.

In the study, conducted while Lemeshow was a graduate student at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, the researchers followed 4,446 girls aged 12 to 18 for 2 years. All were asked to rank their social standing on a 10-point "ladder," with the bottom being "people who no one respects and no one wants to hang around with" and "people in your school with the most respect and the highest standing" at the top.

The average self-ranking was 7.7, while just 4 percent of the girls ranked themselves at 4 or below. After adjusting for several factors that could influence both social status and weight gain, such as body mass index (BMI) at the study's outset, household income, and self-esteem, the researchers found that the girls who considered themselves to have the lowest social status were 69 percent more likely to have a 2-point increase in BMI over the following 2 years.

This is equivalent to gaining about 11 pounds more than expected, Lemeshow, who now works for the New York City Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, said in an interview.

"For girls, it could be useful to have programs that focus on personal skills or how to face social problems and challenges" when seeking to prevent obesity, she said.

In an editorial accompanying the study, Drs. Clea McNeely and Robert Crosnoe of Johns Hopkins University point out that low social, political and economic status are known to be fundamental causes of disease.

The current study findings suggest that self-perceived, subjective social status can also lead to illness, they note. But interventions designed to address obesity in the context of social status must be designed carefully, they add.

"Grouping together multiple at-risk youth to deliver some behavioral intervention can make things worse by creating a new peer culture organized around the very behaviors that the intervention was trying to change."

McNeely and Crosnoe call for a better understanding of how teens influence one another's health behavior to ensure that such interventions are effective. Source: Reuters

France best, US worst in preventable death ranking

France, Japan and Australia rated best and the United States worst in new rankings focusing on preventable deaths due to treatable conditions in 19 leading industrialized nations, researchers said on Tuesday.

If the U.S. health care system performed as well as those of those top three countries, there

would be 101,000 fewer deaths in the United States per year, according to researchers writing in the journal Health Affairs.

Researchers Ellen Nolte and Martin McKee of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine tracked deaths that they deemed could have been prevented by access to timely and effective health care, and ranked nations on how they did.

They called such deaths an important way to gauge the performance of a country's health care system.

Nolte said the large number of Americans who lack any type of health insurance - about 47 million people in a country of about 300 million, according to U.S. government estimates - probably was a key factor in the poor showing of the United States compared to other industrialized nations in the study.

"I wouldn't say it (the last-place ranking) is a condemnation, because I think health care in the U.S. is pretty good if you have access. But if you don't, I think that's the main problem, isn't it?" Nolte said in a telephone interview.

In establishing their rankings, the researchers considered deaths before age 75 from numerous causes, including heart disease, stroke, certain cancers, diabetes, certain bacterial infections and complications of common surgical procedures.

Such deaths accounted for 23 percent of overall deaths in men and 32 percent of deaths in women, the researchers said.

France did best - with 64.8 deaths deemed preventable by timely and effective health care per 100,000 people, in the study period of 2002 and 2003. Japan had 71.2 and Australia had 71.3 such deaths per 100,000 people. The United States had 109.7 such deaths per 100,000 people, the researchers said.

After the top three, Spain was fourth best, followed in order by Italy, Canada, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden, Greece, Austria, Germany, Finland, New Zealand, Denmark, Britain, Ireland and Portugal, with the United States last.

Previous rankings

The researchers compared these rankings with rankings for the same 19 countries covering the period of 1997 and 1998. France and Japan also were first and second in those rankings, while the United States was 15th, meaning it fell four places in the latest rankings.

All the countries made progress in reducing preventable deaths from these earlier rankings, the researchers said. These types of deaths dropped by an average of 16 percent for the nations in the study, but the U.S. decline was only 4 percent.

The research was backed by the Commonwealth Fund, a private New York-based health policy foundation.

"It is startling to see the U.S. falling even farther behind on this crucial indicator of health system performance," Commonwealth Fund Senior Vice President Cathy Schoen said.

"The fact that other countries are reducing these preventable deaths more rapidly, yet spending far less, indicates that policy, goals and efforts to improve health systems make a difference," Schoen added in a statement.