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Yemenis spending YR250-billion a year on qat

Locals worry violent protests will harm businesses

Shopkeepers in Jamal Street, where clashes occurred between anti and pro-government protestors on Saturday, are concerned that violent protests will recreate the vandalism seen in Egypt. Full report on Page 2. Story and Photos by: Sadeq Al-Wesabi



Protestors chanted anti-president slogans, telling President Saleh that although his name means 'righteous' his rule is not. They demanded that he starts packing his bags.



Security prevented protesters from reaching the Egyptian embassy. Protesters withdrew after a group of people attacked them.



These young boys were told to disrupt the protest and chant slogans in favour of President Saleh.

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Feb. 3: Yemen's 'Day of Anger'

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

SANA'A, Jan. 30 - Yemen's coalition of opposition parties, the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), confirmed that this Thursday will be Yemen's 'Day of Anger' after National Dialogue Committee talks failed to materialize.

Mohammed Saleh, spokesman for the JMP, told the Yemen Times that the opposition has planned for protests around the country.

"It will be huge, all over the country," he said.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh, head of the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) party, on Friday called on the JMP to hold talks about the proposed constitutional amendments and the country's political situation with the ruling party. These talks would have been between the four members of the National Dialogue Committee consisting of: Yemen's vice-president, the consultant of the president and the leaders of the two main opposition parties.

Continued on Page 2

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Businessman fined for holding a sale

By: Malak Shafer

SANA'A, Jan. 30 – A week ago, Abdulbaset Al-Qulaisi, a shop manager in a bags and shoe store, decided to start a sales season. But much to his surprise, he was threatened with a fine as he had not informed the Ministry of Industry and Trade beforehand.

"We did not receive a notification from the Ministry that we had to inform them of price changes. When we went to the ministry's office in Sho'b district on Sunday, they told us that it had informed businesses in the area a year and a half ago," expressed Al-Qulaisi. However, Al-Qulaisi's shop had only opened a year ago and he did not know.

"Six soldiers came to the shop and said we will have to go to the ministry's office to pay a fine," said Al-Qulaisi. "We do not know why they noticed us. Many shops near us did not receive any notice." He also said that he had to pay the soldiers YR 8,000.

The shop, Baleno Leather, received

a notice from the Ministry of Industry and Trade office stating that they did not inform them that the shop was to hold a sale.

According to Abdulbaset Al-Kumaim, head of the Ministry of Industry and Trade office, traders must inform the ministry's office if they want to increase or decrease the price of goods. Al-Kumaim told the Yemen Times that shop owners must also inform the office of the reason behind changing their prices, as some businesses decreased the price of food and drink as the expiry date came up.

However, Al-Qulaisi said that his shop sells leather bags and clothes that cannot expire. He said that he wanted to decrease the prices in order to sell the old fashioned bags and shoes and bring in new ones.

Nevertheless, according to Al-Kumaim, businessmen should inform the ministry office of any price changes. The office will then send employees to check on the goods.

Al-Qulaisi told the Yemen Times that

at this time, the negotiations between the ministry office and the shop is still ongoing. He had not been informed of how much the fine was.

Violations because of expiry date

Al-Kumaim said that food and drink prices are often decreased when they are close to expiry, and some traders increase prices just for the sake of earning more money.

Most price changing violations are found in the governorates of Sana'a, Aden and Taiz. Violations vary from increasing prices, selling expired food, falsifying the weight of vegetables, fruits and bread, and selling bad quality car oil.

Last year, there were estimated to be 2,350 violations in Yemen. Fines are imposed according to the violation and can vary from YR 10,000 to YR 20,000 (between USD 47 and USD 94). If the violation is committed again, the ministry's office can close the shop and send the owner to the prosecutor to be tried.



The Office of the Ministry of Industry and Trade has fined Baleno Leather shop an unspecified amount for holding a sale without notifying the office by sending it a letter of notification.

Yemen needs urgent private sector investment in desalination

By: Ali Saeed

SANA'A, Jan. 30 – The government has called on local and international companies to invest in desalination projects to confront the challenge of Yemen's dwindling water resources, Adel Al-Haddad, Deputy Minister for Water Affairs at the Ministry of Water and Environment, told the Yemen Times on Sunday morning.

The Mocha desalination project on the Red Sea which was proposed four years ago is being auctioned, and any foreign or local company can apply to implement the project, according to Al-Haddad.

The project will supply water to around six million people in Taiz and Ibb, which have been reported as areas in water crisis for more than a decade without any action taken on the ground.

"In Taiz, for instance, water comes to the pipe only once a month," said Al-Haddad.

At the moment 40 percent of the population in Taiz and Ibb are connected to the water service, and 25 percent have access to sanitation, according to Al-Haddad. He said that nationwide, 58 per-

cent of people living in urban areas are linked with water coverage whereas only 50 percent of people in rural areas have water in their houses. Around 76 percent of Yemen's 23 million population live in rural areas.

Four years ago, the Hayel Saeed Ana'am Group, the largest family business in Yemen was charged to study the possibility of desalination projects in Mocha to feed Taiz alone. The company completed the study, at their own cost, three years ago with multiple options of energy to be used in operating the potential station in Mocha.

Following the initial study the challenge was the supply line that transports the desalinated water from the station in Mocha to Taiz. Taiz city is 120 km distant from the station and 1,200 meters above Mocha's location at sea level, requiring six water pumping stations, according to Al-Haddad.

The study was submitted to Yemen's cabinet secretary with the expectation to receive funding from Saudi Arabia for the cost of the supply line. Six months ago Saudi Arabia announced they would

provide the financial backing to support the supply line. But until now Yemen has not received any of the funding, according to the deputy minister.

During the last four years of progress on the project, between the government and the Saeed Group, competition appeared from many parties in which some bodies rejected the idea that the Saeed Group was the sole executive party for the project. After which the project was suspended and the Ministry of Water took the chance to review the study done by the Saeed Group with some experts and consultants.

Since the project was proposed there has been much confusion on whether citizens would be able to afford the cost of desalinated water, which has been proposed to be between USD 1 to USD 4 per cubic meter.

This cost was also taken into consideration and an evaluation was done to see if the Public Water Corporation, the state body that collects water payments for water bills, was capable of running the project.

"Donors' reports showed that the Pub-

lic Water Corporation is not qualified enough to run the desalination project," Al-Haddad said. The project's sustainability was also discussed to establish which body could guarantee its continuity.

In November last year, President Saleh formed a Supreme Desalination Committee to follow up the project. The committee, chaired by the Minister of Finance, includes the Ministers of Electricity, the Civil Service, Water and Environment, the two governors of Ibb and Taiz and recently added, the chairman of the General Investment Authority and the Minister of Transportation.

The committee is responsible for the preparation of documents to assist in project implementation. In its first meeting, in November, the committee requested the Ministry of Water to gather and examine existing studies and documents related to the desalination project.

The committee also requested the ministry to create an executive analyzing unit. The unit, consisting of engineers and experts at the ministry, has been assigned to produce a proposal for implementing

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the project, as well as studying the condition of the Public Water Corporation in Taiz and Ibb and find out whether or not the corporation would be able to manage the project. The committee is currently waiting for the ministry to submit its proposal and final report, according to the deputy minister.

The Mocha station would be Yemen's first desalination project. According to Al-Haddad the state is unable to either fund or buy the project from the private sector due to dwindling revenues in the state's budget. The government is hoping international donors will also provide funds to subsidize the cost of the eventual water supply.

Until now no company has yet been

appointed to implement the project and the offer is still on the table until the government finds the best candidate for the good of the state and citizens, according to the deputy minister. As a result there is no deadline or timetable set for when the project may be completed, according to Al-Haddad.

"If this experience worked out with low costs and a good service, we will move it to other areas," he said.

The average annual water consumption in Yemen is estimated at 3.4 billion cubic meters, whereas the annual average of water recharging is only 2.5 billion cubic meters. That means Yemen is short of 900 million cubic meters of water every year, according to Al-Haddad.

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Abo Bakr Mohammed al-Kabab, the establishment's Deputy General Manager and the Marketing Manager spoke about this development and change in response to our inquiries.

Q: What are the reasons for changing your establishment's name from al-Shifa into "The World of Yemeni Honey"?

A: There are several reasons why we decided to take undertake further development and change all the establishment activities, and within it came the change of the name and our identity. We undertook within this stage the slogan, "From the ambitious development came the change, "which expresses accurately what we provide currently and what we will provide in the future.

The most important among the reasons which led us to change our identity is the confusion in the local market because of the great number of commercial stores that are carrying products with the word (al-Shifa) within their commercial names. These stores amounted to over 17 names all selling honey. They are trying to exploit our identity and fame, causing us a great marketing embarrassment in the Yemeni markets, because we are committed to keeping the good reputation that was associated with our brand (al-Shifa) in the Yemeni market. We finally came to the conviction that we should take a decisive step of development that includes changing into an identity that could not be imitated or exploited by frauds who seek to mislead and attract customers in indecent competitive methods.

Q: What sorts of prospects did you undertake in developing and changing the identity of your establishment?

A: We managed with the help of God and the wisdom of those in charge of the establishment, firstly Chairman of the Board of Directors Sheikh Mohammed Saleh al-Ashmori and the Financial Director Khalid al-Ashmori. They helped us to realize our true potential and also aided in the technical and physical aspects of changing our brand and our identity. With their help, we've achieved



Abubaker al-Kabab

encouraging and satisfactory results

Q: Did you face any difficulties in changing your commercial name?

A: The real success we are feeling is in overcoming the difficulties that we have faced, especially the internal difficulties, and we could overcome several of them and we are still continuing to face the challenges with persistence

Q: Al-Shifa Lil- Asal al-Yemeni is a name that is famous because you popularized it and because of the success associated with it. How do you think that the changes you have made will impact your goals or your clients?

A: I don't think that there is a significant impact, for several reasons, firstly the marketing plans and programs for publicizing the change and its causes as well as maintaining the distinctive logo of our establishment in

addition to maintain our current locations, whether in the capital Secretariat, Aden, Mukala or Amran. Our distinctive sales staffs, of which we are quite proud, still provide services in all our stores. You can also learn more by visiting our website www.al-shifaa.com

Q: Did you add any new services or further develop your performance for serving your clients and consumers?

A: It is to be known that this change is only one of the stages in our comprehensive development plan. We were and will continue to be in continuous development to our performance, services, and products in a serious attempt to provide the best services and finest products through our sales branches in local markets.

Q: Your establishment used to be famous in having precedence in honey marketing, what plans have you got for maintaining this important item?

A: We are keen on achieving our establishment's goals realized in maintaining the quality and fame of the Yemeni honey through the

participation in combating frauds, to support the events that boost this item, support the international events that help in its promotion and maintain its international reputation, because it is one of the most important Yemeni exports that contribute to supporting the national economy.

Q: What are the quality's

criteria for your honey and other natural products?

A: Mohammed Ali al-Dhala'i, the Assistant Manager and the establishment's Honey Examination Expert says that the criteria of honey quality depends on the long experience that they acquired through the honey examination and the study of its production areas as well as their insistence in examining the honey samples at their laboratories for measurement of its humidity, glucose, fructose and others. He added that what distinguishes them from others in the honey world is the accuracy of their classification according to production areas as well as quality.

Through access to our website, you can know the Yemeni honey production areas, which we adopt, in addition to the different kinds of honey, with their therapeutic and feeding benefits. Regarding the natural products, we are often keen to provide their best raw materials from their sources and process them in accordance with the latest producing methods, al-Dhala'i said.

Q: You are skilled in the manufacture and production of medical herbs and natural cosmetics, what new products will you have available in this field?

A: The development plan that we adopted consists of a factory that contributes greatly to manufacturing and producing natural products. It is developed and updated to be the first and best factory for honey canning and to produce natural Yemeni products that are compatible with the Ministry of Health's specifications as represented by higher authority for drugs, the reliable safety terms as well as the terms of the Yemeni General Authority for Standardization and Measurements. This shows our keenness for maintaining natural health products that are produced according to scientific and technological principals that satisfy the consumer's need for a safe natural alternative.

Q: In implementing the change and identity plan, how do you see the future of your company?

A: We are looking toward to the future with optimism. Our real future lies in the customers' confidence in our products and services. That is why we are always keen to provide them with the best and finest products in the market. Our new identity echoes our interest to make (alam- alasal al-Yemeni) The World of Yemeni honey and Natural Products symbol for confidence and a pride of excellence for our pioneering establishment.

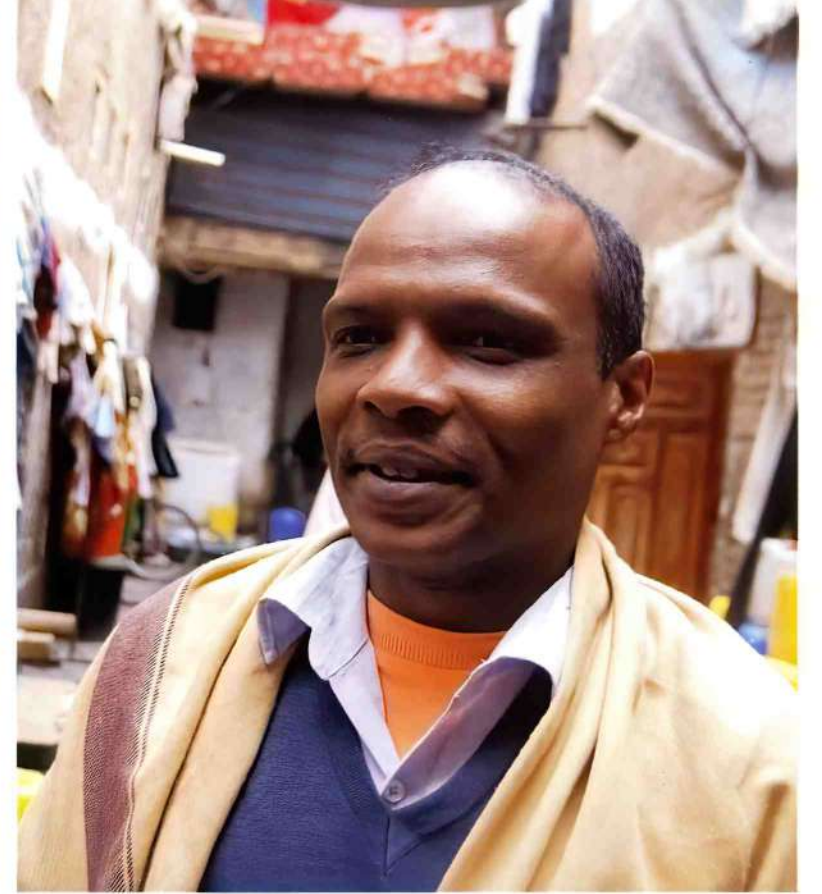


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Education to change the lives of marginalized children



The Amer and Oqbi Association wants to achieve its goal of educating 1000 marginalized children in Sana'a.



Masood Kulaib from the Amer and Oqbi Association in Sana'a.

Story and Photos by: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

The Amer and Oqbi Association in Sana'a has helped marginalized communities for 15 years. The association was established with the aim of educating and protecting marginalized people, raising their awareness, and to provide projects and activities for them, according to Masood Kulaib, the secretary general of the association.

The association works without an office although it has implemented several projects for marginalized people in the last few years. The association works from 'Samsara', a group of houses where many marginalized people live in Sana'a. The Yemen Times visited the 'Samsara' that accommodates more than 220 people from the marginalized class known as 'Akhdam' in Yemen.

"The place was full of tin houses, but the association rebuilt those houses in collaboration with Ox-

fam, and the German, Japanese and British embassies. The houses cost about USD 126,000 and helped 33 families to obtain better housing," Kulaib told the Yemen Times.

"There was only one bathroom for more than 200 people. They were standing in a long queue to go to a bathroom that was unclean and lacked enough water," he said.

He indicated that many Yemeni organizations that claim to speak on behalf of marginalized people take support for those people without actually passing anything on to them.

"Marginalized people don't receive support regularly although they really need this support. I call for these organizations to work honestly and cooperate effectively with us," he said.

"These people need health care, education, clothes, food, water, and proper accommodation. They are the poorest and most miserable people in Yemen," he added.

Kulaib stated that the most important goal for the association at the moment is to educate 1000 mar-

ginalized children.

"To achieve this goal, we urgently need a furnished office. We know how to work successfully with and develop those needy children. We want to achieve this goal because the lack of education is the main problem for marginalized people," he said.

"We have creative youth who prepare plans and projects well. We don't want money for our association. We ask for supporters to come and implement their projects in accordance with our plans," he said.

"Unfortunately, the government uses the marginalized community during elections. They only care about us during those days, but we have decided not to cooperate with them at all because we have political awareness," Kulaib said.

According to Kulaib, the association built a school, developed the water system and established a health unit for marginalized people in Zabeed with the support of the Social Fund for Development, the Rural Water Department and foreign partners.

He revealed that marginalized people in Sana'a want to return back to their villages but they cannot because their salary will be stopped if they do.

"50 people from Zabeed were brought to Sana'a to defend the revolution in 1962 and after finishing the revolution, they chose to work as sweepers for the municipality in Sana'a for 30 YR a month. This salary was considered as huge," he explained.

He said that this attractive salary made many people in Zabeed immigrate to Sana'a to find a better income.

"They didn't know that the economic situation would completely change for the worse," he said.

Before 1990, the concepts of civil society and education were absent in Yemen, especially among marginalized communities, according to Kulaib.

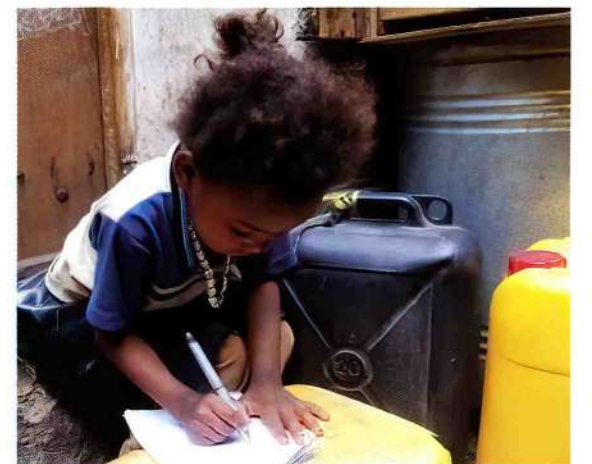
"Marginalized breadwinners didn't educate their children although they had money for that. They had no awareness about the importance of education at that

time," he said.

Kulaib criticized some marginalized men who intended to marry four wives to send them with their children to beg on the streets. He confirmed that many marginalized people don't resort to such behavior even if they were suffering bad economic conditions.

"These days, some of us can find work with the republican guard, air defense, military intelligence and other such positions. We are absent only in the field of the diplomatic corps," he said.

Marginalized people in Yemen are treated with contempt, exposed to exploitation and are not accepted to work in some respected jobs.



Many of the marginalized children in Sana'a are deprived from education due to bad economic conditions. They also suffer from health problems and lack of proper accommodation.

Most of them work as sweepers, porters or washing cars, according to a recent study about the economic situation of marginalized communities in Yemen.

Health risks of plastic bags

Story and photos by: Malak Shaher

The rising steam off the hot corn from the pan looks just too tempting for ordinary people. No oil was used to cook it, and it will not cause any harm to the heart as it does not increase cholesterol in the blood.

However, there is a hidden danger for those who like boiled potatoes and steamed corn, and their health is in danger in the long run. This danger comes not from the vegetables, but from the plastic bags they are put in.

"I do not find any obvious danger when I use plastic bags to put corn in," said Sadeq Abdulkawi, a steamed-corn seller.

The danger lies in the process that occurs after the very hot potato or corn is put in the plastic bag. Toxic chemicals from the bags can dissolve upon contact with the hot food and leach into the food before it is eaten. These chemicals from the bags can cause long-term health

problems. This leaching of dangerous chemicals into food can occur whenever restaurants and take-away shops to cover hot food in plastic.

All over the world, people talk about the dangers of using plastic bags. However, in Yemen, we face an additional danger as plastic bags made in Yemen often contain more dangerous materials that could affect our health even faster, said Abdulaleem Al-Hashimi, from the Yemen Association for Customer Protection.

The association said that the plastic bags are dangerous to the health as they cause many diseases in the long run. They recommend that consumers not use plastic bags where possible, especially with hot foods. The plastic bags also affect the environment badly as they can take decades or even hundreds of years to breakdown.

All types of plastic bags are unhealthy and environmentally unfriendly, however, the most dangerous type of plastic



Riyadh Abdulkareem, head of the Environmental Health Administration in Al-Safia district.

bags do not follow safety standards, say health experts. Moreover, people in Yemen use plastic bags extensively. They are the first and most popular choice of container in Yemen.

The extensive use of plastic bags, which has polluted the environment and threatened people's health, has led the government to recently conduct a strict campaign in factories producing bags in Yemen. Last week, the Environment Protection Authority started conducting operations in shops around Sana'a to confiscate and stop the circulation of plastic bags, according to the head of the authority, Mohammad Al-Asbahi.

Al-Asbahi said that around 12 percent of plastic bags in Yemen are manufactured in factories in the capital Sana'a, with the rest coming from other governorates or even from outside Yemen. Since last Saturday, Al-Asbahi said that there has been a massive campaign in all the districts of Sana'a against plastic bags that

are dangerous to both people and the environment. The plastic bag confiscation campaign will later involve other Yemeni governorates.

According to a Riyadh Abdulkareem, head of the Environmental Health Administration at Al-Safia district, he supervised the confiscation of more than 140 boxes, containing some 280,000 plastic bags.

Abdulkareem provided the Yemen Times with a copy of a letter from the Ministry of General Works and Roads that stated they should confiscate all plastic bags that are not able to breakdown quickly.

The letter is based on articles 39 and 99 of the General Code of Cleanliness. According to Abdulkareem, all plastic bags should contain a material called B2W, that helps the bags dissolve in a maximum of two or three years. He said that they will distribute posters recommending not to use plastic bags that do not contain this material. Bags containing B2W should be labelled so that consumers can recognize the bags that are environmentally friendly and healthy.

"There will be a very strict campaign against those who still sell such bags [not containing B2W]," said Abdulkareem. The cabinet will allow factories to continue producing plastic bags so long as they use the B2W additive that helps the bags dissolve faster.

Ordinary plastic bags can take more than 40 years to dissolve back into the soil, and can release dangerous chemicals into the soil when they breakdown, according to Al-Hashimi. He added that there are many products other than plastic bags that contain dangerous chemicals



This meal covered with plastic seems safe but many people are not aware of the possible long-term health dangers of covering food in this manner.

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that can poison the soil when they breakdown.

The cabinet issued an order in 2008 that banned the use of black plastic bags and that violations could be tried before the law, according to the association. Until people are aware of the dangers of plastic bags, especially the black ones,

the association is joining forces with the cabinet and the Environmental Health Administration to spread awareness in the community of the dangers posed by plastic bags.

According to the Al-Asbahi at least five plastic bags are used in Yemeni households every day.

YT vision statement



"To make Yemen a good world citizen."

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



OUR OPINION

Real protests or rent-a-crowd?

Many news agencies and international media have been covering the recent protests in Yemen. The world is watching, wondering if this is a time of change, or even a revolution as we saw recently in Tunisia.

I think not. I do not mean to belittle the protests or the strife of Yemeni people for that matter. We have been living through decades of suffering. And poverty is on the rise.

However, what we are missing in Yemen is a sense of "self determination."

This is very important for people who are striving to make a difference. There is no sense of urgency in the everyday life of a Yemeni that would induce them to revolt. They may be living in the worst of circumstances but for the "fix" of qat in the afternoon, everything else can wait.

Many people have asked me about the Yemeni protests and my answer has been the same: the moment you see Yemenis protesting in large numbers in the afternoon, then you should worry.

Most of Yemen's 'protests' are in fact organized rallies: crowds are packed into buses, given pre-made banners to wave and prepped on the slogans of the day. Some people might as well make a living by offering a 'rent-a-voice' service to whoever pays them.

I remember not being able to complete some paper work in a governmental office because the employees were suddenly whisked away to 'participate in a protest.' An employee later told me that they did not have a say in whether they supported the cause they were supposedly defending.

Yemeni university students were worried that they would not be able to part-take in further protests because of their exams. Protests were seen as something that should take second priority to their education. I don't blame them. I would have done the same; I need to get my regular life on track before I can participate in 'extracurricular activities.'

Until and unless protests come to mean more than just a way to pass time, then I suggest not worrying. Perhaps plan your commute keeping in mind that traffic will be crazy during the protests.

If you're looking for real change then keep an eye on Egypt. I think we can safely say that protests there have gone beyond the realm of 'extracurricular.'

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Wikileaks Part 2: Yemen's Al-Qaeda policy

By: Matt Bigge

Much has been said in the past week about the potentially troubling diplomatic relations which will result from Wikileaks' leaked State Department cables, but despite all the attention given to the Arab world's rhetorical hatred of Iran, Qaddafi's Ukrainian nurse and Russia's Batman and Robin, the Yemen cables in particular could affect US national security more tangibly than any others. A recent series of foiled terror plots on US soil originating in Yemen have reinvigorated debate over Obama's terrorism policy toward al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). And while the leaked cable only confirms what we already knew about Yemen, including its eagerness for US aid (even if it is to be used in ways it was not intended) and the presence of US air strikes against al-Qaeda, how will the public release of these cables affect the United States, Yemen, their relationship and transnational actors who also have a stake in the region?

Middle Eastern governments have always tried to walk a fine line by cooperating with the US behind the scenes to avoid public backlash and Yemen is no exception. The most damning (and oft-quoted) element of the Yemen cables is President Saleh's "We'll continue saying the bombs are ours, not yours" in reassurance to General Patreaus that Yemen is serious about helping the United States monitor and weed out AQAP. However, other parts of the cable confirm that Saleh may have other priorities on his mind such as nearly doubling US foreign assistance to the country and as American Ambassador to Yemen Stephen Seche implies, bolstering the Yemeni military: "Raising a topic that he would manage to insert into almost every item of discussion during the hour and half-long meeting, Saleh requested that the U.S. provide the ROYG with 12 armed helicopters. Possessing such helicopters would allow the ROYG to take the lead in future CT operations, 'ease' the use of fighter jets and cruise missiles against terrorist targets, and allow Yemeni Special Operations Forces to capture terrorist suspects and identify victims following strikes... 'We won't use the helicopters in Sa'ada, I promise. Only

against al-Qaeda." [Saleh continued]."

While Saleh gives the impression that he holds the same concerns as the United States, Yemen's characteristic misuse of US military aid and "catch and release" terrorist policies reaffirm that Saleh has different priorities. Former Ambassador to Yemen William Rugh argues that "[Saleh's] priority, however, is not al-Qaeda but dealing with discontent in the south; the bloody, ongoing rebellion in the north [Sa'ada]; and the complex array of tribal and local interests that threaten his leadership. Yemen's sagging economy only galvanizes Salih's critics. At Washington's insistence, al-Qaeda is on Salih's list of priorities but he has other existential concerns that trump counterterrorism cooperation with the United States."

However, with the release of confidential reports, Al-Qaeda may pose more of a threat to Saleh than he originally envisioned as public knowledge of US-Yemeni military cooperation may radicalize Yemenis against their president. Gregory Johnson, an expert on Yemen from Princeton University postulates just this, stating that "in some of the tribal areas where al-Qaida is really attempting to recruit people, having something like this where the president and his ministers are on the record talking about lying and deceiving parliament and the Yemeni public, I think it will have traction. Al-Qaida will be able to use it in the months to come." If regime security is Saleh's main concern, then somewhat ironically, he has been emboldening his opposition all along.

Whether news of the leaks and Saleh's comments reach the Yemeni public remains to be seen, but there is no doubt that AQAP will use the leaks to further their own agenda. In the 1990s, Rugh argues that "Salih calculated that strong action against al-Qaeda and its tribal allies might strengthen his domestic opponents and feared that open cooperation with the United States would validate al-Qaeda's narrative that Salih was an anti-Muslim American puppet." This same fear exists today and presents a deterrent to full collaboration with the US, however with al-Qaeda armed with the newly leaked knowledge and poised to act, the Yemeni government, which denies the reports, may find that fighting al-Qaeda is actually in its best interest and that of its most powerful ally.

The other kidnapping

By: Gregory Johnsen Waq alwaq blog

Yesterday we talked about the kidnapping of Tawakul Karman (the government has wisely decided to release her today), but I didn't mention the kidnapping of Taha Husayn Ali Muhsin (Ar.), the son of a commander in Yemen's Special Forces from the Sanhan tribe.

For those who follow Yemen closely his name should suggest that he may be a relative of some very important people, or rather one very important person. (I don't know this for sure, but the name suggests it). President Salih comes from the Sanhan tribe and many members of the tribe have risen to top position in the security and military structures.

The kidnapping was reportedly carried out by individuals under the command of Mubarak al-Mashan, the former head of security in al-Jawf. Al-Mashan, who is currently an adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, is upset that his salary was cut after a meeting with Abd al-Malik al-Huthi.

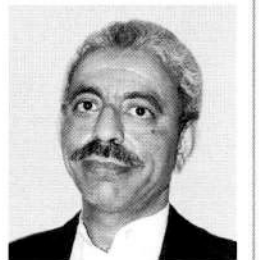
There are a couple of interesting things here. First, whether or not the government likes it, the Huthis are now a part of the political landscape in Yemen and they can't be ignored. Levying fines or withdrawing favors from those who meet or interact with them is not a workable strategy.

The second and broader point is that this kidnapping is, I fear, a template of what is likely to happen more and more in the future as the government is increasingly unable to make good on deals in the same way it has in the past. Yemen's government is in a cash crisis and as it loses money its influence will shrink. Many who find their accustomed salaries and favors no longer met will react like al-Mashan. That is, they will target the regime in an effort to force it to live up to past practices.

This is dangerous in the sense that these attacks will likely happen in the near future at a time when the regime is least able to withstand them. They will come at the same time other, diverse strands of resistance are coalescing against the regime. At that point the regime will need as many allies as it can get, and its lack of money and short-sighted actions like the al-Mashan case, will make this an incredibly difficult trick to pull off.

COMMON SENSE

Hosni Mubarak and his counterparts in the rest of the Arab world should leave immediately



By: Hassan Al-Haifi

One is really disturbed that the current hated leader of Egypt insists on continuing to fulfill the agenda of his foreign and regional sponsors even though he sees his people ready to sacrifice their lives in order to get rid of him. How obstinate can these dictatorial military die hards get? All night the people of Egypt transcending all generations were calling for the immediate dismissal, abdication or exile of this dictator, who, along with the two tyrants before him (Anwar Sadat and Gamal Abdul Nasser) have transformed Egypt from a potential economic, political and even military regional power to a yo yo state that is subservient to the United States of America and the International Zionist Establishment. It was with heavy regrets that the observer listened to Husni last night give what was hopefully to be his last words to the people he has enslaved for the last thirty years, asking for their forgiveness for all the misery he and his cronies have brought upon the God fearing people of Egypt. Instead he was adamant on insisting that the only rule that this very important country of the region is expected to get is that of his ugly repressive and exploitative regime and for God knows how long?

The observer views the events that are unfolding in Egypt as another signal to all the autocratic regimes including that of Yemen, which has even outdone its Egyptian counterpart by leaps and bounds in terms of the blood it has spilled from its constituents, the resources it has absorbed and the public assets that its icons and associates in the military, tribal and mercantile establishment have pilfered over the last thirty-three years without regard to any interests except their own narrow interests. It is also no secret any longer that Mr. Mubarak and his fellow dictators from Mauritania to Yemen are serving the interests of their regional and international masters. On the contrary, the last element that is worthy of their consideration is the interest of their immediate constituents and the interest of the fraternal citizens of the other fictitious states that form the area that represents regional crossroads of the world.

The American and Western Position One is not really concerned anymore about what the American position is on the discontinuation or continuation of the existing corrupt and autocratic regimes with their monolithic reliance on totalitarian systems that dehumanize their constituents and render the resources as perpetual rights for them and their cronies to pilferage in any way they wish. It was clear last Friday from the outset that Husni Mubarak was in continuous contact with Washington and possibly Israel, London and Paris, not to mention his partners in Sana'a, Riyadh and the other autocratic regimes that have taken this nation to the bottom of economic, political and social degradation, notwithstanding the tremendous potential that lies unscathed because of all the constraints, restrictions and hindrances these regimes have put in place, to ensure that they and their cronies are the only beneficiaries with exclusive access to the assets and resources for them to exploit as they see fit, while leaving the overwhelming remainder of the population starving or scrounging in garbage for any possible edible crumbs they can find.

The terrible element in American policy is that it has absolutely and almost incessantly continued to regard the public in the Arab World as not worthy of their consideration, this being an abeyance of the return of popular government in the region, since this would mean the prevalence of the public will. The public will in this region is manifested by the equitable allocation of natural, material and financial resources with a view towards providing equal opportunity for all to benefit from such resources, not to mention the rule of law equitably on all elements of the society, with heavier responsibility weighted to the ruling establishment, accountability for all misdeeds of public and military officials, and of course freedom and human and civil rights. These are actually what the policies of the United States and the other "champions" of human rights have prevented from getting implanted in this region and almost willingly so, under prodding from the International Zionist Establishment. The latter and their now subservient establishments that rule the Western World have taken pains to ensure that this great Arab Nation remains in slumber, by instilling these ugly regimes that prevail in the Arab World (except to a considerable degree in Lebanon and now Tunisia) and hopefully Egypt to be followed by Yemen, God willing.

Hassan Al-Haifi has been a Yemeni political economist and journalist for more than 20 years. His blog may be read at: <http://com-senfromyem.blogspot.com>

SKETCHED OPINION

By: Hamid



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UN Secretary-General's remarks to the Humanitarian Funding Conference

GENEVA, 25 January 2011 - Thank you for coming together in support of the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in some of the world's most dire circumstances.

Last year, the international community faced difficult tests.

Among them were the earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Pakistan, which brought some tremendous suffering.

But these calamities brought something else as well: a hopeful display of global solidarity.

Member States. Non-government organizations. Civil society. And individuals around the globe who stepped up and showed the caring face of the international community.

I visited both of these disaster zones and saw the difference that support was making in people's lives.

The global response to these tragedies was encouraging. But we know that not all emergencies receive the same attention or resources. Many appeals have had very low levels of funding.

We need to reverse that trend in 2011.

Humanitarian needs are growing. More people are relying on us for life-saving and life-sustaining support. More support has been needed than ever before.

That is why the Humanitarian Appeal we launched in November requests \$7.4 billion.

Most international humanitarian action depends on voluntary contributions by Member States, supplemented by private donations.

Collectively, we all need to make extra efforts to secure sufficient and predictable funding for urgent, life-saving humanitarian work. We should not leave the resourcing of humanitarian action to chance.

We at the United Nations will continue to draw from lessons learned to strengthen leadership, improve accountability, and build capacity.

We will also work to better integrate disaster risk reduction and prepared-

ness as well as climate change adaptation measures.

At the same time, all Member States can do more to reach their full potential as humanitarian donors.

That is why I have made this issue one of my eight strategic priorities for the year 2011. We are focused on how we may more effectively and efficiently respond to humanitarian crises to save even more lives.

Excellencies,

I know that this is a time of heavy financial pressure on budgets for all countries.

It can take an extraordinary political effort to secure resources for international aid, even when it is clearly needed to save lives.

The United Nations remains determined to ensure that these efforts succeed.

But to help you better, we need your help.

When Member States share information pro-actively on their aid budgets, we can forecast and plan.

If we knew better today what resources we will have for the year ahead, we could influence budget cycles early, before numbers are locked in place.

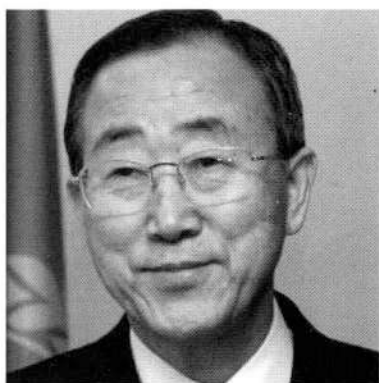
There are already some encouraging steps in this direction.

The European Commission, for some years, has published its humanitarian aid budgets clearly at the start of each budget cycle.

The United States Government recently launched a website that shows key data on foreign assistance budgets and appropriations.

Let me also mention Sweden. When I chaired a similar event a few years ago, I recall the Swedish representative announcing his Government's specific decisions on allocations among the various emergencies for that year. I am pleased to note that Sweden has repeated this good practice ever since.

If a critical mass of Member States follows these and other good examples, then we will be in a position to know,



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon

at the beginning of each year, what resources are available for humanitarian action, and to prioritize accordingly.

Ladies and gentlemen, The world's economy has changed much since the modern humanitarian system was created some twenty years ago.

Some countries have enjoyed spectacular growth and now rank among the world's largest economies.

Humanitarian giving has also expanded. Many more Member States contribute to consolidated appeals now than ten years ago, and still more contribute to the Central Emergency Response Fund, which in turn supports most appeals.

This is encouraging, and this trend must continue.

Let us always remember that the international humanitarian system helps Governments to help their own people.

To meet their survival needs, the millions of people struck by crisis require the fullest possible generosity from all peoples and all Member States.

Thank you for your participation today and for your commitment to deliver for those in need.

I look forward to hearing your interventions regarding humanitarian aid in 2011.

Together, let us pledge to make a real difference in the lives of the most vulnerable people in the world.

Arab states buy up vast tracts of African farmland as food prices skyrocket

Oil prices and food prices are interconnected. Wealthy Arab states try to create a food pipeline to stave off riots.

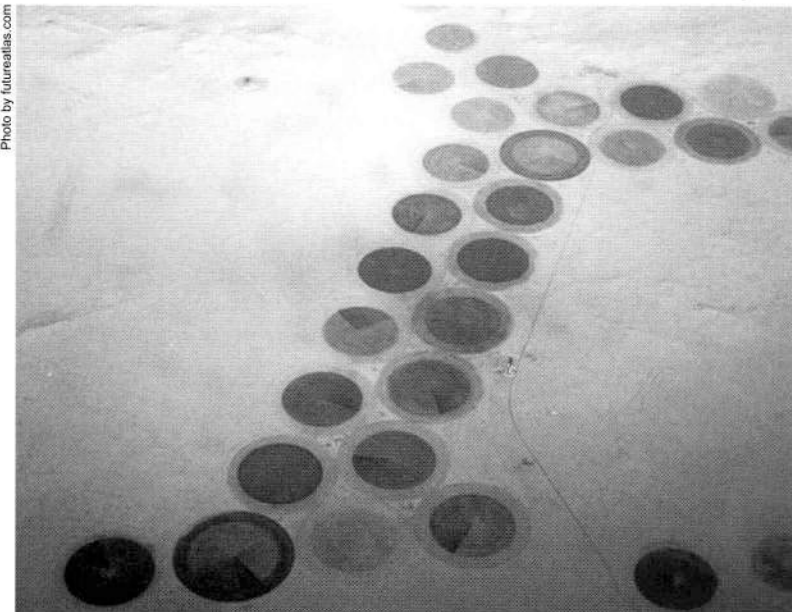
By: Susan Kraemer
The Green Prophet

As oil prices once again begin to climb past \$100 a barrel as they did in 2008 so too, as in that oil price shock, food prices are rising, too. As then, there are now riots developing in third world nations like Algeria and Tunisia, over food shortages.

In December, The United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization noted that food prices have exceeded the high prices of 2008, when the Gulf region was hit particularly hard. The IMF found that inflation skyrocketed almost 16% in the Gulf as a result, mostly driven by high food prices – driven by high oil prices. The Gulf states are reliant on food imports.

This time, the Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia and UAE, have decided to take matters into their own hands, according to Arabian Business. They are using their vast oil wealth to buy up tracts of land the size of small countries in Africa, intending to turn them into agricultural hotbeds to feed their multitudes. They have paid millions of dollars to the governments of Sudan and Ethiopia, and smaller amounts to those of Kenya, Sudan and Mozambique, for the use of hundreds of thousands of acres of agricultural farmland.

Jenaan, one Abu Dhabi-based private firm invested more than \$500 million



Desert farming in Libya. Libyan pivot irrigation / Flickr

in Africa, with a 50,000 acre farm in Egypt and 100,000 acres in Sudan, as well as properties in Ethiopia and Tanzania. Only half of the Egyptian crop is sold in Egypt. The rest is sent to the Gulf Arab states.

Needless to say, those countries also need to be able to feed their own people. It isn't easy growing food in these temperatures in the best of times. These lands themselves have hunger and malnutrition that approaches 18%. In Egypt's case, even without peak oil, climate change is cutting down on the productivity of its crops.

Understandably, these nations are alarmed by the "land grab" and are attempting to devise food export policies so that their own populations don't

starve. "It wasn't only the prices going high that worried some of the Gulf countries, it was also the fact that, at the same time, a number of major food exporters, decided to impose export bans in an attempt to keep prices down," said David Hallam, an analyst with the FAO. "So what they feared was that not only were they facing high prices, but it might not be possible to secure supplies at any price."

And that, in turn, makes the wealthy Arab states, with the food crisis for their own rapidly growing populations, only more concerned. High oil prices lead to food shortages, which have destabilizing political effects. Interesting times ahead.

Lebanon braces for a new Hizbullah-friendly government

But experts say ousted premier Hariri may yet return to the driver's seat

By: David E. Miller
The Media Line

Lebanon's new prime minister, billionaire Najib Mikati, spent his first day in office Wednesday seeking to assuage doubts among Lebanon's non-Shiite population and the West.

But observers said Mikati was starting a difficult assignment as leader of a religiously fractured country beset by foreign interference and deep divisions over whether to cooperate with a United Nations investigation into the 2005 assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Mikati's chief asset is that he was nominated for the post by Hizbullah, the Shiite movement that brought down the last government and commands a militia that outguns Lebanon official army. But Mikati will have to convince the U.S. and the West he isn't leading Lebanon into the arms of Iran and Syria, Hizbullah's backers. He will also have to convince Lebanon's Sunni Muslim and Christian communities he is a leader for the entire nation.

"The complaint that Mikati isn't representative is correct," Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous, a political scientist at Lebanon's Notre Dame University told The Media Line. "If his government holds, it would mean that the March 8 Alliance [Hizbullah's political bloc] has bid farewell to comprehensive participation in decision making."

While a democracy, Lebanon's political structure is a delicate balance of religious politics that assigns each position to a member of a particular community. The prime minister must be a Sunni as is Mikati. However, the Lebanese system, known as Consociationalism, has always granted religious factions the right to nominate their own candidates.

But members of Hariri's March 14 Alliance argued the fact that Mikati was a Sunni was less important than that he is answerable to the Shiite Hizbullah organization, rather than to his own co-religionists. Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah denied accusations

that his party was taking over Lebanon through Mikati's nomination in a televised speech Tuesday.

Nadim Shehadi, a Lebanon researcher at Chatham House, a London-based think tank, agreed, saying it would be wrong to call the new government a Hizbullah government. Mikati was too wise and experienced to allow himself to become a Hizbullah puppet. "He would bury himself by doing what Hizbullah wants," Shehadi said. "It would be political suicide for him."

Lebanon was calm on Wednesday, following two days of protests against Mikati's nomination. In a conciliatory move, on Tuesday the new prime minister called on Sa'ad Hariri, the ousted premier and a fellow billionaire, to join a broad coalition government, a proposal Hariri rejected.

Hariri's camp was unable to sustain prolonged anti-Hizbullah protests, casting doubt on his ability to effectively oppose the new government.

"Everyone was expecting larger protests," Sahar Atrache, a Lebanon analyst at the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, told The Media Line. "There was no real mobilization of the street."

Maj. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, head of the Israel Defense Force Intelligence Corps told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday that it was "unclear" whether Hizbullah would try to seize power, pointing to the problems Hamas, the Islamic Palestinian group, has suffered after it seized control of the Gaza Strip in 2007.

"Hizbollah has learned from Hamas that there are many limitations once you are in power. Hizbollah wants to influence the government but not be the official address," Kochavi said.

Nevertheless, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that a Hizbullah-controlled government would adversely affect U.S.-Lebanon relations. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry advised its citizens against travelling to Lebanon "until the return of calm and stability," the official SPA news agency reported on Wednesday.

Mikati, 55, served as prime minister for three months in 2005 immediately

following Hariri's assassination, but he is more of a technocrat that the kind of political bosses that dominate the country's political life. A graduate of American University of Beirut and Harvard, Mikati is well-known in Lebanon as a shrewd businessman, ranked by Forbes as the 446th richest man in the world.

Mikati's first test may be his most difficult when his government decides on how to relate to the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), established at the request of the Lebanese government and partly funded by it to investigate the assassination of Rafik Hariri in 2005.

Rafik's son, Sa'ad, withstood significant pressure by his coalition partner, Hizbullah, to denounce the tribunal as a biased foreign conspiracy. The crisis finally brought down his government when Hizbullah resigned January 12.

Hariri may not yet be out of the picture. Lebanon's next parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place in mid 2013. Sensenig-Dabbous said Mikati's government could mark the end of the old system and the advent of a new, Western, political logic that prescribes majority rule.

"It would be wise for Hariri to let this government rule for a year and a half, and then reappear in 2013," Sensenig-Dabbous said. "I can see a lot of dissatisfaction in Lebanon with a Hizbullah-led government."

Shehadi of Chatham House agreed that at this point Hariri may be better off outside the government when the STL publicizes the indictments, "because he won't be under pressure to handle it."

He added that "sitting it out" in the opposition until the 2013 elections may bring him back stronger, as was the case with his father, Rafik, who was ousted as prime minister in 1998 only to return with a larger majority in the elections of 2000.

"The 2013 elections will be payback time," Shehadi said. "Lebanon is not a country where you can have a coup d'etat. The constitution is so complicated that it prevents any faction from monopolizing power. The army is always kept in check."

The Women's Dialogue: India-Pakistan, new ideas for a new way forward

By: Women Without Borders

On Tuesday, January 18, 2011, four representatives from India and Pakistan came together to present the results of a courageous dialogue that cut across political and religious boundaries. Although politicians on both sides regularly engage in high-level negotiations, grassroots representatives—and especially women—are only rarely included.

It is obvious, however, that diplomatic efforts can only be translated into concrete, effective strategies if people on the ground feel personally addressed. Women can be key in this process—to

facilitate these new efforts, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Consumer Protection supported the Women without Borders / SAVE Dialogue Project "Political Conflict Resolution Starts at Home!"

After holding a productive dialogue session in Mumbai in November 2010, SAVE Pakistan representatives Mossarat Qadeem, Executive Director of the PAIMAN Trust, and Shabana Kapoor, Founder of SMART NGO, and Anita Pratap, a Professor in the Defense and Strategic Studies Department of Quaid-I-Azam University, as well as SAVE India representatives Archana Kapoor, Founder of SMART NGO, and Anita Pratap, a leading journalist and best-selling author, traveled to Vienna to speak about the outcomes of

the dialogue sessions. Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer welcomed over 80 guests to the event, held in the Vienna Insurance Group's (Wiener Städtische) Ringturn.

Through this dialogue process, the panelists, who represent the women who are involved on the ground, were determined to address the reality of what is happening on both sides and to openly speak about extremism and terrorism.

SAVE will continue to foster these dialogue efforts to provide tangible alternatives to the ongoing hostilities. We are not only talking about regional hostilities—nuclear and terrorist threats resonate around the world.

Testimonies

"63 years of independence, and still we haven't come to any kind of conclusion. The unique point about the SAVE women's dialogue is that it is impacting the people whose lives have been turned around by some act of violent extremism. Then, it is not about the "other" anymore, it is about us. This dialogue was a starting point between women, between mothers, between families. Here are real people living this reality day in, day out, who needed the strength of this dialogue. We need to break the idea that every Pakistani is a terrorist, every Indian a victim. It is not true." -Archana Kapoor, India

"Pakistanis and Indians have been living with an image of 'the other' as an enemy for 64 years. We have had a series of dialogues and meetings, addressing animosity on both sides, but since 1947 we have never achieved success that allows us to be good

neighbors. 64 years is long enough to live in animosity. We have to reach towards a solution. In the dialogue in Mumbai, we came up with recommendations that are doable, and grounded in reality. If these are taken up by women with our skills, we can share the destiny of our two countries." -Mossarat Qadeem, Pakistan

"A strategic move toward a sustainable India-Pakistan dialogue is to expand and deepen civil society linkages. The time has come for women in both countries to take a dynamic role in building peace through dialogue. The skills and efforts of women, visible today in every arena from business to politics, must be harnessed for dialogue and peace-building. One new way forward is to create a network of women in India and Pakistan as a pressure group to urge establishments on both sides to keep dialogue open, continuous and focused on

trans-border collaborations that bring tangible cultural, economic and peace dividends to both peoples." -Anita Pratap, Japan/India

"When the West looks at Pakistan, they think Talibanization is a homogenous phenomenon. It is not. Nor is the nature of extremism in Pakistan. There is a gray area between white and black, and that has to be explored. The picture of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan cuts across national boundaries. The good news is that the time of denial by political stalwarts and policy-shapers is over. The SAVE action-driven dialogue is therefore very timely. We welcome international attention—we have a strong civil society and women's movement on the ground, ready to stand up against the extremist minority that unfortunately exists not only in tribal areas, but also in many other parts of our country." -Shabana Fayyaz, Pakistan

Yemenis spending YR250-billion a year on qat



At least 25 percent of Yemenis working in agriculture are involved in qat farming and harvesting.



At least 30 percent of an average Yemeni family's budget is spent on qat.



From 2004 to 2008 qat farms have increased from 122,843 hectares to 146,810.

By: Ali Saeed

Mohsen Saleh, 50, is the main breadwinner for five children and works in Sana'a as a porter. Every day he earns between YR1,500 and YR2,000, and goes to the qat market (miqwat) where he buys a bunch of narcotic qat leaves for YR800 to YR1,000. For lunch he only pays around YR500 and the rest he sends to his family in a rural area near Ibb city.

It is not only Saleh who spends 50 percent of his income on qat leaves. More than 72 percent of Yemenis chew qat on a daily basis, according to the World Bank.

Dr. Mohammad Ba Naja, a prominent professor of economics at the

University of Aden, told the Yemen Times that people in Yemen spend about YR250-billion (about USD1.17-billion) every year on qat. He also used this figure during a public lecture in Aden organized by the Yemen Center for Human Rights Studies in Aden.

Mohamed Qasim Noman, director of the center, told the Yemen Times that this lecture is part of a series of public lectures organized by the center, targeting the youth of Aden, and aiming to reduce the number of qat chewers among Yemenis.

On average, between 10 and 30 percent of a family's budget goes to purchasing qat, according to Ba Naja. He said that qat cultivation in Yemen is on the rise and that qat farms have increased 18 fold over the past four decades.

He stressed that the expansion of qat

farms come at the expense of food and cash crops, which threatens food security and development in the country.

"Despite the arable area in Yemen not exceeding 2.5 percent, huge areas [of food and cash crops] are being replaced with qat," he said.

From 2004 to 2008, the area dedicated to qat farming has increased from 122,843 hectares to 146,810, according to Ba Naja. He explained that food and cash crops for export are decreasing, and that this will create a trade imbalance and affect the balance of payments.

The amount of water consumed by agriculture each year is estimated at 3.1 billion cubic meters, of which 30 percent is consumed by qat farming, according to the professor. About 60 percent of Yemen's workforce is employed in agriculture, a quarter of

which work in the qat industry.

Ba Naja said that programs to combat qat in Yemen through the supply side are useless and suggested fighting qat by reducing consumption and tackling the issue from the demand side.

"If the demand for qat decreases, suppliers will give up qat farming and think of something new," he said.

Noman said that his center is organizing awareness activities to educate youth on their role in the community in reducing the number of qat chewers. During the past two weeks, the center has held two public lectures on qat that target university students and adults in Aden.

"We organized a public lecture by a professor from the Faculty of Agriculture at Aden University on the hazards of using toxic pesticides in qat farming," he said.

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Yemenis need to respect time

By: Malak Shaher

Al-Mulaiki is a punctual person. He was rushing to attend a seminar on time and almost had an accident getting there. But much to his surprise,

when he arrived on time, he realized that his attempt had been in vain. The seminar was delayed because so few people had turned up.

"I felt depressed because I tried to be as punctual as I can. In order to be on time, I got on a motorcycle and thought I was going to

have an accident because I was trying to catch the seminar," said Al-Mulaiki.

When Al-Mulaiki arrived he found that more than half the chairs were empty. He had to wait for another hour and a half as the organizing committee waited for more participants to arrive.

Most of the time when Yemenis have an appointment,

whatever it is, something "just happens and makes them late," said Mahmoud Al-Matari, 20, a university student.

"Whenever I have an appointment with somebody, something out of the blue happens which delays me," Al-Matari explained. Smiling, he added that sometimes it is his own fault, and that he does not care about appointments. He said that if he has an appointment at 10am, he starts getting ready for it at 10am.

Clinics are not excluded. "Most of the



Photo by Nuhia Haidar
In Yemen, it is common that the person you have an appointment with would be late. Call them to double check what time they would be ready.

time people come late even if they are suffering," said Sameer Mohammad, who works as a receptionist in an optician's clinic. "Being late runs in Yemenis blood," he said. "We always tell the patients to come an hour in advance."

For seminars, conferences, graduation parties and other events, people are often asked to come half an hour, or even an hour, before the event starts.

"We know previously that people will not come on time and they will create a mess as they flock while the seminar is held," said



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If you have an appointment in Yemen at 10am double check with the other person what time exactly you would be expected. Sometimes seminars are delayed for a whole hour and half hour for a variety of reasons. And if you expect to see a Yemeni at a specific time you should call him or her at least one hour before just to make sure that they will be on time.

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