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Mediations to end Sa'ada fighting failed

A mediation committee recently formed by President Saleh failed to convince Al-Houthi followers to halt attacks against the army, as fierce clashes between government troops and Al-Houthi supporters continued in areas west of Sa'ada, sources said Sunday.

SA'ADA, Jan. 29 — The mediation committee had reached an agreement with Al-Houthi supporters on release of detainees, approving compensation for those experiencing damage and ending confrontations between the two conflicting sides, but disputes later erupted as Al-Houthi followers contin-

ued chanting slogans against the United States and Israel. The committee continues to dialogue with Al-Houthi bystanders while confrontations between government forces and insurgents escalate, compelling the second party to distrust pledges and obligations by the first, which never

compensated those affected by the war, security sources said. According to official sources, the mediation committee last Thursday and Friday distributed a total of 320 million Yemeni Riyals to locals in the war-ravaged area of Haidan and inventoried recently damaged properties in

areas hit by government air strikes. The government is exerting extensive efforts to settle armed clashes with rebels and negotiate with them, particularly after followers implemented a series of ambushes targeting provincial security officials.

Continued from page 3

JMP demand reshuffling of SCER

By: Mohammed Bin Sallam

SANA'A, Jan. 29 — In a statement published last week, the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) called for the reshuffling of the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum (SCER) to ensure integrity of upcoming presidential and local elections. The statement contained rejection of any mechanism introduced by the SCER to form committees for revising and modifying voters' registers announced last Wednesday.

JMP said in another statement published on Saturday such mechanism is a violation of the legal standards and intends to confine the balance and neutrality principle in the poll committees and edge out any role of the opposition.

The opposition, represented by the IMP, held the SCER accountable for delaying the deadline of electoral privileges due to being partial to interests of the ruling party. Confirming their adherence to running independent and neutral poll, the JMP said the SCER is neither eligible not qualified for running the polls, demanding it to be restructured.

JMP opposed the SCER's announcement to form minor committees to run the process of the electoral registers'

revision and modification, which is allegedly a violation of the law and the constitution. Opposition parties have ended their talks on the issue.

The opposition said: "as the JMP announce their rejection of the proposed mechanism, we hold the SCER accountable for any delay of the electoral privileges' deadline. The SCER passed decisions violating the law and involving partiality in favor of the ruling party, starting with reducing the number of poll committees."

"The SCER confirms renewal of its mechanism for the formation of the electoral committees with the aim of edging any role of the opposition. The SCER never shows readiness to be neutral and independent when it adopted a mechanism to eliminate any presence of the opposition, nor does take into account the importance of the presidential and local elections and their influence on the country's future," the opposition added.

JMP concluded their statement by renewing its rejection of the electoral committees' formation mechanism. They emphasized what was contained in their comprehensive political reform program and their care for independent and neutral elections.

Continued on page 3

Guantánamo detainees ignored by the government

Four years passed. Guantánamo Bay is still full of detainees, and Arab governments are not doing enough to have them released. Now, US lawyers are in Yemen to discuss the ongoing problem.

By: Stine Exler

"We want Yemen's government to react," says Tina Foster, attorney from the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York. "So far, this government has not done anything to get their countrymen home from Guantánamo."

Tina Foster and other US attorneys representing detainees at Guantánamo are visiting Arab countries to make people aware of the continuous illegal acts of the US government. Now they are in Yemen to talk to detainees' families and give them an update on the cases. But the visit is equally a matter of trying to get the Yemeni government to put pressure on the Bush administration to release the 120 Yemeni men who are still detained at Guantánamo. On Jan 28, the Yemeni National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms (HOOD) held a

press conference with the attorneys at Yemen Times' offices to discuss the prisoners' present situation.

"We were here in Yemen six months ago on the same mission, and we will keep coming back until we get the men released," says Tina Foster. "We are fighting this battle on two fronts. We are fighting in the courts of law and we are fighting in the courts of public opinion. For our clients to be allowed fair trials and human rights, we need the back up of the public. The Arab people must put pressure on their governments to get their countrymen home".

Detained again

So far, five Yemenis have been released from the camp. Rumours of the release of an additional 13 Yemeni prisoners have not been confirmed. But being released from



A niece of a detainee holding a sign during the press conference: Guantánamo. Until when?
PHOTO BY STINE EXLER

Guantánamo does not mean that the troubles are over. In Yemen, the five released men are now withheld in prison. They are still waiting to go to trial. Still waiting to come home to their families.

Even though these men are not technically clients, the lawyers hope to visit them within the next couple of days.

"Everyone who comes out of Guantánamo has our interest. We want them all to be treated fairly. We want them to be safe," says Tina Foster.

Khaled Al-Anesi, lawyer and executive manager of HOOD, says: "When the detainees are released from Guantánamo and return to Yemen, it is illegal under Yemeni law to detain them again in this way. These men are now living under worse circumstances than at Guantánamo."

Continued on page 3

CPJ: "Withdraw the press law"

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) delegation criticized Yemen's government at a Jan. 26 press conference for its oppression against journalists.



Members from the Committee to Protect Journalists during the press conference (from left: David Marash, Joel Campagna and Clarence Page).
PHOTO BY YASSER AL-MAYASI

By: Yasser Al-Mayasi

SANA'A, Jan. 28 — The delegation assured that the press law the government intends to enforce upon journalists is defective and inconvenient to press liberty. Furthermore, it declared, it is not fit for a democratic country. The delegation noted that despite President Saleh's affirmations of

respect for press liberty, the law proves otherwise.

The group requested Parliament and the government withdraw the law in order to create a free press atmosphere, stating, "We will convey a message to government officials urging them to abstain from imposing oppressive laws that curb the press, as well as a demand to conduct investigations into the

assaults that took place against journalists. Ignorance of such offensives encourages violence against journalists. Moreover, such negligence is a transgression of public rights, in addition to its negative impact on Yemen's democratic image. It may cost Yemen the loss of a great deal of aid and donations."

Continued on page 3



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Death toll rises to 150 for smuggled migrants to Yemen

SANA'A, Jan. 24 — At least 150 Somalis and Ethiopians died when their two smuggling boats capsized in Mukala Monday. Yemen's Coast Guard picked up victims' bodies after the boats capsized, rescuing many. Some still are missing.

Salah Al-Asker, Director of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Mayfa'a Refugee Center, said "By this morning, we had extricated 150 dead bodies," pointing out that this was done in cooperation with local authorities and citizens who already have buried the bodies.

The two boats carrying 256 illegal Somalis and Ethiopians (128 passengers each) sailed from a village near the northeastern Somali port of Boassaso.

Al-Asker said only five survived from the first boat, while 46 survived from the second.

UNHCR stated that another boat dropped some 120 people on Jan. 21. Passengers on that voyage reported that 10 people died, four of whom seemingly were thrown overboard.

According to an Ibn Sina Hospital report, smuggled victims died when their boat broke down, not from being deliberately dropped from the boat, as some sources said. UNHCR spokesman Ron Redmond called for "international action to stem the flow of people falling prey to smugglers." He also stated that the agency tries hard to reduce the flow of smuggled migrants to the Gulf of Aden. According to the agency, at least

27 boats have arrived at the Yemeni coast since Jan. 12.

Thousands of Somalis and Ethiopians try to come to Yemen every year to escape war and tragic poverty. Currently, there are more than 80,000 registered refugees in Yemen, most of them Somalis. Somalia has been without effective government and experienced tribal wars since 1991, at the time of dictator Mohammed Siad Barre.

Although Yemen's government tries to reduce the number of smuggled migrants, the steps taken are not enough. The Coast Guard Authority stated that plans to combat smuggling have been implemented but resources are not enough.

No discrimination against female journalists

SANA'A, Jan. 25 — Several media leaders refused the idea of 'discrimination' mentioned in a study about the situation of Yemeni women in media. At a workshop organized particularly to announce the study's results, they admitted that women in media face many difficulties and obstacles; however, they agreed such difficulties result from technical, social and economic obstacles facing all media staff, not just women.

The Jan. 22-23 workshop, organized by the Yemeni Female Media Forum (YFMF), in cooperation with the Yemeni Media Development Program (YMDP), was devoted to discussing results of the study, considered the first-ever public survey concerning the status of Yemeni women in media and the societal and institutional obstacles they face in doing their job.

According to the study prepared by Dr. Mohammed Alfaqeh, assistant professor in the information college at Sana'a University, there are many types of discrimination against women within various media institutions. The most visible discriminatory practices against women are: few training opportunities offered them, being ignored for any coverage abroad, occasional sexual harassment and immodest treatment by male colleagues and executive and leadership

positions given to male journalists, despite women deserving to ascend the hierarchy.

However, initial study results shown in the graph below revealed that despite the difficulties and discrimination, almost three-quarters (74 percent) of female journalists enjoy a high degree of job satisfaction. This reflects their perseverance and determination to face up to and overcome the frustrating conditions, the study mentioned.

The effect of cultural environment on a female journalist's work also was included in the study, revealing several positive and negative effects of customs and tradition. The study requested media institutions do everything they can to better media women's conditions and status.

SABA News Agency chief, Nasser Taha Mustafa, said it is not exactly correct to say that Yemeni women haven't been granted executive and leadership positions in media institutions. For example, he said there are two or three women directing departments at his agency. He admitted the number of women in such positions is still small, adding that women face many social obstacles. For example, they can't work full time due to family obligations, so they cannot devote themselves completely to leadership

or management roles.

Mohammed Alasadi, Yemen Observer Editor-in-Chief, emphasized the importance of improving women journalists' efficiency, pointing out that many women lack computer or English language skills which are very importance in media work nowadays. He also referred to negative attitudes some female media members adopt when limiting their activities and productions only to women's and children's issues. According to Alasadi, they refuse to cover poetic, international or diplomatic events.

Yemeni Journalists' Syndicate member Sami Ghalb confessed that there are not many training courses particularly offered to female journalists needing more encouragement and rehabilitation.

Abass Aldailami, national radio general director, referred to the importance of considering poor socioeconomic circumstances that block creative works in Yemen. He said such difficult circumstances create complications preventing media staff from accomplishing their tasks competently.

Minister of Information, Hussein Alawadhi, did not attend the workshop, which consisted of more than 50 participants from various international and national media institutions.

SFD holds workshop on Institutional Evaluation findings

SANA'A, Jan. 25 — The Social Fund Development Partners Consultation (SFD) held a workshop on its Institutional Evaluation findings at Taj Sheba Hotel, sponsored by the UK Development for Institutional Development (DID).

Several ministers and other senior officials participated in the workshop including Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Dr. Abdulkarim Al-Arhabi; Minister of Education, Dr. Abdulsalam Al-Gofi; Minister of Health and Population, Dr. Muhammad Al-Na'ami; Minister of Water and Environment, Dr. Muhammad Al-Iryani and many representatives from donor countries and international and local organizations.

SFD Managing Director Al-Arhabi stated in a press conference that the findings are from an observational evaluation SFD conducts every three years.

The evaluation focuses on SFD's contribution to improving Yemeni citizens' living conditions by increasing access to basic services in education, health care, water supply, the environment, cultural heritage and transport. Evaluation findings are based on a quantitative survey of the living standards of 6,000 households. Additionally, a qualitative beneficiary assessment is made of targeted groups' opinions polled about the benefits of SFD projects.

Stakeholders discussed evaluation findings in relation to delivering services, governance and institutional capacity building. Findings are based on five workshops and a series of meeting and interviews conducted between Nov. 24 and Dec. 6, 2005.

Participants discussed SFD's strategic objectives, future vision and its role

in poverty reduction and state building in Yemen. The workshop raised some issues at the central level, such as government's vision for the SFD and how to best complement its role with targeted ministries.

Consultant Mary Jennings said SFD's particular strength is its work at the community level, which delivered the most findings. The government has the most difficulty delivering services like health and education at the community level, especially in terms of building a governance structure whereby community members can be active in development.

The SFD was established in 1997 as an administratively and financially autonomous agency. SFD participates in implementing national poverty reduction and improving Yemeni citizens' living conditions.

Aden water project slated for 2007

SANA'A, Jan. 29 — A \$30 million World Bank-funded project to improve Aden's water and sewage system will begin next year. The Indian Environmental Consultancy company, M-W-H, will conduct project studies costing \$2.5 million.

The project will encompass all Aden districts, developing and improving the water and sewage system to meet population needs for the next 20 years. It suggests rehabilitating and developing the present pumping network by improving pumping stations and estab-

lishing new stations. The present sewage system is either to be rehabilitated or replaced and new extensions built. There are also ideas to build new reservoirs, dig new wells and desalinate sea water when needed.

An initial consultation for assessing the project's environmental impacts was held Jan. 28, organized by the Local Water Authority in cooperation with M-W-H. Concerned parties, production and industrial sector members as well as civil societies attended the meeting. Beneficiaries and affected

community members were invited to participate in the environmental impact assessment and study sustainable mechanisms to render the project successful.

Aden governor Dr. Yahia Al-Shoibi addressed the meeting, stressing the environmental impact's importance, hoping to see serious studies and urging all sectors to participate. The project manager and a consulting company representative reviewed project components and phases, along with its environmental impact.

Minister of Interior provokes Al-Ahsab

Ahmed Al-Ahsab and his family have been conducting a sit-in in front of the Minister of Interior's house in protest against "unfair" security authority procedures against him.

SANA'A, Jan. 29 — A year and a half ago, a water pump, agricultural equipment and other property were stolen from Al-Ahsab's farm in Maghreb Ans, Dhamar governorate. He informed the Investigation Bureau and asked area security authorities to look into the crime, thinking they would arrest the criminals. However, it turned out that security authorities did not take serious measures, but rather tried to "bring the criminals to justice," Al-Ahsab said.

Al-Ahsab does not believe the interior minister has taken serious steps regarding his case. "The Minister of Interior gave me limited time to solve my problem and discover the accused in my case, but it turned out he did not do anything other than give me appointments," he complained.

He also stated that the commander of the minister's guards threatened him in

a telephone conversation. "I received a threatening call from the commander of the minister's guards, in which he threatened to detain my wife and children at the Central Prison," he said.

The Al-Ahsab family conducted a similar sit-in in front of the Presidential Palace last year, remaining there for months. Security authorities eventually removed their tent and imprisoned them.

Al-Ahsab went on to say that even the Dhamar security head has not implemented the minister's orders. "Security authorities in Dhamar are indifferent to and pay no attention to the orders of the Minister of Interior, who asked them to look into my case and bring in those who stole this agricultural equipment and property from my farm in Dhamar. Security officials do not give a true account to the minister regarding my

Foreign Ministry condemns caricatures in Danish and Norwegian newspapers

SANA'A, Jan. 27 — Yemen's Foreign Ministry condemned the continued publication of 12 blasphemous caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by Danish newspaper Jylland Posten and Norwegian newspaper Magazinet.

A ministry spokesperson stated that it considers the sacrilegious caricatures a deliberate insult to Islam's Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and hurt the feelings of 1.3 billion Muslims worldwide. The spokesperson said the cartoons attempt to distort divine religions and prophets and lead to hatred and violence. Such attempts lead to increased conflicts between civilizations and cultures and cause a lack of security and peace in the world. He demanded the Danish and Norwegian governments

stop such sacrilegious acts and apologize instantly.

In an official statement, the ministry called on the international community to criticize such acts and take necessary procedures ensuring they will not be repeated in the future. The immoral drawings and the Danish newspaper's actions conflict with the values and principles of all divine religions. They violate international rights forbidding reviling other religions and creeds. The statement emphasized rights to freely express, believe and publish according to universal norms and values, but said what the two newspapers published in the cartoons was considered a violation of those rights.

The Danish newspaper claimed it

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This edition's question:

Do you think the outrage of the Muslim world against the Danish newspaper would cause the west to be put off from Islam?
Yes
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Last edition's question:

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No 54%
Yes 41%
I don't know 5%

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case," he added.

Al-Ahsab now is appealing to the Minister of Human Rights, human rights organizations inside and outside Yemen and Parliament's Committee Protecting Freedoms and Rights.

Parliament denounces defaming of Prophet

SANA'A, Jan. 29 — The Yemeni Parliament Saturday denounced the defamation of the Prophet Mohamed by caricature in Danish newspaper Jyllands Posten, saying it contradicts religious freedom.

Parliament's Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Committee issued a statement about the insult confirming that Yemen's government and its citizens

denounce such defamation, which contradicts religious tolerance. It demanded the United Nations human rights departments, topped by the Human Rights High Commission, as well as international human rights organizations, including European ones, live up to their commitments to defend individuals' rights. The parliamentary committee urged such organ-

izations to stop the spread of hatred and insulting peoples' culture and faith.

The statement requested Arab countries, the Islamic Conference Organization and Arab and Islamic foreign ministers follow up the matter with concerned nations and organizations to force the Danish government to apologize for this grave insult.

YJS Chief: We have freedom but not free press

SANA'A, Jan. 24 — In a meeting of Yemeni Journalists Syndicate (YJS) members at the Shura Council Tuesday, YJS Chief Mahmoud Ali renewed the syndicate's rejection of the recently issued Press and Publications Law.

YJS members described the draft press law as a "setback" and a "disappointment" in that it only imposes more restrictions on private and party-affiliated newspapers.

The YJS Chief advocated allowing opposition writers and journalists to write in official newspapers, which

should be 51 percent owned by the government and 49 percent by journalists.

In his meeting with Shura Council Deputy Chairman Abdullah Al-Bar and committee members authorized to study the new draft press law, Ali stated, "In Yemen, we have freedom, but we do not have a press with the same level of freedom," noting that Yemeni journalists are the poorest worldwide.

Journalist Ali Al-Jaradi attributed YJS rejection to the draft press law's content, which never included any right for media plurality. Instead, it con-

tained bans and constraints on journalism. He claimed it cancels penalties amounting to the death sentence and tough procedures the press law imposes on journalists.

Al-Bar emphasized the need for homogenous viewpoints on the draft Press and Publication Law through consultative meetings with YJS members, party leaders and civic organization representatives. He added that the Shura Council will never approve any law imposing restrictions on press freedoms.

Release of expired wheat denied

HODEIDAH, Jan. 25 — Hussein Al-Wishah, General Manager of the General Authority for Specifications, Standards and Quality Control (GASSQC) Hodeidah Branch, denied reports published by some local newspapers that his authority released 34 containers filled with expired wheat.

Filled with a wheat and Soya mixture, the containers were offered as aid to Yemen by the World Food Program. Twenty-three of the 34

containers were found to have been filled with expired wheat and then held at the port, Al-Wishah explained. Only the remaining 11 containers contained wheat suitable for use.

The issue provoked nationwide outrage, compelling Parliament to summon Al-Wishah before MPs for questioning. Official document copies obtained by the Yemen Times confirm Al-Wishah's explanation.

Several private newspapers mentioned this month that the World

Food Program representative pressured Hodeidah Port officials to release the seized containers. He reportedly threatened the GASSQC that international organizations may stop extending aid to Yemen because it seized the wheat containers.

Asked about details of the seized containers, the World Food Program representative denied the wheat containers belong to his organization, which buys wheat from Yemen and never imports any from abroad.

Continued from page 1

Mediations to end Sa'ada fighting failed

The Criminal Investigation Bureau director and three of his guards were killed in an ambush on the road between Sa'ada city and Sahar District.

Sahar District Administration Chief, Hussein Shawet, and three of his guards were injured in another ambush and a military vehicle destroyed when insurgents opened fire on it, official sources said.

The same sources added that Sheikh Ali Hureyah was killed Thursday morning by unidentified firing as government forces raided a Sahar District insurgent hideout.

Parliament Speaker Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussein Al-Ahmar sent a letter at week's end to the negotiation committee, demanding it quickly reach an agreement with Al-Houthi followers. Sheikh Al-Ahmar said the committee deadlocked, as it was formed on an ethnic basis and did not include national forces, as had the previous one.

According to a Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) leader wishing to remain anonymous, the main objective in excluding political parties and organizations and civil community organizations from the committee was to obscure any information about crimes and human rights abuses. He confirmed that there are many officials benefiting from government's incapability to end the Sa'ada clashes.

He believes political leadership disavowed responsibility for the committee, thought of as a missionary carrying a message and having limited capabilities which it must not exceed in negotiating with Al-Houthi supporters.

He pointed out that the two sides reached a cease-fire during negotiations, but government forces did not keep their commitment to the agreement, leading Al-Houthi followers to perceive negotiations as futile, particularly as no neutral parties were involved.

The JMP leader said if the government is serious about solving disputes and ending clashes in the area, it should refer the issue of anti-U.S. and anti-Israel slogans chanted by Al-Houthi followers after Friday Prayer to Parliament to end the dispute. Such slogans continue intentionally to eliminate ethnic clerics in Sa'ada and draw public attention away from corruption cases and other domestic issues.

Two Al-Houthi followers escaped Friday from Criminal Investigations' Detention in Sana'a. Suspects Abdullah Al-Hakim and Taha Ali escaped six months after their arrest for plotting terrorist attacks. They are members of Al-Houthi's Sana'a Cell, a source told September Net. He added that the suspects' escape constitutes a flagrant failure on the part of security apparatuses.

Authorities detained Al-Hakim's father and Ali's father and brother based on substantial evidence that they helped the suspects escape.

JMP demand reshuffling of SCER

JMP hold the view the SCER with its current structure is neither eligible nor qualified for running the upcoming presidential and local elections. The claim it should be reshuffled in a politically balanced manner to prevent it from being partial. To ensure free and fair elections, the electoral committees must involve all the political forces in the country.

Spokesman for the SCER and Head of its Information Sector, Abdu Mohamed Al-Janadi, said: "JMP are only staging political controversy aimed at distracting the SCER from

performing its tasks in compliance with the law."

In a statement to State-run Al-Thawrah daily, Al-Janadi pointed out political parties and organizations have the right to do what they want, but the SCER has taken its decision after a series of talks based on a criterion proposed by the JMP. Under this criterion, he added, registration and poll committees were distributed in 2001 and 2003.

Al-Janadi noted the SCER has only two criteria, one based on voting and the other on the number of seats in

Parliament. It is the parties which preferred the former over the latter, and not the SCER as the alternative will be worse if applied. The SCER has no option but to apply only one of the mentioned criteria.

Concluding his statement, Al-Janadi expressed curiosity at the JMP's statement saying these parties do not know that the SCER is a constitutional authority formed of 15 personages who won two-thirds of Parliament's votes. "It is an independent and neutral authority formed in compliance with the constitution and the law," he ended.

Guantánamo detainees ignored by the government

According to Al-Anesi, the government is detaining the men in accordance with the wishes of the Bush administration.

Zaki Zehawi, attorney from the Federal Defenders of San Diego, agrees: "It seems that Arab authorities are bowing to the US government. We are surprised that this does not create an outrage in the Arab world."

And yet, not all detainees get this treatment after being released. One month ago, three Bahraini men were released from Guantánamo. When they returned to Bahrain, they were questioned for a few hours and then allowed to go home to their families. None of them were further imprisoned.

"We would like to see the same thing happen here in Yemen," says Tina Foster.

Closing the camp

One reason why some are being detained in their own countries is that the US government might have plans to close Guantánamo down. Tina Foster believes that in order to make the initial withholding of the men look convincing, the Bush administration requires Arab governments to detain the men who are released from Guantánamo to make them look guilty. This way of keeping up appearances would also help explain the slow progress in having people released from the camp in the first place.

"For four years, the US government has been saying that all the men at Guantánamo are dangerous. So of

course it looks bad if they release them all at once and close down the place. This is probably why they pressure other governments to detain them in their home countries, so they look guilty and dangerous. Even though they are not," she says.

According to Tina Foster, US government officials have admitted that out of the approximately 500 detainees, only 20 have the actual interest of the US government.

Guantánamo is a symbol

The case of Guantánamo is unique in more ways than one. On December 30 of last year, a new law was passed that made it even more so. This law states that the men at Guantánamo do not have the right to come to a US court to challenge their detention. Instead, the US military will act as the judge. Without lawyers. Without presentation of evidence. Without basic human rights.

The attorneys are presently challenging the new law in order to get the cases tried in a proper court.

"Nothing like this has ever happened before," says Tina Foster. "Guantánamo is not only about these 500 men. It is a symbol of the Bush administration's illegal acts around the world. If they are able to get away with what is happening at Guantánamo, it means that they can take anyone from any part of the world, lock them up, torture them or even kill them, and never have to explain why they do so. We have to stop them now."



Attorney Tina Foster from the Center for Constitutional Rights with the nephew of Mohammed Al-Asadi who is still at Guantánamo. The boy who was born after his uncle was detained is named after him.

PHOTO BY STINE EXLER

All the attorneys working with the Guantánamo detainees are volunteers. Some are working with non profit organizations, others with private law firms that take on the cases without charge. When asked if the lack of salary is part of the reason for the slow progress, attorney Heather Rogers from the Federal Defenders of San Diego, answers: "Belief in ideals is a much stronger motivation than money. We are all driven toward justice and no matter how long it takes, we will make progress. We will be heard".

CPJ: "Withdraw the press law"

Delegation members assured that they will stand with Yemeni journalists and make the assaults against them known throughout the world. Delegation head David Marash affirmed that the CPJ will pressure the government by campaigning to prevent international aid if it continues violating journalists' rights. He continued, saying that punishments against journalists will impact Yemenis and their government negatively by costing them millions of dollars in investments and donations.

Marash declared that stifling journalists confiscates peoples' right to knowledge, inhibiting their knowl-

edge capacity as well as killing their interest in economic and free political contests.

Joel Campagna, Senior Coordinator of CPJ's Middle East and North Africa Program, affirmed that the draft law presented by the government fetters press freedom. He said it contains a number of inconveniences to journalists, adding that it appears to be the work of an undemocratic state. The law also doesn't meet international standards and some of its articles deny career liberty, he pointed out.

Campagna determined that he found press liberty retreating in Yemen during the previous two years. He said

delegates met with journalists, lawyers and activists to discuss press liberty and became acquainted with the series of harassments, kidnappings, wiretappings and newspaper cloning that occurs.

Campagna said the CPJ will publish a comprehensive report on the harassments they investigated during their visit to Yemen. He declared that stopping newspapers is not acceptable in light of international standards. He noted that CPJ reports are distributed worldwide and that many countries ultimately base their economic relations with other countries on such reports.

Penal procedures imposed on teams boycotting tournament

SANA'A — The Yemeni Football Federation (YFF) Temporary Committee took firm penal procedures — including fines totaling 100,000 Yemeni Riyals — against teams refusing to join 2006 premier league tournaments, official media reported Thursday. Previous match results were counted in favor of teams that joined the tournament.

According to sporting officials, no match has been delayed or halted since the tournament's beginning, except between Tawen Baadan and Shabab Al-Jeel.

The Ahli Sana'a, Hilal Hodeida, Sa'ab Ibb, Sha'ab Hadramout, Al-Yarmouk, Hassan, Al-Rashid and Tadamun Shabwa clubs have boycotted the tournament, while other clubs refused to participate in matches that began Jan. 19. The second week's matches are expected to be canceled, as the timetable involves teams boycotting the tournament.

YFF Chairman Sheikh Ahmad Saleh Al-Eisi and Shawqi Ahmad Hayel, Businessman and Chairman of Al-Saq Club, met the Minister of Youth and Sports to discuss disputes between the Yemeni football teams and suggest possible solutions, sporting officials reported.

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Sana'a University Staff Syndicate refuses "irresponsible" pledges

SANA'A, Jan. 29 — The Sana'a University Staff Syndicate refused administration's demand to impose pledges on staff members.

In a statement Saturday, the syndicate described the pledges as violating the simplest legal and constitutional rights of staff and their assistant lecturers. They also considered it a personal insult, expressing concern that it could lead to institutional collapse.

The statement said ignoring and postponing the legal right of more than 500 staffers to receive remaining unpaid salaries is irresponsible treatment. It also said that ordering others to sign pledges to receive remaining salaries reveals indecent treatment that will trigger crises. The statement noted that continual staff treatment such as slander, humiliation and extortion recently has increased.

The Yemen Times received a copy of a letter sent by Sana'a University Deputy Rector Dr. Ahmed Al-Kibsi asking college deans to force staff to sign pledges to abide by university regulations. It also demanded first and second semester timetables and lecture hours be sent. The letter said the pledges and other demands would be sent to civil service in order to approve remaining unpaid salaries.



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terms of offering products and services to meet customer demands and keep them happy. The establishment offers products with top quality and competitive prices.

The Establishment has a list of goals to be reflected in the provision of machineries and automobiles contributing in the national development. It also fulfills ambitions of low-income people to own suitable cars. The Establishment works hard to make its imports present in the Yemeni market and open a number of

typical car showrooms.

On the New Year's occasion, Alfao Est. Trading & Agencies- Alhaj Machineries and Automobiles organized a promotional festival for its products. The event was attended by ministers, senior government officials, businessmen and media personnel. The festival represented a suitable opportunity for popularizing the Chinese vehicles and machineries and to introduce people to this unique world of Chinese Automobiles and International Companies.

Secretary-General of the Capital inaugurates the Festival AL-HAJ MACHINERIES & AUTOMOBILES AGENCIES Al-Haj Agencies: Yemeni-Chinese Partnership to serve development in Yemen.

About the festival and the occasion, Ahmad Mohamed Al-Kuhlani, Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Capital said:

"Today we celebrate the inauguration of the new car showroom belonging to a famous businessman- Mohamed Saeed Al-Haj." The showroom contains various products, of transportation means and heavy machineries. We have already realized that the Chinese industries proved accuracy, durability and real competition.

"We encourage all investors to open the horizons of cooperation and strategic partnership with internationally famed companies to serve the process of development in our beloved country." He added.

Al-Kuhlani emphasized on the importance of providing maintenance workshops and spare parts to meet the demands of citizens, particularly those of limited income. He noted that it is necessary for the establishment to offer post-sale services- as he commented: "We congratulate Ahmad Al-Haj for his giant establishment."

Secretary-General of the Capital added: "The company's care for selling cars in installments adds to its fame and encourages people of limited income to buy cars. The Establishment has started its marketing policy and the implementation of its sales program in installments, and we wish it the best of success and prosperity."

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

In the same context, Qais Al-Haj, General Manager of the Establishment delivered a speech on behalf of the Chairman of the Board of Directors in which he welcomed the visiting guests saying:

"Our respectable guests, we are pleased to extend our gratitude and thanks to you for accepting our invitation and joining us in our celebration. Welcoming a new year of our establishment that continues to move toward the best."

"We take this opportunity to convey to our wise leadership and the Yemeni people our sincere congratulations and highest compliments on celebrating the advent of the New Year."

In his speech, Qais Al-Haj added: "since the Alfao Establishment was inaugurated in 1988, we have been adopting effective and efficient strategies to address the demands of development and improvement, as well as to be in harmony with the modern scientific systems and its



Head Office Nawakshoot St.

applications. The establishment has become a giant company embracing well-qualified human resources from Yemen and other Arab countries and is enjoying regional and international relations that positively contribute to the selection of real economic activities." Such economic activities, he noted, are expected to serve our beloved country and our wise political leadership, mainly HE President Ali Abdullah Saleh for building civilization and prosperity of Yemen.

"Our Establishment could open horizons of cooperation with professional international establishments and companies whose products are distinguished with top quality. We do this in order to meet demands of customers in different industrial, service, constructional and agricultural sectors.

He further went on: "The achievements reached by our Establishment have been manifested in the expansion of its share in the local and international markets. Increasing the sales rate makes us in front of a great accountability and responsibility toward our society and country. Such achievements have their direct effect on our strategic plans for the next phase and in the real-life situ-

ation. We are committed to fulfill expectations of our customers and make them happy. We continue implementing directives of the wise leadership for the sake of driving forward Yemen's progress and advancement and we will work on fulfilling ambitions of the Yemeni consumer through flooding the local market with different types of transportation means and heavy machinery."

"It is our pleasure to draw attention of our respectable guests and customers that we have just started new economic and service activities. Among which is the inauguration of brick and tile-making factories with the use of modern technique and machinery. In addition, we offer petroleum-related services for local and foreign companies and introduce oil products with top quality from international reputable companies.

Al-Haj Establishment is an Important Partner

For his part, the Chinese Commercial Attaché in Sana'a said: "In this festival, we congratulate Al-Haj Est., which is the real partner of Chinese companies. I use this opportunity to congratulate the Establishment on the advent of the New Year-2006- and confirm the continuity of

developing mutual cooperation in the future.

Commenting on the festival

Mohamed Qaflah, Deputy Chairman of Trade and Industry Chambers General Union said in the Festival: "On behalf of the Trade and Industry Chambers General Union, I commend on the festival and we expect the new year-2006- to see economic openness, continued development and expansion of partnership between the Yemeni private sector and the international private sectors. We hope such wonderful activities to be an initial step for working on what serves future of the country and upgrades the role of private sector in development."

Better image

The Establishment organized a tour for the attendants and media personnel to view sections of the cars showroom and their contents. Mohamed Saeed Al-Haj, Chairman of the Board of Directors, at the Establishment, presented a detailed explanation on the qualities and characteristics of machineries and automobiles of the Establishment which were introduced to the Yemeni market. He clarified: "We hope to please our highly regarded customers from the

government and private sectors by telling them that we care for selecting professional companies in car industries to be our agents.

We reached agreements with some Chinese companies that represent reputable American and European companies. Having glorious history and successful achievements in the production of cars with German and American design according to international quality standards and competitive prices." He added:

"Nowadays, our customers from different social classes can have cars with modern specifications and prices fitting their income on the base of sale-in-installments mechanism ranging between 4-5 years. We offer our customers authentic warranties and post sale services through the maintenance departments in the Est., which have introduced highly-qualified engineers and technicians, and equipped the maintenance units with distinctive machineries and means.

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"We have the intention to be real partners in the process of development which our beloved country witnesses, and this is why we offer machineries and automobiles of different types to serve sectors who are involved in the main infrastructure of development.

ALFAO INTERNATIONAL OIL SERVICES & ENGINEERING CONSULTATION, which is a branch of ALFAO EST., is the Sole Agent and Representative for CHINA NATIONAL CHEMICAL CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION [CNCCC], which is an export-oriented group company directly under the central enterprise working commission, who mainly involves in chemical industry and petrochemical products with integration of engineering design, contracting service, warehousing and various services such as oil services, oil exploration, oil rigs, oil construction...etc. We are also Agents for SHANTUICHIK CLASS LUBRICATING OIL.



Secretary-General of the Capital

"We congratulate Al-Haj Est. for its distinctive business and wish ALFAO Est. the best of success and prosperity."



Mohammed Saeed Al-Haj Chairman of the Board of Directors

"We feel a total commitment in being a private sector that should play an influential role in the economic development of Yemen."



Qais Al-Haj General Manager

"We offer distinctive services, and we have the ability to meet needs of different sectors."



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Hamas, Fatah gunmen battle over election results

GAZA (Reuters) - Hamas and Fatah gunmen exchanged fire on Friday amid political turmoil as the long-dominant Fatah faction was threatened with a violent backlash from within after its crushing election defeat by the Islamic militant group.

Hamas, whose shock parliamentary election victory changed the face of Palestinian politics and plunged Middle East peacemaking deeper in limbo, said it would hold talks soon with President Mahmoud Abbas on a "political partnership". But Fatah leaders have rejected a coalition with Hamas.

The United States said it will review funding to the aid-dependent Palestinians if Hamas enters government and Israel suggested it could suspend customs revenue transfers, adding economic uncertainty to the political upheaval.

Some 20,000 Fatah supporters took to the streets in angry protests across the Gaza Strip, burning cars outside the Palestinian parliament building and firing rifles in the air. Some Hamas posters were ripped down by the crowd, which burned tires in the streets.

Acknowledging Hamas's new standing as a political powerhouse, Abbas told reporters: "We are consulting and in contact with all the Palestinian groups and definitely, at the appropriate time, the biggest party will form the cabinet."

The militant al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, part of Fatah, issued a statement threatening to "liquidate" the faction's leaders if they changed their minds and joined a Hamas-led administration.

At separate rallies, thousands of Hamas backers celebrated their surprise victory.

While Fatah leaders have called for a peaceful transition of power, bad blood runs deep between the secular and Islamist rivals. Many Hamas gunmen still harbor resentment over crackdowns by Palestinian security forces amid peace overtures by Abbas to Israel, which has sought a clampdown on armed groups.

In the first armed clash between Hamas and Fatah militants since Wednesday's vote, three people were wounded in a gun battle near the southern city of Khan Younis.

In later flare ups there, Hamas gunmen and Palestinian security forces exchanged fire in Khan



Fatah supporters demonstrate against election results in the West Bank city of Hebron, January 27, 2006. REUTERS

Younis, wounding a Hamas gunman and two security officers.

Security sources said a further two policemen were wounded when masked gunmen, wearing trademark green Hamas headbands, fired at a patrol car, underscoring the difficulties ahead.

With Middle East peace talks frozen since 2000, Israel ruled out negotiations with any Palestinian administration involving Hamas, which is sworn to Israel's destruction and has been behind dozens of suicide bombings.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Israel threw into doubt its willingness to continue the transfer of monthly customs revenues totaling tens of millions of dollars to the Palestinian Authority. The money is needed to help pay salaries for 135,000 government employees.

Compounding the Palestinian Authority's worries, the United States said it will review "all aspects" of its aid programs to the Palestinians if Hamas is in the government.

"To be very clear, we do not provide money to terrorist organizations," said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack.

Divided opinion

An opinion poll in Israel's Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper showed 48 percent of Israelis favored talking to a Hamas-led Palestinian government, while 43 percent were opposed.

Israel holds a general election on March 28 and interim Prime Minister

Ehud Olmert, whose centrist Kadima party is the front-runner, has hinted at unilateral moves to set a border with the Palestinians on Israeli terms.

Israel has already pulled its settlers out of the Gaza Strip without negotiations, citing the current Palestinian government's failure to rein in militants.

"In the Gaza disengagement, Israel opened a window of opportunity. With these elections, the Palestinians have slammed it shut," Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said in Tel Aviv.

Speaking in Damascus, Moussa Abu Marzouk, a senior Hamas official, said the movement had a "clear vision for a government of unity -- one in which everyone joins".

But thousands of Fatah supporters, who held protests across Gaza, rejected any coalition with Hamas and called on Fatah's veteran leadership to resign over the debacle. "Corrupt Fatah leaders who caused the election defeat must resign. Fatah must renew itself," one protester shouted through a loudspeaker.

Hamas's capture of 76 seats in the 132-member parliament -- against 43 for Fatah -- was widely seen as a political earthquake in the Middle East, triggered by voter anger at Fatah over corruption and the failure of peace efforts.

Hamas has mostly respected a truce for nearly a year, but says it will not give up its guns or its charter demand for an Islamic state to encompass Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

German Iraq hostages urge Berlin to help free them

BERLIN (Reuters) - Two Germans held hostage in Iraq appeared in a video on Friday urging their government to help secure their release and German Chancellor Angela Merkel vowed to do everything in her power to free the men.

The recording, aired by Arabic news broadcaster Al Jazeera, showed the pair kneeling in front of four masked gunmen.

Their voices were inaudible, but Al Jazeera said the video, which had a date stamp of January 24, the day of their abduction, showed the two men urging Berlin to help secure their release.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told reporters the footage was "devastating".

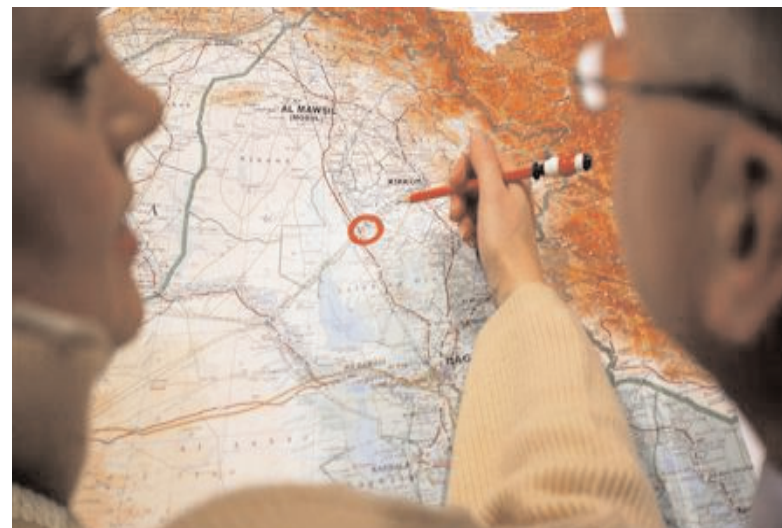
Merkel said all of Germany had been "deeply moved by the images" and vowed the government "will do everything it can to bring our fellow countrymen home safely, unharmed and healthy."

Germany's foreign intelligence service, the BND, was analyzing the footage, though a spokesman declined to comment on any conclusions BND analysts might have reached.

Iraqi security forces have set up checkpoints, circulated descriptions of the two engineers and made contact with local tribal leaders to help identify the kidnappers, a spokesman for the U.S.-Iraqi Joint Coordination Center in Tikrit, Iraq said.

Al Jazeera said the tape was received from a group that calls itself the Brigade of Ansar al-Tawhid Wa-Sunna. The group did not make any demands through the recording.

The word "al-Tawhid" is well known in Germany because of the "al-Tawhid trial" of Islamist militants at a Duesseldorf court that ended last year.



Crisis center staff at the foreign ministry in Berlin consult a map of Iraq, Jan. 24. REUTERS

But a security source said the kidnappers appeared more probably to be supporters of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. "We guess they're more likely to be Baathists," the source said.

Upsurge in kidnappings

The two engineers -- identified in German media reports as Rene Braeunlich and Thomas Nitzschke -- were abducted on Tuesday outside their workplace in the Iraqi industrial town of Baiji, 180 km (110 miles) north of Baghdad.

At least six gunmen in two unmarked cars grabbed the two men just outside a detergent plant in an industrial complex around Iraq's biggest oil refinery.

U.S. patrols suffer almost daily roadside bomb attacks in the area, which also attracts criminal gangs because of the oil refinery.

There has been an upsurge in kidnappings of foreigners in the past three

months. Over 200 foreigners and thousands of Iraqis have been abducted since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Most foreign hostages have been released, but 54 are known to have been killed; dozens are still believed to be held.

Last month German archaeologist Susanne Osthoff was released after being held hostage in Iraq for three weeks. German media reports have cited unnamed diplomats as saying that Berlin paid the kidnappers \$5 million for Osthoff's release.

Two days after Osthoff's release, Germany freed a Hizbollah member jailed for life in 1985 for the murder of a U.S. Navy diver. Berlin has denied any connection between the two events.

The German government has asked journalists to avoid speculation about possible ransom payments so as not to encourage financially motivated abductions.

Bush urges full probe of Hariri murder

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President George W. Bush called on Friday for a "full and firm" investigation of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri in which Syrian officials have been implicated.

With Hariri's son Saad at his side in the Oval Office, Bush also said the United States wanted to see Lebanon "free of Syrian intimidation."

No one has yet been indicted in the killing of Hariri in a truck bomb in Beirut almost a year ago, but a U.N. investigation has implicated senior Syrian officials and their Lebanese allies.

Lebanon has also detained a number of individuals identified as suspects. Damascus has denied any role in the murder which stirred anti-Syrian protests in Lebanon and set in motion the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon.

"The American people mourn the loss of your dad," Bush said. "It's very important for the investigation into your dad's death to go forward. We expect there to be a full and firm investigation and the people who are responsible for your dad's death need to be held to account."

U.N. Legal Counsel Nicolas Michel discussed with top Lebanese officials on Friday ideas for the creation of an international court to try



U.S. President George W. Bush meets Lebanon's parliamentary majority leader Saad al-Hariri, the son of murdered former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri, in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington January 27. REUTERS

anyone charged with Hariri's killing.

Bush, who has made promoting democracy in the Middle East a cornerstone of his foreign policy agenda, said he and Hariri discussed their "mutual desire" for Lebanon to be free.

"Free of foreign influence, free of

Syrian intimidation, free to chart its own course," the president added.

Hariri, a member of Lebanon's parliament, told reporters later he was trying to arrange an international donors' conference for Lebanon.

"We're working on setting the date and I hope we'll get it soon," he said.

UN lawyer meets Lebanon officials on Hariri court

BEIRUT (Reuters) - U.N. Legal Counsel Nicolas Michel discussed with top Lebanese officials on Friday ideas for the creation of an international court to try anyone charged with the killing of a former Lebanese prime minister.

Michel, who arrived in Beirut on Thursday, said he consulted the officials on ways the world body could help in setting up a court "with an international character" as requested by the Lebanese government last month.

"My presence here is to carry out these consultations... which we hope would be fruitful," Michel told reporters.

No one has yet been indicted in the killing of Rafik al-Hariri in a truck bomb in Beirut in February but a U.N. investigation has already implicated senior Syrian officials and their Lebanese allies in the murder.

Lebanon has also detained a number of individuals identified as suspects. Syria has repeatedly denied any role in the killing which stirred anti-Syrian protests in Lebanon and set in train events that brought withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon.

The lawyer held separate talks with President Emile Lahoud, Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and the ministers of foreign affairs and



U.N. Legal Counsel Nicolas Michel (L) leaves the Beirut office of Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora in Beirut Jan. 27. REUTERS

justice.

A statement from the presidential palace said Lahoud expressed during the talks "his hope that a formula for the court would be reached quickly".

"The Lebanese are unanimous on the necessity to reach to the whole truth (of who killed Hariri), though their views sometimes differ on the shape of the judicial body that should handle the trial," it quoted Lahoud as

saying.

The 15-nation council, in a resolution adopted last month, authorized U.N. staff to help Beirut determine the nature and scope of assistance.

Michel is also looking at whether the U.N. Hariri inquiry should be expanded to probe a wave of deadly bombings in Beirut since Hariri's death.

US Senate passes resolution condemning Iran

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. Senate on Friday unanimously passed a resolution condemning Iran for its nuclear program and backing efforts to report it to the U.N. Security Council.

The resolution, approved by a voice vote, cites Iran's "many failures ... to comply faithfully with its nuclear non-proliferation obligations."

It "strongly urges" the International Atomic Energy Agency at its special meeting on Thursday to refer Iran to the U.N. Security Council over suspicions it is secretly trying to develop atomic bombs.

The resolution also calls on all Security Council members, particularly Russia and China, to "act expeditiously" to deal with Iran's suspected

noncompliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The United States, Britain, France, Russia and China, the five veto-wielding powers of the 15-member Security Council, plus Germany plan to meet in London on Monday to try to resolve differences over whether to send Iran to the council. Russia and China to date have opposed a formal referral.

Venezuela's Chavez warns US over spy case

CARACAS, Venezuela (Reuters) - Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez warned on Friday he could jail U.S. Embassy officials caught spying after accusing them of links to Venezuelan officers suspected of espionage for the Pentagon.

The charges of U.S. spying are the latest test of relations between the United States and Chavez, a fierce critic of Washington who wants to bring socialist revolution to the world's fifth-largest oil exporter.

Chavez, a close ally of communist-run Cuba, calls U.S. President George W. Bush "Mr. Danger" and has often charged Washington with planning to overthrow him since he survived a 2002 coup he says was backed by the U.S. government.

"We have uncovered a case, another espionage case," Chavez told an audience at a World Social Forum event where he was joined by peace activists and Cuban National Assembly Speaker Ricardo Alarcon.

"I warn the U.S. government ... the next time we detect an officer or a civilian official, above all U.S. military officers, trying to get information from our armed forces, we're going to lock them up," he said.

Venezuelan authorities said on Friday authorities had "confidential evidence" that U.S. Embassy staff were involved with a group of Venezuelan military officers accused of passing state secrets to the U.S. Defense Department.

A U.S. Embassy spokesman said on Friday, "We still have received no official contact from the Venezuelan government on that matter. We are in the dark as to what the details of the charges are."

U.S. officials say Chavez's allegations of plots are populist rhetoric meant to shore up his support among



A U.S. Geological Survey handout, photographed from the west, shows Augustine volcano's summit on Jan. 12. After 10 days of relative calm, Alaska's Augustine Volcano roared back to life late on Friday, shooting a cloud of ash 40,000 feet into the sky. REUTERS

poor voters. His critics at home and in Washington portray him as an increasing threat to democracy in Venezuela and overseas.

Earlier this week, Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel said several low-ranking officers had been discovered handing secrets to the United States. A top army commander on Thursday said the U.S. Embassy was linked to the case.

Officials have not said how many officers were involved or confirmed that anyone has been detained. Military authorities have said an investigation

was under way, but a navy spokesman said he could not comment on the probe.

Alonso Medina, an attorney for one man detained in the investigation, said his client, Jacinto Nouel, was a retired firefighter and dentist held on charges of spying and threatening the security of the military.

The lawyer said the prosecutors accused Nouel of ties to the U.S. Embassy after he received documents from his son-in-law — a retired Venezuela naval officer — living in

Miami. Medina said the documents were a CD-ROM with public information about Spanish aircraft.

Venezuela clashed recently with the United States over its purchase of Spanish transport and maritime surveillance aircraft as it modernizes its armed forces through agreements with Russia, Brazil and Spain.

U.S. officials blocked the sale of the Spanish aircraft. Washington can veto transfer of U.S. parts to third parties and says it is worried Venezuela's military buildup may destabilize the region.

Taliban militants burn down three Afghan schools

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (Reuters) - Taliban insurgents have torched three schools in a restive southern province of Afghanistan, the latest attacks in the militants' campaign against the U.S.-backed government and its efforts to promote education.

The three newly built schools, where 1,000 boys and girls studied, were gutted on Friday night in different parts of Nawa district in Helmand province, said provincial education chief Mohammad Qasim.

"I can say that the Taliban were behind this," Qasim told Reuters on Saturday, adding that no one was hurt in the attacks.

Taliban spokesmen were not immediately available for comment.

The Taliban banned girls from school during their rule, which ended when they were ousted by U.S.-led forces in late 2001 after the Islamists refused to hand over Osama bin Laden, architect of the September 11 attacks on the United States.

Since then, insurgents battling U.S. and government forces have launched numerous attacks on schools and teachers, including deadly attacks in recent weeks in Helmand, where British troops will soon be based.

Suspected Taliban gunmen dragged a teacher from his classroom and shot him at the gates of his school in December after he had ignored warnings to stop teaching boys and girls, officials said.

In a separate attack, also in December, gunmen shot and killed an 18-year-old male student and a guard at another school in Helmand. The gunmen opened fire on teachers and said they would be killed unless the schools were shut down, police said.

In Zabol province, also in the south, a teacher was dragged from his home and beheaded last month.

Dozens of people, most of them civilians, have been killed in a wave of attacks — including 13 suicide bombings — across Afghanistan's south and east in recent months.

The government blames Taliban fighters and their al Qaeda allies, saying the militants want to frighten off NATO members from a planned expansion of their Afghan peacekeeping force.

On Thursday Britain announced it would send 3,300 more troops to Afghanistan, bringing its total there to 5,700 after it takes over command of the NATO mission in May.

Japanese march to protest crime by US military

TOKYO (Reuters) - Some 800 Japanese calling for an end to crimes by U.S. military personnel marched in protest on Saturday, a day after prosecutors indicted a U.S. sailor for killing and robbing a 56-year-old Japanese woman this month.

The demonstrators gathered in a park near a U.S. naval base in Yokosuka, south of Tokyo, and later held a march nearby, Kyodo news agency said.

"Not just in Yokosuka, but in cities with bases such as Okinawa...there are many incidents and accidents involv-

ing U.S. soldiers," Kyodo quoted Masahiko Goto, a lawyer who took part in the demonstration, as saying.

Japanese prosecutors on Friday indicted Seaman William Reese, 21, who was arrested this month on suspicion of killing and robbing Yoshie Sato on January 3 in Yokosuka.

The incident has come at an awkward time in U.S.-Japanese relations, as Tokyo and Washington attempt to hammer out a deal with local Japanese communities to reorganise U.S. bases in Japan in an attempt to make the U.S. military more flexible.

Alaska volcano erupts after 10 days of quiet

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (Reuters) - After 10 days of relative calm, Alaska's Augustine Volcano roared back to life late on Friday, shooting a cloud of ash 40,000 feet into the sky.

It was the 10th explosion since January 11, when the 4,134-foot (1,260-meter) volcano in southern Cook Inlet began an eruptive phase, reported the Alaska Volcano Observatory, a joint federal-state office.

As of late Friday, there were no reports of ash settling onto any of the nearby communities, but some was expected to drift onto Kodiak Island, southeast of the peak, said Janet Schaefer, a geologist with the volcano observatory.

Because it was dark when the eruption occurred, the ash was not visible to casual observers, she said. "We do see from satellite imagery that the ash cloud is moving southeast," she said.

Augustine is located about 175 miles southwest of Anchorage. The conical-shaped peak forms its own uninhabited island in Cook Inlet, the channel that runs from the Anchorage area to the Gulf of Alaska. It is the most active of Cook Inlet's volcanoes.

Despite more than a week of quiet,



A U.S. Geological Survey handout, photographed from the west, shows Augustine volcano's summit on Jan. 12. After 10 days of relative calm, Alaska's Augustine Volcano roared back to life late on Friday, shooting a cloud of ash 40,000 feet into the sky. REUTERS

experts had anticipated another eruption at Augustine, Schaefer said. Seismic activity had been building at the site. "We knew something was coming up shortly," she said.

Before this month, Augustine's pre-

vious eruptive periods occurred in 1986 and 1976. The current activity "is looking a lot like what happened" in those years, with a series of explosive eruptions interspersed with days of quiet, Schaefer said.

China lifts quarantine in final bird-flu-hit area

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China has lifted the quarantine on the last of 33 areas that had reported outbreaks of bird flu, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The Ministry of Agriculture approved the ending of quarantine on Friday in an area of southwestern Guizhou Province after no new cases were reported for 21 days.

No poultry had been allowed into or out of the area during the quarantine period. Markets had been closed and

infected birds, or those suspected of being infected, culled.

A Chinese woman died of bird flu this week, the seventh person to die from the disease in the mainland since November.

No outbreaks of bird flu in poultry have been confirmed in the area of Sichuan Province where this latest victim lived.

Bird flu has killed at least 83 people worldwide since it re-emerged in late 2003, according to World Health

Organization figures.

Millions of poultry have been killed to prevent the spread of the disease, which can be passed to humans through contact with sick birds. Experts worry that the H5N1 virus could mutate to spread easily among humans, leading to a global pandemic.

In Hong Kong, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department said it was conducting further tests on a dead oriental magpie robin to confirm a suspected case of H5 avian influenza.

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Yemen Press Review

By: Mohammed Khidhr



Al-Mithaq weekly, organ of the General People's Congress (GPC), 23 Jan.2006.

Main headlines

- PM: The government program this year, the implementation of a group of reforms approved by the GPC 7th conference
- Under preparation, Smaller government machinery working with efficiency and effectiveness
- Islah party was skeptical about fairness of elections to justify its defeat
- Would political parties agree on a criterion for forming electoral committees?
- In encouragement of the private sector, Building two oil refineries in Hadramout and Hudeida, expansion of Aden and Mareb refineries
- Shoura Council committee entrusted with discussion of press draft law begin their meetings
- Yemen welcomes Chinese investments, enhancement of partnership of the two countries

The newspaper's editorial says some of opposition parties continue their hostile campaign against the General People's Congress just to discredit its status and achievements, using a type of language full of hatred and misleading and provocation. They intend to draw the GPC to a battle it does not want to be one of its parties. The GPC's real battle is nowadays inside the field of development and comprehensive reforms. All affiliates of the GPC and masses of the people should be conscious in the face of those attempts that we had experienced in the past and gained nothing from them but loss, because they are in fact tools for destruction not construction.

The editorial maintains mentioning that we have repeatedly and always sincerely called upon our partners in the political life to adopt together the best options that support the process of modernization, change and reforms in the society, and on our part our choice has become clear and known. The GPC has concluded its 7th conference to embark on a new phase of tireless work and they would not preoccupy themselves with battles that some opposition parties try drag the GPC to them.

Those who try to hunt for small mistakes happening here and there as in any society and work to exaggerate them and use them in their hostile tendencies have become clearly known to the people and will not succeed in their pursuit.



Al-Shumou weekly, 21 Jan.2006.

Main headlines

- The American ambassador to Yemen demanded giving the GSM third operator to an American company instead of a Chinese
- Imminent movements for the arrest of

a number of personalities supporting the rebellion

- Conspiracy targeting unity of the Socialist Party, Observers emphasize its parties are local and regional political forces
- Suspicious clandestine contacts between local societies and foreign parties lead to boycott activities of some of them
- Through hundreds of jobs provided by its consulates around the world, Washington courts the youth of Sana'a and Riyadh

In its editorial the newspaper says the political variables on the ground, whether at the local or the regional and international levels, emphasize the necessity of the national alignment to encounter foreign interventions aiming at disruption of the political life on the Yemeni arena. Those interventions are planned according to an agenda that it is not to rule out its adoption of a strategy working for dismemberment of the country into sectarian entities. The features of this scheme could be observed through what it seems an insistence on prolongation of the duration of al-Houthi rebellion events in the country. If this presumption has, according to viewpoints of some, achieved a noticeable progress in that of political appearance in media locally and internationally to show its ability to create factors of negotiations with the government side, some politicians see that a gain for the rebellion politicians. They see it like that despite of the data in the military field do not qualify the rebellion politicians and militias to just think of the possibility of at a negotiating table. This is a principle undermined by an announcement of forming a committee working to undermine rebellion confrontation with forces of the army according to a principle of the stop of more bloodshed.

The loss of confidence between opposition parties and he ruling party represents one of the most important factors supporting continuation of al-Houthi rebellion activities, or any similar conspiratorial forces which try to implement their plots against Yemen as a homeland and people.

The loss of confidence between opposition parties and he ruling party represents one of the most important factors supporting continuation of al-Houthi rebellion activities, or any similar conspiratorial forces which try to implement their plots against Yemen as a homeland and people.



Minbar Al-Shoura weekly, organ of the Democratic Union of People's Forces, 22 Jan.2002.

Main headlines

- Member of the elections supreme commission Al-Jundi: Differences of parties not objective, may cause deprive them from participation in formation of committees
- The president of the republic heads for Germany for medical checking
- Sheikh Al-Ahmar denies his running for presidency, describes President Bush and his ambassador to Sana'a as reckless and hostile
- Official report discloses loss of millions of duties of educational services
- 170 woman organizations work in Yemen
- Trial of employees accused of embezzlement of the Watani Bank

Writer Nizar Al-Abbadhi writes an article about the phenomenon of carrying and possessing weapons in Yemen. He says at present all circumstances of the past that dictated carrying and possessing weapons have disappeared and Yemeni life changed into a different style of daily dealing. This change presumes that it is reasonable and logical to ask about the reason why weapons are carried in the markets and streets. It is to be wondered why members of parliament insist to reach the parliament building surrounded by armed bodyguards as if they were heading for a war front. The wonder is also about the reason why some would think they will lose respect and prestige with the absence of weapons.

One would be shocked at being acquainted with statistics of the interior ministry concerning the number of victims of weapons and the damage they inflict on the society. Knowing of those statistics will bring great anxiety of people about their sons from a stray bullet that could kill those children.

What is strange is that all opposition parties demand the government to strengthen the sovereignty of the law and order and at the same time they had boycotted the popular activities held last November demanding the passing of law regulating carrying and possession of weapons. Even the opposition media kept silent towards that activity. No one knows if weapons merchants were part of the opposition ranks or not.

It is astonishing that all consider the issue of weapons as only a government responsibility and not a general national responsibility. All efforts should join forces for curbing and regulating this phenomenon and should insist on the parliament to legally decide this question. Media instruments are presently the sole responsible for enlightenment about this matter. They have to promote a new civilized culture titled awareness, respect of law, judiciary authority and social peace of the Yemeni people.



As-Sahwa weekly, 26 Jan.2006.

Main headlines

- International reports: Rima elections were not free and decent
- The government decision concerning Head of Judiciary Council, deception for the international community
- Deputy American ambassador: Arab regimes are slow in implementing their laws and talk much
- More than ninety teachers demonstrate in protest to abolishing their jobs
- Columnist Zaid Ash-Shami discusses in his article the work and tasks of the Elections Supreme Commission in Yemen, saying we have entrusted the Commission with managing elections and it is supposed to be impartial. Nevertheless it is customary that the commission is composed of representatives of political parties where the majority is for the ruling party. The commission has thus tended to be leaning to the

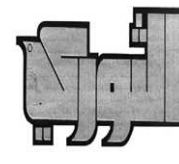
SKETCHED OPINION



ruling party and shows bias in favor of that party's choices and interest.

Before any operation of registration of electors and during formation of committees, there happens a dispute among the parties and the commission on distribution of parties shares in the committees. All parties show a theoretical agreement on transparency and decency, but practically all that is not done. Nowadays the dispute happens anew. The General People's Congress wants to dominate the lion's share whereas the opposition parties demand for equilibrium. Regrettably the elections supreme commission adopts the visions the GPC chooses.

As the political arena has developed into two main aspects: the authority represented by the ruling party and the opposition composing parties of the Joint Meeting Parties. This does not mean there are no others but they are mostly with this or that side. The suggestion is that the GPC takes a share of one third in the commission and the opposition parties altogether in the JMP get the second third. The remainder third of representation could be given to people in judiciary, university students, unemployed graduates or any social segment to be agreed on.



Ath-Thawri weekly, organ of the YSP, 26 Jan. 2006.

Main headlines

- Because of its partiality to the ruling party, JMP demands re-formation of the Election Supreme Commission
- JMP declares rejection of the Supreme Commission's formation of election committees
- YSP secretary-General congratulates Chile president
- Woman sector of the YSP in Aden re-organized
- Writer Mansour Al-Surouri tackles in its article the problem of waters in Yemen, saying it is one of the most irremediable ones for a long time. All what the government has done with this regard is that it had in 1998 prepared a national strate-

gy of waters and in 2003 issued a law on waters.

The water security comes in the second place after the national security and occupies the first place among all development sectors.

Ninety percent of Yemen's areas are of dry climate with increased rates of humidity. This means an increase in proportion of evaporation accompanied with big absorption of underground waters and that to an increase in the average of drop of annual subterranean waters level in our country, from one to eight meters.

According to estimates of the World Bank, there are 45 thousand artesian

wells exposed to danger due to absence of modern management and because of following backward methods, especially in irrigation as well as non-existence of programs for rationing water consumption. Thus large quantity of underground waters is threatened of loss. The policy ignoring by the government of such a dangerous problem and its tragic dimensions is no longer convincing for the citizens or of avail for a ruling regime the first responsible for that and others. The ruling regime has therefore to get ready to bear its responsibility for the future because the essence for life continuation is water.



SILVER LINING
By: Mohammed Hatem al-Qadhi
mhalqadhi@hotmail.com

Hamas Victory: Corruption vis-à-vis Extremism

The world has been stunned by the landslide victory of the Islamic movement of Hamas. I have been watching and reading about the international community response commenting on the unprecedented democratic event in the Arab region; they all applauded the smooth way in which the election was run without any violence or fraud. I was myself impressed by this and the way Fatah has responded to the announcement of the results. The Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and other officials of Fatah have behaved in a way that has commanded the respect of everybody and has invited the appreciation of the world towards this growing democratic experience, despite all the obstacles. The Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qura'e has also demonstrated a good democratic example as he resigned upon hearing the preliminary results showing the victory of Hamas, asking it to form cabinet. This is really extraordinary in the Arab countries. I have felt that democracy will no longer be a luxury in the Arab countries and that its future- in this region plagued with oppression and tyranny for a long time- can be promising.

This election result is, of course, a good message to the Arab tyrannical regimes that there will be no room for them in the political spectrum of these countries when the people are given chance to practice real democracy. This is because these people are now more aware of the importance of their role in making their future through choosing their rulers through transparent and free poll. This is the power of democracy in producing a change into the life of the people.

The massive win of Hamas in Palestine and the big achievements of the Muslims Brothers in the last parliamentary election in Egypt have shown that the Arab people are fed up with corrupt and oppressive regimes and that they are ready to vote for even extremist groups that can stand against these regimes. In other words, the Arab people are given two hard choices: either to vote for corrupt regimes or sometimes extremist groups. These people are no more willing to vote for corrupt regimes that have produced nothing but poverty, unemployment and further extremism and terrorism. The Palestinians voted against corruption in all its form, poverty and unemployment more than the peace process

with Israel. They have punished the corrupt officials of Fatah and their incompetence to breathe a new life into their life. Surely, the same thing will take place in any other Arab country if there is fair and free election.

I think that the result of the Palestinian election has confused the international community and put Hamas itself in a fix, taking into account Hamas stand towards the peace process with Israel and the stand of the US and the Europe towards Hamas. While the US President George Bush said that they will not deal with Hamas as far as it believes in the destruction of Israel, the European Union announced that they will deal with the upcoming Palestinian government whosoever. But, Bush has not lost hope in the way to continue supporting the Palestinians and the peace process, depending on Abbas stay in power.

I believe that isolating Hamas by the West and the US will not lead to any fruitful results and rather will incur further terrorism which might go beyond the Palestinian territories. I know that the result of democracy can be sometimes bitter. However, we have to accept its outcome. The choice of the people must be respected and it is they who should by the end evaluate the ability of Hamas to meet and fulfill their ambitions and demands or not.

On its part, Hamas has to be pragmatic, balanced and takes into account the future of the Palestinians who should not be put down. It has to be responsible towards protecting the interests of the Palestinian people at large and consequently be open to the international community. Hamas, whose leaders have recently announced that negotiation with Israel is not a taboo, can not run the government without having contacts with Israel. It can not also run the government without ending violence, testing the real intentions of the Israelis to the peace making process. Unless Hamas does not do this, it will not only face challenges in dealing only with Israel and the US, but also with Europe and the rest of the world. It has also to start fighting corruption and find out how to improve the living conditions of the people.

The coming few days will truly test the ability of the Islamic parties, whose power is growing in the Arab countries, to rule and cope up with the world current affairs and live up to the challenges ahead. Let's wait and see!

Muslim U.S. Army chaplain describes life at Guantanamo prison

By: Zeeba Anarwala
Reporting from the United States

James Yee, former Muslim chaplain in the U.S. military who was falsely accused of espionage, spying and aiding the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, described Thursday (January 19) in a speech at Northwestern University near Chicago how desecration of the Quran by guards led some prisoners to attempt suicide. He said that religion was used in a "humiliating and degrading way" at the military prison camp. Yee, a third-generation Chinese American, and graduate of the prestigious military academy West Point, converted to Islam in 1991. Yee was recognized in the military for his outstanding service and was sent to Guantanamo to serve as a religious leader for the 660 detainees at the all-Muslim prison. Approximately 85 to 115 Yemenis are believed to be at Guantanamo.

When Yee first went to Cuba, he did not know what his role would be. He thought it was because the Army wanted to show they were sensitive to the

Muslim prisoners' needs, and he would serve as a showpiece. When he arrived at Guantanamo, he became an adviser to the command in Cuba. The command expected him to provide recommendations for the prisoners' treatment, such as marking the direction of the Kaba so they could pray and telling the guards how to handle the prisoners' copies of the Quran. Soon, however, Yee learned that not only were the prisoners' religious beliefs not respected, he and other Muslim-American military personnel were treated as the "enemy," by other personnel, and he was subjected to derogatory comments such as "Chinese Taliban."

Yee says the military's 'secret weapon' in Guantanamo was the use of religion against the prisoners. Yee says he witnessed many of these abuses while other stories were related to him by the prisoners. "I witnessed when guards searched cells, they would violently shake the holy book, and sometimes the binding cracked" and the pages would fall to the floor. Furthermore, Yee says prisoners had buckets in their cells to use as toilets and the guards would routinely throw

copies of the Quran in the buckets filled with urine and feces. To protest these behaviors by the guards, many prisoners went on hunger strikes. He said the psychological torment the detainees suffered from seeing the Quran being treated so vilely, prompted some to resort to suicide.

In addition, Yee detailed numerous reports of female interrogators inappropriately touching the detainees during questioning. Less known, according to Yee, was that detainees were forced to inappropriately touch the female interrogators, Yee said. Female guards routinely did pat down searches, a method Yee pointed out is not even allowed in civilian prisons in the United States. Yee also added that prisoners told him that they were forced to sit in the middle of a satanic circle, bow down and say, "Satan is my God now, not Allah."

On his way home from Guantanamo Bay for vacation, Yee was illegally searched by customs officials at a U.S. airport. Officials claimed Yee was carrying "suspicious documents" and accused of spying, espionage, aiding the enemy, mutiny and sedition—all

crimes which carry the death penalty. From the airport, Yee was transferred to a maximum security prison where he was in solitary confinement, with his eyes and ears covered—similar to how the Guantanamo detainees were treated while being flown to Cuba. After 76 days Yee was released from prison and eventually cleared of the bogus charges, because the government could not materialize a case against him. In an investigative report done by an American newspaper, an anonymous source said the decision to arrest Yee was made at the highest levels of the U.S. government.

In his speech, Yee did not mention if the Muslim detainees resented him for being part of a system that was systematically degrading and humiliating them based on their religion.

After resigning from the military, Yee has thought about serving as a Muslim chaplain in civilian prisons and giving dawah (inviting others to Islam) to prisoners. Yee gives a detailed account of his experiences at Guantanamo in his new book "For God and Country: Faith and Patriotism Under Fire."

Contract projects: breeding ground for corruption

Project execution delays and land plot disputes settled by force instead of the courts are major factors impeding investment in Yemen.

Report by: Mahyoub Al-Kamali

Contract projects and their implementation by entrepreneurs are considered breeding grounds for corruption, wherein middlemen and beneficiaries of contract deals are very active. Additionally, project-allocated land plot disputes are increasing and negatively affecting society and arousing uncertainty among investors due to using weapons to settle these disputes.

Most contracts and tenders are service, development and other projects forming the core of infrastructure. Delay of their execution by contractors, consequently halting construction, under various pretexts such as construction materials price changes, requires compensation at the state budget's expense. Additionally, some entrepreneurs implement projects under specifications lower and less than what was agreed in contracts, causing much squander of funds allotted for implementing projects.

The government recently has become aware of this problem hampering project implementation timetables. Sana'a mayor Ahmed Mohammed Al-Kuhlani emphasized that companies acting fraudulently and not committed to project execution will



Mr. Ahmed Mohammed Al-Kuhlani

be blacklisted and not given the opportunity to implement future projects.

At a Jan. 26 plenary meeting at the capital secretariat's public works office to discuss progress and execution levels of projects currently under construction and some floundering projects, Al-Kuhlani stressed that it is important for engineers and executive officials to shoulder their responsibilities through field follow-up of implemented projects. He added that they must take legal measures against any company breaching the contract and its terms, calling for no delays in paying financial dues to companies and contract agencies.

The meeting also discussed topics pertaining to progress in implementing

projects, as well as problems and hindrances affecting normal execution, such as absent supervising engineers from implementing firms at most project sites, equipment shortages and some firms' not presenting implementation timetables.

Attendees concluded that projects' main hindrances are unjustifiable halting of work, inadequate implementation and contract firms' failure to affix traffic safety marks during the project.

The matter of implemented capital projects faltering is applicable to other projects under construction in the free zone. This situation negatively affects the investment process, slows the country's growth progress and impedes ability to attract local and foreign capital for project management in an investment environment where there is a delay in projects designed to serve investors.

Regarding the second impediment, judiciary absence in settling land plot disputes also affects the investment situation. Disputing parties mostly resort to using arms to settle problems, which worries investors. One such problem occurred in Taiz governorate.

Assistant governorate deputy Mohammed Ahmed Al-Ansi addressed a letter to the Taiz works director demanding that he and the Rahda works director quickly investigate Khadir district, which he accused of conniving with owners of previously built estates and empty land in the town of Rahda. The letter stated that real estate owners had not obtained licenses beforehand and not paid duties



Building of Project under construction.

calculated according to areas of buildings to be built. According to the letter, there were more than 48 violations against the Rahda works office. Al-Ansi demanded the Rahda works office quickly form a committee of specialists to go to the town to carry

out legal procedures and take punitive measures against the office director in the light of investigation results.

Such violations occurred in a small town like Rahda, whereas many more occur in land disputes in Aden, Hudeida, Sana'a, Mukalla and other

places, which worry authorities and investors alike. Judiciary absence is the first cause aggravating these problems. This situation dictates judiciary system reform and solving disputes in a fair manner to create a stable investment climate in the country.

Hidden conflict behind Watani Bank funds squander

Trial proceedings of nine members of Watani Bank's board of directors reveal they acted illegally to achieve personal benefits. Lawyer Jamal Al-Ju'bi described case procedures as representing power centers conflict.

By: Yemen Times Staff

The ongoing trial of those accused of squandering Watani Bank depositor and shareholder funds has disclosed there was a hidden conflict regarding money wasted and seizing it.

The penal court of first instance specialized in trying nine members of Watani Bank's board of directors, two of them still at-large, began trying them on charges of betraying confidence and wasting depositor and shareholder funds estimated at YR 19,760,829,000 (YR 19.7 billion), not YR 47 billion announced when the Central Bank of Yemen (CBY) seized control of Watani Bank.

Lawyer Jamal Al-Ju'bi described the case as a conflict between state power centers, arguing that if it was purely economic, Watani Bank's condition was no secret to the CBY for many years, as the bank's reports confirm. He emphasized that the issue was political, aimed at liquidating high-ranking power centers, resulting in inflicting harm on the banking system.

Al-Ju'bi pointed out that there could

be some solutions to the problem of financing Watani Bank, but what previously occurred does not disclaim that there were mistakes by members of the board of directors of Watani Bank for Trade and Investment. In a statement to As-Sahwa newspaper, Al-Ju'bi affirmed that through the case procedures, some board members have been arrested, whereas other influential parties were not. He added that referring the case to the specialized penal court meant there were some matters intending to be hidden because the extraordinary court is one of state security, which concept bears that trial proceedings are suppressed.

The general prosecution representative stated that the defendants betrayed confidence as they facilitated squandering depositor and shareholder funds for themselves and others. He accused them of taking loans and illegally spending large sums on themselves, buying some shareholders' stocks for sums exceeding the shares' market value and granting loans to some parties without any guarantees. He also charged the first defendant with accepting a bribe

from the ninth defendant in return for facilitating a loan for him.

Some defendants confessed to the circumstantial evidence list and prosecution's investigation, confirming they would repay what is due the bank, while others denied the charges against them. Abdullah Hashim, lawyer for defendant number one, Watani Bank board chairman Dr. Ahmed Ali Al-Hamdani, refuted the penal court's specialty in prosecuting Al-Hamdani's case. When Hashim requested the court entrust a specialized firm to study the matter and report back on it, he pointed out that since the CBY seized control of it, YR 4 billion has been delivered to Watani Bank and loans repaid by entrepreneurs. He asked about the fate of these sums.

Specialists wondered if the Central Bank's seizing control of Watani Bank had any precedence, adding that such action should have been the final solution. They stated that Watani Bank's bankruptcy had not been declared yet, adding that the CBY should have interfered at the decisive moment to rescue the bank. They said despite CBY authority to monitor other banks in case of poor management, there must be other warnings, adding that a committee entrusted by the CBY did not announce whether Watani Bank's assets were enough to cover its obligations. They also stressed that it is CBY's duty to find solutions because the present situation has generated a crisis of confidence and a wave of bank deposit withdrawals, heralding some banks' collapse.

Last Dec. 7, the CBY issued a statement of Watani Bank's board members' retaining assets in all Yemeni banks and ordered the attorney general of public property prosecution to retain accounts of board members, bank directors and their relatives.



Watani Bank building in Sana'a.

Yemen's efforts to restore donors' trust

The commissioner for humanitarian and development aid accuses most donors of forgetting to offer humane assistance to Yemen.

By: Yemen Times Staff

Yemen is endeavoring to restore donors' confidence so it can obtain their backing and support to receive Millennium Fund assistance in areas of health, education and fighting poverty.

In this regard, Yemen implemented new measures confirming correctness of its economic, financial, administrative and judiciary reforms. In this context, foreign minister Dr. Abubakr Al-Qirbi called on donor countries and organizations to increase their aid volume to Yemen in order to push forward the wheels of development, surmount developmental challenges it faces and support efforts to move ahead in its comprehensive program for economic, financial and administrative reforms.

Al-Qirbi made his remarks during a Jan. 26 meeting in Sana'a with the American ambassador to Yemen and ambassadors of European Union countries. He reviewed the Yemeni government's efforts in all-out reform and its successes in enhancing the development process, combating poverty and strengthening democracy and human rights.

The minister emphasized Yemen's keenness to consolidate these successes by implementing economic, administrative and judicial reform programs. Al-Qirbi also expressed Yemen's anticipation of increased assistance from donor countries to maintain reform programs and achieve its aspired goals and

ambitions.

The European Commission announced it has allocated 2.5 million Euros for basic clean water needs and health care for Yemen's poorest rural areas. The commissioner for humanitarian aid and development also criticized donors, most of whom he said would forget offering humanitarian assistance to Yemen.

He added in a press release that continuous drought and lack of health care in the poorest areas continue severely, maintaining that these conditions contribute to making communicative diseases via water one of the major factors in the fatality rate among mothers and children, noting that the fatality rate among pregnant women is 42 percent.

He pointed out that the European Commission still is devoted to providing potable drinking water and primary health care in the poorest Yemeni areas during 2006. He said such aid will reduce the population's suffering in those Yemeni areas, especially among women and children.

He said the Yemeni government still is unable to meet all the needs of its population, particularly in remote rural areas. Therefore, the European Commission and its non-governmental organization partners intend to offer potable drinking water systems to approximately 30,000 people and expand support to approximately 70,000 in the health sector. He said health facilities will benefit from rehabilitation and medical equipment, as well as from providing permanent water.

The commissioner also said



Dr. Abubakr Al-Qirbi

primary training will help activate mother and child health services, with some activities particularly aiming to serve children under age 5 and expectant mothers before giving birth. Means will be reinstated to fight malaria's spread and treat it in its habitats. Additionally, there will be focused awareness on proper water use and health sector activities.

The European Commission is among Yemen's major donors. In the past five years, it has given approximately 90 million Euros in human aid and 34 million Euros for food security.

For the first time, Yemen's government recently called for adopting policies and steps suitable to consolidate trade and economic partnership between the government and the domestic private sector.

The World Bank previously decided to reduce financial aid to Yemen from \$420 million to \$280 million after observing a drop in positive indicators of the development process against increasing corruption. Yemen's economic growth still is weak, between 3 and 5 percent, and it faces an increased population growth rate of more than 3 percent.

New strategy for antiquity protection to be drafted

By: Yemen Times Staff

Prime Minister Abdul-Qadir Bajammal has ordered the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to prepare a national strategy addressing the protection and excavation of antiquities and artifacts. He further suggested that Yemenis should make use of the expertise of archeological missions coming to Yemen and that Yemeni academics, archeologists and students should be involved in excavation, antiquity rescue and restoration operations.

Chairing a meeting at the head-office of the General Authority for Antiquities, Museums and Manuscripts (GAAMM) Saturday Jan 28, the Premier stressed the importance of reconsidering the current law of archeology in such a way as to enhance the GAAMM in terms of measures that further help in the protection and conservation of the national antiquities and relics as they represent a human, historical and literary treasure for the Yemeni people.

A number of pertinent issues were discussed at the meeting including the



Yemeni artifacts have been subject to clandestine excavation, pillage and sale. Here is a collection recovered by Yemeni police at gang's safe-house

human and material resources locally available for the GAAMM and organizing its activities within a more institutional context. The meeting also discussed how to rejuvenate the GAAMM in terms of its duty towards national archeology through excavation, protection, conservation, renovation of the archeological finds as well as organization of its relationships with foreign

missions in light of protocol and legal lines.

The meeting included Minister of Information Hussein Al-Awadhi and Minister of Culture and Tourism Khaled al-Rowaihan. Other officials attended the meeting including Abdullah Mohammed Bawazeer, Chairman of the GAAMM, Dr. Abdul-Rahman Jarallah, Deputy GAAMM, Dr. Saleh Basurrah,

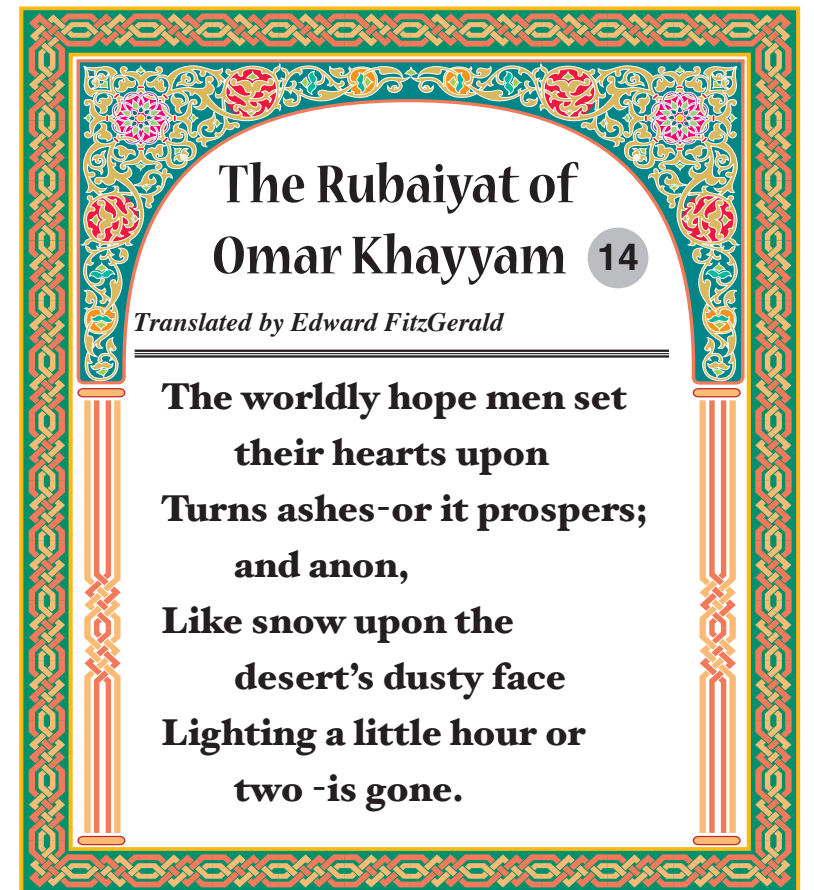
Rector of Sana'a University, and a number of academics at the Archeology Department at Sana'a University.

Bajammal suggested that Yemeni universities should participate actively in this regard. He specifically directed Sana'a University to submit a plan for establishing a college for archeology and tourism to the Higher Council of Universities. Bajammal indicated that a number of the faculties, such as those of education, can be restructured so that they serve the purpose.

The Prime Minister urged the local councils to contribute to safeguarding artifacts and archeological sites.

A team was set up to prepare a comprehensive report on the reality of antiquities and the way to improve it and how to protect antiquities. It will set forth all the necessary elements and prerequisites to be incorporated in the process. The team is led by the Minister of Culture and Tourism and consists of a number of specialists and academics. They are to submit the plan within two weeks.

This comes at a time when many alarming reports have been heard about



The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam 14

Translated by Edward FitzGerald

The worldly hope men set
their hearts upon
Turns ashes-or it prospers;
and anon,
Like snow upon the
desert's dusty face
Lighting a little hour or
two -is gone.

the looting and pillage of archeological sites in different areas of Yemen, a country which is very famous for its rich history and outstanding old civilizations. Members of gangs dealing in Yemeni artifacts were also captured and tried. Yet, many people believe that selling of Yemeni antiquities is on the rise

due to lack of protection on the part of the government.

This Premier's move is also meant to promote the ailing tourism sector which has witnessed setbacks recently due to abduction of tourists in Shabwa and Marib which triggered intense public protest and condemnation.

Yemeni youths search for freedom via online chatting

By: Mohammed Al-Jabri
Jabri333@yahoo.com

Sitting at his computer and smiling widely, snowym23 (a chat room nickname) chatted online with another user pretending to be female. The two spent hours messaging one another in utter freedom.

The spread of internet cafes in Yemeni cities and the existence of chat websites have attracted many youths, both educated and uneducated, especially as Arabic chat sites have begun to proliferate. Young people turn to such websites because they can do there what they cannot do in real life and freely expose their feelings and desires.

In fact, Yemeni society is conservative, whereby tradition and habit reject love relations and immoral behavior. For example, a man and woman who love each other encounter difficulties or get into embarrassing situations when they meet or try to meet. A woman is not allowed to imitate western societies and choose her boyfriend or make friendships with the opposite sex. Television, movies and videos also have influenced most youths who, as a result, are beginning to change their attitudes in ways similar to western societies. All these factors, along with some others, lead Yemeni youths to online chatting, one way to escape the traditions and habits of their society.

In chat rooms, people use nicknames not necessarily typical of real males or females. Hence, a male may use a female nickname and vice versa. Female users undoubtedly prefer nicknames typical of their natures. This is why it is difficult to distinguish between male and female users.

Chatters feel secure and no longer worry about who will identify them.

Men search for women in these chat rooms, as do women for men, and the kind of relationship sought in most cases is flirtation. Therefore, when a man comes across another man, he immediately ignores or rejects him. But if he happens to find a female user, he wastes no time in pursuing, coaxing and trying to chat with her for a long time. This is true of females, who easily are attracted if flirted with or pursued.

Chat topics youths choose are romantic and to some extent social. A female user may consider it a chance to look for an "imaginary" partner and waste her time seducing others. A male user also may look for a member of the fairer sex with whom he can enjoy flirting. Nevertheless, frankly speaking, relations between male and female users may develop into what is called "cyber sex." A.R., a 20-year old female, says she can engage in different relations in chat rooms and no one can discover her identity or what she does.

Youths sense pleasure as they indulge in such relations because through them, they can satisfy their desires. Social science expert Dr. Khalid Ahmed said television, romantic movies, videos and magazines influence today's youths, who try to imitate what they see and hear. He pointed out that this is evident in their behavior: some are inclined to behave savagely, some romantically and others childishly. "A good way to expose their hidden feelings and desires is by communicating with others through online chatting," he explained.

Nowadays most internet cafes have begun providing clients with web cameras (webcams) to further facilitate communication with one another. As

for Yemeni females, there is no fear of being identified on-camera, because most are veiled. They can attract males easily as they communicate this way – and easily cheat them.

A friend confessed that he had been in online contact with a veiled female pretending to be gorgeous. He said she became an obsession as he tried his best to see her face and was not given the chance to meet her face-to-face.

Undoubtedly, as two people chat online using webcams, it becomes like a face-to-face conversation. Moreover, as chatters appear on webcams, others can identify them, easily distinguishing between males and females, and the possibility of telling lies decreases accordingly. Those using webcams try their best to be cautious, but the majority of youths use them only to communicate with relatives or true friends. A positive aspect of webcams is that sometimes Yemeni youths come across those from western societies, especially if they know English well.

In America, Europe and some Asian countries, some users act badly, while others appear nude while chatting online. Some Yemeni youths confessed they sometimes chat with such sexually-oriented users. Unfortunately, male and female users (especially those with the internet at home) like to indulge in such relations. Additionally, most internet cafes have begun establishing private sections for females, encouraging more females to explicitly chat with and watch obscene acts on their webcams.

Other youths, most probably teenaged males, find freedom to use taboo words and indulge in slang. I once happened to sit beside a 16-year old boy who was busy messaging in a



Some youths sitting inside an internet cafe busy in chatting online.

chat room. I was stunned as he rudely exchanged taboo words with another user. Internet café owner Nasser Ali said most teens like to enter chat rooms, especially Arabic sites, just to use a few

abusive words while chatting with others. They feel secure in doing so, knowing they will not be punished.

Looking at European and American society, online relations between men

and women often result in dating and sometimes end in love and marriage. Will the same happen in Yemeni society, where most online relations are not taken seriously?

Sana'a songs part of World's heritage

By: Yemen Times Staff

The United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) has officially announced the popular Sana'a mode of singing to be part of the world's human verbal non-material heritage. Saba News Agency reported.

According to SNA, Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO Director-General, said the announcement is a part of the UNESCO interests in preserving the intangible heritage throughout the world amidst growing threat from the modern lifestyle and globalization.

SNA quoted Dr. Mohammed Abdul-Bari Al-Qadasi, Secretary General of the National UNESCO Committee, as saying the announcement, which was upon request by Yemen's representative at the UNESCO, aims at crystallizing a long-term strategy for preserving Sana'a song heritage including audios, and videos. This strategy includes documentation of Sana'a songs in national registers and training staff in performing the preservation duties.

Al-Qadasi pointed out that the Japanese government, within its 2006-2007 cooperation program with the UNESCO, approved a plan targeting the Sana'a songs. The plan aims to disseminate knowledge about Sana'a songs and the way they are performed and sung.

The project is expected to further

promote this type of songs and the instruments used in performing them such as 'oud, brass plate and qanbous.

The project will be implemented under the supervision of the Cairo-based UNESCO regional office in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the National UNESCO Committee, French Institute for Archeology and Social Sciences, Sana'a University, Capital Secretariat and the Yemen Musical Heritage Center. The project will be run by the Social Fund for Development.

It is noteworthy that the mode of singing found in Sana'a is extremely unique and melodious. Being the metropolis of Yemen, Sana'a has been proverbial for its arts and attractive features. The Sana'a song is popular nationwide. Many local singers from different provinces performed Sana'a songs. Some of them rose to fame because of their magnificence in performing such songs.

The Sana'a mode of sung lyrics have been exquisitely rendered by many leading Yemeni and Arab singers such as Mohammed Jum'ah Khan, Ali bin Ali Al-Anisi, Ali Al-Simah, Mohammed Hamoud Al-Harithi, Ayoub Tarish Absi, and many others.

Sana'a singing is classified to be among the masterpieces of world's verbal heritage because of its unique aesthetic and technical characteristics such as the harmony among the lyrics and melody. This fact has attracted the

attention of many people not only in Yemen but also in the Arab area. Listening to Sana'ani songs, many foreigners fall in love with them. An outstanding example is Dr. Jean Lambert, director of the French Institute for Archeology and Social Sciences (CEFAS), who excellently performs Sana'ani songs and dexterously handles 'oud. He has performed at many concerts and expressed his infatuation with this type of art.

The recent UNESCO recognition of this classical singing is believed to give an impetus to preserve it and promote it in other countries of the world. It also reflects Yemen's significant contribution to the world's non-material heritage.

The UNESCO had a non-material cultural heritage preservation treaty ratified at its October 2003 conference by some 30 countries and will come into effect on April 20, 2006. Yemen is expected to ratify it soon. The Treaty intends to preserve the verbal traditions, social practices and festive rituals as well as traditional knowledge about nature and the cosmos and the skills related to traditional handicrafts.

The treaty provides for the set up of two lists, one for non-material human cultural heritage and another for non-material heritage that requires urgent renovation. It also provides for the construction of a fund to conserve such heritage by means of the contributions of signatories and other sources.

((وشعر الصابرين الذين اذا ما ابتهم حمية قالوا انا لله وانا اليه راجعون))

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وكافة هيئة التحرير في مؤسسة يمن تايمز للصحافة والطباعة والنشر

Dr. Jibrel: "I make it a point to work within religious and ethical boundaries; there are limits to what can be experimented upon."

Interviewed by: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Dr. Sallam Omar Jibrel has worked in Yemen's reproductive health field for the past six years. He established Yemen's first In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) and Assisted Reproduction Center (ARC) in 1999.

In the early years of establishment, Jibrel gathered information about infertility in Yemen and studied cases in order to provide valuable reproductive health treatment and services. Throughout his years in Yemen, in addition to working at the center, Jibrel regularly lectures on infertility at Yemeni universities and academic institutions.

He also represents Yemen and the Arab world at many international conferences abroad, most recently at last year's stem cell conference in the United Kingdom. He was the only Arab doctor and gave the international community insight on reproductive health problems in the Arab world, as well as learned about the latest developments in stem cell technology.

The Yemen Times ran a detailed interview with Dr. Sallam Jibrel in 2001. Since then, there have been many new developments in the field of assisted reproduction. According to Jibrel, the major developments were: introducing lasers in assisted hatching, spindle location of oocytes (choosing the proper angle for oocyte insemination), single embryo transfer using blastocyst culture media and stem cell studies involving future cloning. Such developments definitely are going to change infertility treatment methods.

ARC progress

Since Yemen's first IVF center began, the ARC has seen more than 12,000 cases, nearly 95 percent involving infertility. At the same time, the center's medical staff has performed 1,500 IVF treatment cycles and more than 4,000 surgical infertility treatment procedures on men and women.

In male reproductive treatment, medical staff performed different testicular sperm extraction procedures such as Percutaneous Epididymal Sperm Aspiration (PESA), Testicular Sperm Aspiration (TESA), Testicular Sperm Extraction (TESE), as well as microsurgical vaso-epididymostomy and vasovasectomy.

In female reproductive treatment, medical staff performed all classical, laparoscopic and hysteroscopic

gynecological and obstetrical procedures such as myomectomy, endometriotic ovarian cystectomy, laparoscopic abdominal adhesiolysis, ovarian cystectomy, hysterectomy, hysteroscopic uterine septum resection, intrauterine myomectomy, polypectomy and synechy resection.

Additionally, the ARC performed some procedures for the first time in Yemen such as amniocentesis (aspirating amniotic fluid to exclude genetic intrauterine disease).

Stem cell technology

Stem cells are the masters of all the body's cells and found in great concentrations in umbilical cord blood of newborns. Doctors also can prepare them in IVF labs for cloning purposes while embryos are in early development stages. After birth, the cells end up in bone marrow where they continuously replenish and produce blood cell constituents, as well as immune system cells. Stem cells are used to treat a large number of diseases and medical disorders and many more treatments are on the horizon.



Dr. Sallam Omar Jibrel

Gaucher's disease, Gunther's disease, Hurler's disease, Hunter's disease, Alamyloidosis, Bare Lymphocyte syndrome, adrenoleukodystrophy, congenital dyskeratosis, Lesch-Nyhan syndrome and others.

Immunodeficiencies such as: Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome, chronic granulomatous disease, severe combined immunodeficiency diseases, adenosine deaminase deficiency and X-linked lymphoproliferative disease.

This new field has provided with vast medical dimensions and each year more diseases and disorders are being added to the list of diseases that could be treated through stem cells technology.

Stem cells are collected immediately after birth. Umbilical cord blood is rich with these potentially life-saving cells, which in the past would have been discarded with the placenta. In the past few years, research has shown that umbilical cord stem cells can be transformed into other types of cells and tissues in the body.

Scientists believe this discovery will positively contribute to treating other conditions and diseases, such as: Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, restoring brain damage following a stroke and restoring closed heart arteries (creating blood vessels), thus possibly avoiding a bypass operation.

Infertility in Yemen

Before the ARC, infertility treatment in Yemen was very primitive. Introduction of high technology by the first Jordanian team made a big difference in diagnosing and treating infertility. Intra Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI) first was performed in Yemen in March 2000, signalling a new era in Yemeni infertility treatment. During the past five years, Jibrel was keen to improve the center's work and introduce new field developments. He introduced a genetic lab so medical staff can detect and diagnose genetic background cases, such as repeat abortions and infertility among siblings.

Yemen's infertility awareness has increased in the past five years. "When I came to Yemen five years ago, it took me hours to explain to patients what IVF is, trying to convince them this was the only way they could be treated. Now I handle some cases fully aware of all aspects of IVF procedures. This is always the story whenever a new treatment technology is introduced in any country," Jibrel explained.

The World Health Organization estimates that 15 percent of the world's married couples have infertility problems. In a previous interview, Jibrel stated that Yemen is more or less the same.

However, the type of infertility in Yemen is a little bit different, mainly due to male infertility. In 60 percent of cases, the husband is the cause of infertility and this goes back to the set-up of Yemeni community.

As in any other Arab country and other Muslim countries, the male always seeks treatment for himself. If the problem is the wife's, he might take another. But the husband's side in Yemen more or less has certain characteristics and qat chewing has its own influence on male infertility.

Most of the time, qat is filled with substances like pesticides, insecticides and other agricultural substances. Used to grow Qat very quickly and protect it from insects, such substances influence male sperm growth and development to maturity. Qat can produce abnormal

sperm and affect sperm motility as well.

Another factor is nutritional quality of traditional Yemeni food, which affects sperm's ability to fertilize. Another factor is infection, which hits the male genital track and sometimes passes unnoticed or mistreated. All these factors impact male infertility.

Female infertility is less, between 15 and 30 percent of all infertility cases in Yemen. But factors attracting attention in female infertility in Yemen include tuberculosis, which still is seen in many cases of blocked tubes in Yemeni women. Tuberculosis affects female tubes, necessitating IVF treatment.

The next most common women's problem is Polycystic Ovary Syndrome.

At least 25 to 30 percent of Yemeni females treated for infertility having this problem, which more or less is from hormonal background and has some hereditary factors as well. Fertility in Yemen largely is the same as in other countries, which also have the unique properties previously mentioned.

Jibrel thinks more care and attention should be given to the medical profession in Yemen. "By this I mean that there should be strict evaluation of those working in this profession by both the Ministry of Health and the Yemeni Medical Syndicate. Also, evaluation of newly graduated doctors at all levels will make a big difference in Yemen," he said.

Next step

As to where Jibrel will head next, he

explained that he is content with the ARC's progress and the medical team working in it. He said, "I am happy to have started medical service that was of great value to many patients in Yemen. I am also happy that I have made a Yemeni team that I am really very proud of. I am now keen to improve this by introducing new procedures in infertility treatment."

Jibrel's next step is more research and specialization in stem cell technology, which he believes will help many young male infertility patients. However, he pointed out that there is control over medical research, or at least the part in which he is involved. Referring to this, he said, "I make it a point to work within religious and ethical boundaries; there are limits to what can be experimented upon."

As for the ARC, he proudly stated that the medical team is all Yemeni doctors and biologists. Jibrel feels confident that they can work on their own and are of high caliber. They have attended many international conferences in infertility treatment and management. The ARC is viewed regionally and internationally as a reputable scientific center.

Personal aspiration

Asked about his personal aspiration, Jibrel answered, "Career-wise, I would like to find enough time to write a book about my medical experience in the field of assisted reproduction and a book about my family history. Personally, I hope to find enough time to visit all Yemeni cities and live the true experience of this lovely country. My main wish is to meet all Yemeni children born after IVF treatments I have performed in those families."

Who is Dr. Sallam Omar Jibrel?

- A Jordanian earning his first medical degree (MB.BS) from Jordan University's School of Medicine in 1981. Worked in various Jordanian hospitals after graduation.
- Moved to Saudi Arabia in 1987 to work at the Military Hospital in Kamis Mushayt.
- Obtained a master's in Obstetrics and Gynecology in 1996 and an M.D. in endoscopic surgery in 1998 from Christian-Albrecht University in Kiel, Germany.
- Returned to Jordan in 1998 to work in the assistance reproduction and infertility field, especially In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF).
- Headed the Obstetrics and Gynecology department at Jordan's National Red Crescent Hospital in Amman for three years.
- Established Yemen's first IVF program in 1999. Since then, Medical Director of the Assisted Reproduction and IVF Center, mainly specializing in IVF-ICSI, laparoscopic and hysteroscopic surgery.
- Professional interests: reproductive endocrinology, male factor infertility and its impact on infertility, tuberculosis (T.B.) and female infertility and stem-cell technology.
- Personal interests: photography and history.
- Father of three children.
- Member of: Arab Society of Reproductive Medicine European Society for Human Reproduction and Embryology Middle East Fertility Society International Society of Gynecology and Endoscopy



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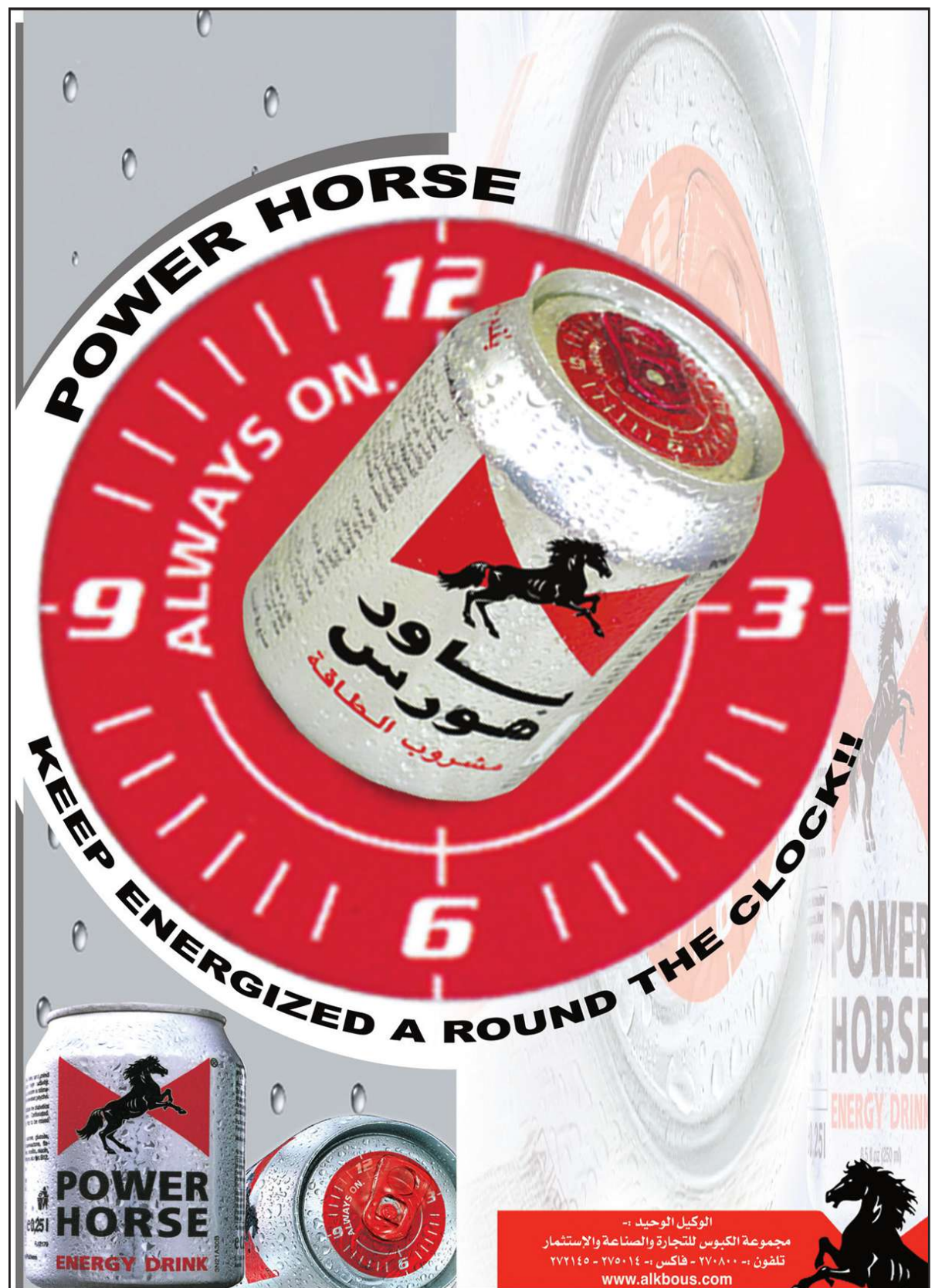
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“Aljawhara”: a spring mythically gifted by the Prophet

By: Dr. Hamdan Zaid Dammag
dammag@yementimes.com

“Aljawhara” means the gem in Arabic. However, for the people of Dhilmahmer, a small village in Alnakeelain district in Ibb province, it is the name of their precious ancient spring. No one in this village or surrounding villages knows for sure how old Aljawhara is – some claim it is 400 years old and others say 200. Despite this, almost everyone there knows the story of Aljawhara narrated by locals generation after generation.

The Myth

Long ago, Alnakeelain district experienced a severe draught. A good man named ‘Mohomed’ from a nearby village traveled to Mecca for the Hajj and resided there a long time. In his prayers at the Kaaba, he asked God to show mercy on his people in the village who hungered and were in great difficulty. One night, he saw the prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him) in his dreams. The prophet spoke to him and told him he would find a bundle beneath his head upon waking, inside of which was a precious gift sent to him by God. The prophet ordered Mohomed to return to his village and take the bundle with him, asking him not to open it until he reached his village. The next morning, Mohomed found the bundle beneath his head. He then returned home walking all the way from Mecca to Ibb. While resting near his village, he thought of the bundle and felt he could now find out what was inside it. He wanted to be sure of the gift given to him by the prophet before telling the villagers about it. He opened the bundle and suddenly a gem fell to the ground and turned into a spring. Haj Mohomed then was sorry for not obeying the prophet’s command and died that same day. As a sign of gratefulness and respect, the people of Dhilmahmer village buried him near



Aljawhara spring waters have never stopped flowing.

where the gem fell. Over the years, his grave was turned into a shrine (wali) visited by Alnakeelain locals for blessing and meditation. Many miracles of Haj Mohomed are purported, especially in healing illnesses.

Facts and Observations

Like many things in Yemen, an accurate history of Aljawhara spring and shrine (Al-Wali) cannot be verified. However, Muttee Ahmed Dammag, an electrical engineer living in the area, told of a 150-year-old agreement between farmers regarding distribution of its water. “This tells us that Aljawhara has been there at least 150 years,” he concluded.

Aljawhara spring itself is located beneath the village mosque and worshippers gather there for ablution around prayer times. Villagers are permitted to carry water to their homes for drinking purposes, as Aljawhara is the only water source for Dhilmahmer village. In dry seasons, surrounding villagers queue for water with their containers. Certain hours of the day are allotted to village women for washing clothes. Spring water also is used in a controlled irrigation system for certain village farms, with two small dams regulating the irrigation process.

Aljawhara spring waters have never stopped flowing as far as any villager remembers. Sheik Ahmed Hamood, the 83-year-old village chief, claimed that the water level is nearly the same year round, in dry or rainy seasons. “During



Sheik Ahmed Hamood telling the myth of the spring.

early morning hours and at night, the water is relatively warm, while it gets cold in the afternoon,” he noted.

Haj Mohomed’s grave still exists today. A small, domed white shrine, called a wali in Yemen, was built with the grave inside. Villagers from different areas used to visit the wali for blessings and meditation, especially sick people wanting to get well and women wanting to get pregnant. This mostly was during the Imamate era when Yemen lacked essential services such as schools and hospitals.

However, only a few visit the shrine nowadays, mostly women, despite the recent spread of religious thought prohibiting such visits. “We still see women go there from time to time,” Hamood said, “The wali is in bad condition though and needs regular renovation.” He pointed out that a few individuals who appreciate the building’s historical value help save the building from collapsing from time to time. When asked about any governmental or organizational aid to preserve the building, Hamood replied, “No, no one seems to care.”

This is Aljawhara, where myth and reality blur: a spring mythically gifted by a prophet and the only real water source for Dhilmahmer village.

Dr. Hamdan Zaid Dammag is Editorial Consultant at the Yemen Times. A poet and short story writer for many literature publications, some in English, he is a research fellow at the Institute of Computing, London South Bank University, UK.

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