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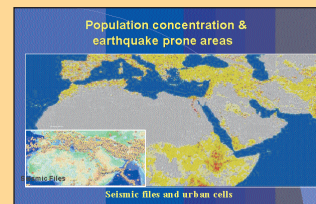
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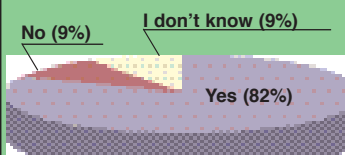


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Jamal Sholan: "Remember one thing: it is the buildings that kill people, not the earthquake!"

Readers' Voice

Last edition's question:
Do you think that the recent deaths caused by rally stampede would affect the GPC's presidential candidate's popularity in the coming elections?



This edition's question:

Do you think the Pope intentionally criticized Islam with his recent comments about Prophet Mohammad?
- Yes, he did
- No, it was an innocent mistake
- The comments were out of context
- I don't know

Go to our website at: yementimes.com/#poll and have your voice heard

Saleh calls for peaceful election day, condemns terror

By: Hamdan Dammag

RADA'A, Sept. 17 — At yesterday's campaign rally in Rada'a in Al-Beidha governorate, President Ali Abdullah Saleh called on Yemeni people and political forces to make Sept. 20 a day without violence, tension or arms and urged citizens to vote in a peaceful manner for those who will represent them in the presidency and the local councils.

Denying Joint Meeting Parties' "rumors" of a new "price hike," Saleh pointed out that 150 journalists and 140 international observers will report citizens' views freely and cover Yemen's elections and democratic process.

Dhamar

Addressing hundreds of thousands of



Saleh addresses his supporters.

attendees at a Saturday campaign rally in Dhamar, Saleh declared, "Those calling for change, such change means an unknown destination for Yemenis. Our nation will give its decisive word on Sept. 20."

He added that citizens will go to the

polling boxes Sept. 20 and vote for a president from among themselves, one who "won't be hired."

Referring to the incidents in Hadramout and Marib, he stated that terror elements wanted to cause disturbance and chaos amid Yemen's democratic celebration. He announced a YR 5,000,000 reward for anyone providing information related to any wanted terrorists in Yemen.

Additionally, he strongly condemned statements by Pope Benedict XVI against Islam and the Prophet Mohammed, announcing that Yemen would "reconsider relations with Vatican."

He added, "The pope ought to offer an apology to the Islamic nation," and called on Arab and Islamic countries to reconsider their relations with Vatican.

Bin Shamlan: On the 20th we will see

By: Yemen Times Staff

SANA'A, Sept. 17 — An early morning JMP rally ran a little late as supporters slowly entered the one open entrance at Al-Thawra Stadium.

Once inside, the thousands of supporters echoed Faisal Bin Shamlan's "We came for change" chant for a second time in just under one month at the stadium.

"Change has become a must and we want to compensate for failure of the current regime and build the country," announced Bin Shamlan, before his supporters from Sana'a Governorate.

According to Bin Shamlan, the JMP will bring change aiming to "restore the Republic of Yemen with its bright face," correcting the concepts of the unification, find equal citizenship, and establish tolerance and solidarity among people. The key members backing the Bin Shamlan bid stood firmly behind their candidate.

Hamid Al-Ahmer, a prominent tribal figure and Member of Parliament, sent out accusations saying the GPC has plans for voter fraud and criticized it for monopolizing media outlets.

"How eager we are for your reign, Bin Shamlan, the reign of good and prosperity, of freedom and democracy, of love and harmony, of competence



Bin Shamlan addresses his supporters.

and honest administration," said Al-Ahmer, pointing at current government corruption. Bin Shamlan also criticized government corruption and their performance, the increase of poverty and unemployment.

"A change is not just replacing one person with another. A change is replacing a single-handed system with an institutional system that aims at building the country and citizens whoever they are," said the presidential hopeful.

"We plan to establish the concepts of unity and the principle of equal citizenship, as well as to enhance the spirit of solidarity and forgiveness and eliminate violence."

France asks Yemen not to use force

By: Amel Al-Ariqi

SANA'A, Sept. 16 — French President Jacques Chirac has asked the Yemeni government not to use force against the captors of four French tourists, Yemen's interior minister said Saturday.

"France's ambassador has said the French government and President Chirac personally have insisted that Yemeni authorities not use force, no matter how long the tourists are detained," Rashad Mohammad Al-Alimi stated at a press conference.

Continued on page 2

Terrorist attacks coincide with elections

By: Mohammed Al-Jabri

SANA'A, September 16 — Security authorities on Saturday arrested four Al-Qaeda members who were planning attacks in the capital city, Minister of Interior Rashad Al-Alimi announced at a Saturday press conference in Sana'a.

"A cell linked to the Al-Qaeda network was arrested Saturday morning in the capital city of Sana'a. The cell had links to terrorist attacks on oil installations Friday in Hadramout and Marib governorates," the minister stated.

According to Al-Alimi, security forces seized explosives from the suspects planned for terrorist attacks in the capital city. The explosives consisted of 12 bags each containing 88 to 110 pounds of highly explosive material.

Security forces also confiscated masks and women's clothing, which militants sometimes use to disguise themselves, in addition to forged IDs, a vehicle license plate, a video camera



The wreckage after the thwarted bombing at Yemeni oil facilities.

and other items required to conduct terrorist acts, Al-Alimi added.

He accused the four militants of belonging to the Al-Qaeda network, indicating, "They were planning to attack targets in the capital city of Sana'a."

Security forces surrounded the Al-Qaeda-linked cell Friday night, capturing it early Saturday morning. At first, they resisted by using force, but no one was hurt when security forces arrested them, Al-Alimi noted.

Continued on page 2

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In brief

Al-Dhalie**8 deaths because of campaign traffic**

Sept. 15 — Eight people were killed in car accidents as a result of the traffic at presidential campaign rallies last Wednesday in al-Dhalie governorate 345 kilometres south Sana'a. However, only five people were hurt lightly in the rally itself as a result of the crowding. The traffic deaths — all males — were caused because of piling people in cars and trucks in order to transfer them to the rally location five of which were from one family "Dhagsan", while the other three were unrelated.

Al-Mahara**54 kilos of Hashish confiscated**

Sept. 16 — The General Authority for Drug Fighting in cooperation with local security of Al-Mahara 54.5 kilos of Hashish were confiscated last week. The drugs were found in the sea near the coast in various packages hung by wires for retrieval.

Sana'a**40 dead in traffic accidents last week**

Sept. 16 — According to the traffic general authority there were 166 reported traffic accidents around the republic during last week. The casualties included 40 dead and 189 injured. The total cost of these accidents is estimated at YR 840 thousand and the report indicated the common cause of the accidents to be speed and poor maintenance.

Taiz**200 disabled receive election training**

Sept. 16 — Two hundred deaf Yemenis received training on the mechanisms and tools they can use to allow equal participation in the coming elections. This campaign was arranged in a workshop organised by people with hearing disability care Association in Taiz as part of six similar workshops conducted for the first time in Yemen.

Hadramout**Two power plants start operating next week in Sayoun**

Sept. 15 — Prime Minister Abdul-Qadar Ba-Jammal inspected on urgent project of electricity at capacity of 15 MGW in Hadhramout governorate. He listened from officials of the project on to works after arrival of equipment of the plant last Wednesday. It is scheduled that plant will be operated next week. Another plant is to be set up in Horah district in Hadhramout at capacity of 10 MGW.

Al-Mahwait**Deadly mountain landslide**

Sept. 17 — A year-old baby was killed and three houses were destroyed after a land slide that fell on Bait Minain in Al-Mahwait last week. The landslide was caused by the residue of rainwater in between the mountain rocks, which eventually caused parts of the mountain to break down and crush the houses. All members of the families were farming outside their homes except for the sleeping child inside one of the houses. It is the third landslide in Al-Mahwait this year.

Aden**Precautionary and technical oil training**

Sept. 16 — Technical employees at Aden oil refinery have received 14 training courses this year. The courses have been for 27 employees and provide staff with technical, engineering, storage, management, environment protection and nursing as well as other professional skills to assist them in performing their work at the refinery. The courses were organized in coordination with the Arab House for Consultancies.

Saleh threatens to end relations with Vatican

SANA'A, Sept. 16 — President Ali Abdullah Saleh has threatened on Saturday that Yemen may reconsider its relations with Vatican City State unless the Pope Benedict XVI apologizes directly for his action.

The Pope tried yesterday to calm Muslim anger at his remarks on Islam, saying he was "deeply sorry" about the reaction and that medieval quotes he used on holy war did not reflect his personal views.

Yemeni Religious Scholars Association condemned the Pope for his speech against Islam. In a statement issued two days ago, they expressed that such speeches reveal the Pope's ignorance regarding Islam and its teachings.

In Qatar, A Sharia professor at Qatar

University has invited Pope Benedict XVI to participate in a public debate to challenge his recent comments about Islam. In Palestine, About 2,000 Palestinians protestors marched in the Gaza Strip on Friday waving the green flags of Hamas and chanting praises to "God and his prophet". In Egypt, about 100 Muslims demonstrated after Friday prayers at the country's prominent al-Azhar mosque in Cairo, chanting: "Oh Crusaders, oh cowards! Down with the pope!" In Pakistan, groups held rallies and chanted anti-pope slogans in the capital, Islamabad, and other major cities including Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and Multan. Pakistan's foreign ministry summoned the Vatican's ambassador to express regret over the remarks and parliament

passed a resolution condemning the comments. In the US, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which calls itself the largest Islamic civil liberties group in America, said: "The proper response to the pope's inaccurate and divisive remarks is for Muslims and Catholics worldwide to increase dialogue and outreach efforts aimed at building better relations between Christianity and Islam." In Malaysia, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the Malaysian prime minister and chairman of the 56-nation Organisation of the Islamic Conference, said: "The pope must not take lightly the spread of outrage that has been created. The Vatican must now take full responsibility over the matter and carry out the necessary steps to rectify the mistake."

Government blocks websites, harasses journalist, as elections approach

IFEX — On 11 September 2006, HRinfo condemned the blocking of independent websites and the harassment of journalists by the Yemeni government, as the 20 September presidential elections approach.

Yemeni authorities blocked the website Yemeni Council (<http://www.al-yemen.org>) and Yemen Sound (<http://www.yemen-sound.com>). The two websites are independent and enjoy a high visitor rate because they provide an important space for debate, especially among Yemeni youth.

The Yemeni Council website was blocked in early August while the Yemen Sound website was blocked in early September. The two websites have criticized the Yemeni president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has nominated himself as one of five candidates to run for the presidency.

On 7 September, the press and publi-

cations prosecutor summoned Khaled Al-Alwany, the chief editor of the independent newspaper "Al-Asema" ("The Capital"), for questioning without any explanation provided. The newspaper is known to be close to the Yemeni Reform Assembly Party.

Samia Al-Aghbary, a Yemeni journalist and an HRinfo volunteer, said she expressed surprise at finding that several websites that cover presidential elections news in a manner unsatisfactory to Yemeni authorities have been blocked. She added that the summoning of Khaled Al-Alwany has increased tension and reflects the authorities' bias and desire to influence the media during the elections process.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh announced in 2005 that he would not nominate himself for another term. Two months ago, however, he broke his word and decided to run for elections.

Saleh has ruled for 27 years. If he wins the coming elections, he will serve another seven years, thus extending his tenure as ruler to 35 years.

HRinfo condemns the blocking of these websites as a violation of the right to exchange information. It condemns any measures taken to restrict press freedom. HRinfo demands that the Yemeni authorities immediately lift the blockade on these websites and that they refrain from harassing journalists.

SOURCE: Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (HRinfo), Cairo

For further information contact Gamal Eid, Executive Director, HRinfo, Apartment 10, No. 5, Street 105, from Midan al Hurriya, al Maadi, Cairo, Egypt, tel/fax: +202 524 9544, e-mail: info@hrinfo.net, gamal4eid@yahoo.com, Internet: <http://www.hrinfo.net/en>

Deadly Human smuggling on the increase

SANA'A, 16 Sept — In the first 12 days of the new sailing season 1,441 have been recorded on Yemeni shores, according to the United Nations.

The High Commission for Refugees recorded the arrival of 15 boats to start the season, revealed spokesperson Ron Redmond.

"If the present trend continues, this month could set a new record for the number of arrivals," said Redmond, at a press briefing in Geneva.

Most of the arrivals are Somalis but also large numbers of Ethiopians — who are fleeing insecurity and poverty. For a fee of US\$40 each, they are crammed into rickety, open fishing vessels. Many making the hazardous voyage will not survive.

"Those arriving on Wednesday said two male passengers had drowned when they were forced overboard while still in

deep water. Four were reported to have drowned from the first boat to arrive this season on Sept. 2," Redmond confirmed.

UNHCR issued a warning earlier in September about what it called the "deadly business" of human smuggling across the Gulf of Aden from Somalia to Yemen.

"Despite the danger, and UNHCR's repeated warnings, the number of people being smuggled across the Gulf of Aden from Somalia to Yemen appears to be accelerating," said Redmond. The smugglers are operating from the commercial port of Bossasso in Puntland, a self-declared autonomous area of north-east Somalia, over 300 km from Yemen.

"UNHCR has worked in the region to inform people about the dangers and has called on the international community to press authorities in Puntland to crack down on smugglers," said Mr.

Redmond. "Hundreds die before reaching shore each year."

The agency has also asked donors to back international efforts to help in Puntland "where living conditions encourage acts like sailing to Yemen," he added

The refugees are given prima-facie refugee status upon arrival in Yemen. There are currently more than 88,000 registered refugees in Yemen, of whom 84,000 are Somalis.

Yearly, thousands of Somalis and Ethiopians suffering poverty and insecurity in their homeland, including refugees trying to escape persecution and violence, fall prey to smugglers in the hope of reaching Yemen, from where many attempt to make their way into Europe.

Women not a political priority

SANA'A, Sept. 16 — Women are still trying to find a place in Wednesday's election.

"Generally speaking, the attitude of all political parties towards the political contribution of the woman is extremely weak," said Huria Mashoor, the vice-president of the national committee of the woman.

Mashoor was speaking at an eleventh hour symposium hosted by the Yemen Institute for the Development of Democracy.

The president of the institute agreed with Mashoor.

"Political parties dare not to nominate a female in order not to fail," said Raja'a Ali Mokbil. "But at least GPC is much better than opposition parties as the female candidates in GPC are about 34, while Islah party has no female candidates for the local councils",

However, Mona Safwan, a journalist in Al-Wahda newspaper said GPC let down the woman more than the opposition Islah party.

"GPC promised the woman more seats in the local councils but they broke its promise, while Islah party didn't promise anything. Add to that, Islah party has a female candidate for the local council, who is Dr. Fain, a doctor of psychology in Sana'a University," said Safwan.

Dr. Adel Al-Shibami, the spokesman



and the chief of the studies and research department at the Future movement said, "Before suggesting any solution, we conducted research to come to grips with woman's position and the outcomes of our research indicate woman's absence in economic, political and cultural fields make her out of her depth so that being a decision-maker is a tall order for her."

At the end of the symposium, Mr. Ahmed Al-Sofi, secretary-general of YIID distributed a result of a survey which has been made to know people's opinion of who is the most popular presidential candidate?

He said the sample consists of 2500 people in Sana'a, Aden, Taiz, Ibb and Al-Mahweet and it shows a 78.5 percent approval rating for Ali Abdullah Saleh, 12 percent for Faisal bin Shamlan, 8 percent for Fathi Al-Azab and below one percent for each Ahmed Al-Majidi and Abdo Sa'eed.

JMP: GPC's new allies are yesterday's terrorists

SANA'A, Sept. 17 — The Joint-Meeting Parties are demanding an independent investigation into the terrorist attacks of Safer and Al-Dhabah which took place last Friday and they held the authorities responsible for the attacks describing the political utilization of the incident as irresponsible.

Abdulwahab Al-Anisi, Assistant General Secretary of Islah, criticized the General People's Congress accusation that the JMP stands behind the attacks, indicating the GPC has suddenly become security forces and judicial authorities through the accusation even before any investigation takes place.

Al-Anisi said the behavior of the GPC involves risky tactics such as treating allies of the past (Al-Islah Party) as enemies today, or worse, calling them terrorists while in the past they were political partners. He added that the GPC has new allies today whom he used to call terrorists recently.

And it might even indicate that the GPC has used its new allies in plotting the Safer and Al-Dhabah attacks to make the public wary of regime change.

The point was reinforced by President Saleh's remarks on Al-Jazeera describing a wanted terrorist in Egypt who declared elections were forbidden in Islam and people should vote for President Saleh because he's a rep-

resentation of moderate Islam while Islah party members were extremists.

The JMP has played down Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmar's remarks that he will support President Saleh, indicating it was a personal opinion following pleas by the GPC for such a stance from Sheikh Al-Ahmar. The JMP has also indicated that authorities made arrangements to make Bin Shamlan's campaign in Sa'ada fail after the Saleh campaign had limited success, indicating the JMP has not yet cancelled the Sa'ada rally.

The General Secretary of Yemen Socialist Party, Dr. Yassin No'man, said the behavior of the GPC in attaching Friday's terrorist attacks to the JMP is an old habit the GPC practices when it reaches a political dilemma, he also criticized the GPC's harsh campaign filled with personal attacks against their presidential candidate for competing against Saleh, stressing the agreed importance of practicing the principles agreement.

Al-Atwani, General Secretary of Unionist Nasserite party said the GPC is now bankrupt of ideas as it has no more cards to use against the JMP except accusing them of terrorism. Indicating the JMP is against the additional polling stations proposed by the SCER, calling on the SCER to avoid being selective on which laws to execute and which to ignore.

Equal citizenship festival launched

SANA'A, Sept. 17 — Aiming to support independent women candidates the Home Coalition conducted a festival themed "For Equal Citizenship: Elect Women!"

"Yemeni Women are still suffering the lack of political awareness and we all, whether partisan or independent, have to cooperate for our rights," said Dr. Faten Abdu Mohammad, a local councils' candidate, saying she nominated herself for the sake of those who are poor.

"I am neither short of money nor a position, and what pushes me to nominate myself is the poor situation of my neighbors who trusted me from among other candidates," she said.

Maha Awad, a founding member of Home Coalition said the festival is listed among the means of support for woman

candidates and further aims to encourage women elect fellow candidates.

"We were expecting a material support from parties and organizations; however, this did not happen. Certain people supported us with YR9 million and it was distributed among woman independent candidates with YR 100,000 each," said Awad.

Asked about the difference between man and woman candidates, Awad pointed out that "Woman candidates can feel the demands of their fellow women, while men overlook such demands."

Home Coalition is a formation including a number of NGOs interested in women issues. It also involves the National Committee for Woman, a government committee, working to support women's nomination.

Al-Hamadani denies quitting

SANA'A, Sept. 17 — Rashida Al-Hamadani says she is still running in the elections and denies rumours she withdrew her candidacy.

Al-Hamadani is a local council candidate for Sana'a Governorate and Hamdan District. She is also the chairperson of the Women's National Committee.

"I am still in the race and there is no

reason for me to withdraw at this stage. I very much hope to win and depend on the people's votes and their support," She said in a statement to the Yemen Times.



Continued from page 1

Terrorist attacks

As for Friday's attacks in Hadramout and Marib, Al-Alimi said such acts aimed to "damage the national economy and the interest of the Yemeni people.

"They placed 10 gas canisters tied with TNT explosives on each of their four vehicles so they could blow up oil and gas installations," he explained. Security forces foiled the attacks, killing the four militants.

Timed to coincide with this week's elections, Al-Alimi assured that the attacks wouldn't affect the election process or democracy in Yemen.

In 2000, the USS Cole was attacked while refueling at Aden port. Two men approached the destroyer in a dinghy loaded with 500 pounds of explosives,

killing 17 U.S. sailors and wounding 33 others when the explosives were detonated.

Two years later, the French oil tanker Limburg was attacked off the Yemeni coast, killing one crew member and unloading 90,000 barrels of oil into the Gulf of Aden.

The attempts

Security officials thwarted two bombings of oil installations in the southern and central regions of the country on Friday. The four suicide attackers and a security guard were killed, said the Ministry of the Interior.

These attacks came days after one of Al Qaeda's top leaders, Ayman al-Zawahri, threatened strikes on oil facilities in the

Middle East for "stealing Muslim oil."

In the first early morning attack two cars sped toward an oil storage site in the Hadhramaut region, one driven by a man wearing a uniform similar to those worn by workers there, and the other by a man in a military uniform, the Yemeni authorities said. Guards opened fire on both cars, blowing them up outside the site.

Shrapnel from the explosions sparked a small fire in one of the storage tanks, but it was quickly extinguished.

About 30 minutes later, security guards at an oil refinery in Marib opened fire on two other cars carrying explosives and marked to look like vehicles used there. The region remains on a high security alert.

France asks

pers from transferring the tourists to another region.

A local newspaper quoted a witness in Shabwa as saying that Yemeni military planes launched rockets on Al-Khubar region near Rafad region, where the kidnappers are sheltering. The witness confirmed that there was no human loss and the army only wanted to scared the kidnappers.

However, an official source denied the launching of rockets, indicating that military planes were flying at low levels and broke sonic barriers, which created the loud noises. Authorities say they will give the captors more time to free the Frenchmen.

News Yemen web site reported Saturday that the Yemeni government has refused to consider the kidnappers'

demands until after Wednesday's presidential election.

A security delegation representing Yemeni authorities has taken over the negotiations after Tuesday's failure of mediation efforts by a delegation of tribal leaders.

Official reports indicate that between 1991 and 2001, 325 people were kidnapped in Yemen, including 91 French, 80 Germans, 37 Britons, 23 Americans and 22 Dutch.

Hostages generally have been released unharmed, but three Britons and an Australian seized by Islamist militants were killed when security forces stormed their hideout in Dec. 1998. So far this year, Yemen has executed at least two convicted kidnappers.

Yemeni children narrate their sufferings on the street

By: Anwar Murghim
& Fatima Al-Ajel
Fatima_fnfr@yahoo.com

Yemeni street children are deprived of play, pleasure and enjoying their childhood. Such children know nothing of childhood except their thin bodies and innocence; however, they act as men through their work and the responsibility placed upon their shoulders at a young age.

They shoulder the responsibility for others before themselves. Such is their fate and their family circumstances, whether social or economic. They must spend long hours on the streets under the sun's blazing heat. What they receive from their work is nothing as compared to the exploitation of their childhood, which is subject to various sorts of violence.

After spending a short time with them and asking about their life, every one narrates his own story that's different from his friend, but they still live in the same situation. Asked many questions, such as when and why they began working on the street and what their future dreams are, the following are their replies:

Advancing to the second year of primary school, 7-year-old Mohammed Saleh Al-Hidri moved



Child dazed while trying to earn a living on the streets.

PHOTO BY ANWAR MURGHIM

with his brother from Dhamar's Ottomah district to work in Sana'a. Standing beside Qubab Al-Mutawakel Mosque, his sad face tells everything about such street children's suffering and situations.

In talking with Al-Hidri, who sells chocolate, he seemed frightened and stammered while giving his name and age. "I get up at 7 a.m. and sell

chocolate until noon. I then go to my brother and eat lunch with him, later returning to work until 7 p.m.

"My family members number seven. I came to Sana'a a month ago and now live with my elder brother and some other people in a small shop. This work isn't suiting me at all because I'm still young and I can't work," Al-Hidri added.

At Saba'een Park, six brothers work together, with everyone specializing in selling one thing. The eldest, Badia Abu Ghaith narrates his experience selling with his five brothers.

"We're a big family and my father is poor. We live in a small house. I sell women's veils while my brothers, Ali and Salim, sell balls and balloons. Saleh and Sultan carry scales and ask people to weigh themselves, receiving YR 10 for everyone who does. My brother Nabil has nothing to sell, so he works as a bus fare collector.

"My father gathers us every evening to collect the money. Everyone must earn at least YR 200; otherwise, my father will punish him. We have to work hard all week and then Friday is a rest day for us when we can play football with neighborhood friends.

"I'm sometimes jealous of my sisters, who don't work and can enjoy their childhood. I wish I was a girl and could sit home playing

because, in traditional belief, it's shameful and not allowed for girls to go out and work on the street," he concluded.

Twelve-year-old Thebat Galib explains, "I've worked as a cassette seller on the street for five years. I was studying at school, but my father forced me to leave and work. When I refused, my father kicked me out of the house, but then I returned home on condition that I work and earn at least YR 500 a day.

"Three years ago, some men tried to kidnap me. They tried forcing me to get in their car but I refused and shouted until they left. In the future, I dream of going back to school and becoming a good teacher," he added.

Fawiz Al-Hakimi is different than the others. A very clever student who gets high marks in school, he can balance between studying and working on the street. "I have to work because we're eight children and my father's income is low."

He and his two brothers travel from Nuqum zone to Saba'een Park to work in the morning, then return home and prepare to go to school in the afternoon and spend all evening studying hard.

Al-Hakimi studies at Thurah School and is always excellent but unfortunately, he failed two years due to the stress under which he lives. "I'm now in eighth grade and I have to study many materials, but I can't find the time or someone to help me in my studies."

Amid his bad circumstances, Al-Hakimi has hopes and he struggles to achieve them. "I'm proud of my work and I don't feel shy, even when my classmates laugh at me. I believe one day I'll be a doctor and then I'll be rich and provide a good opportunity to my kids to study and live their childhood as they want. I won't allow them to suffer as I did," he vowed.

Selling eggs is easy work, according to 8-year-old Rashid Abu Al-Azi and his three brothers. All of

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Sometimes children works as bus assistant collecting money from passengers.

PHOTO BY ANWAR MURGHIM



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Yemen Times ELECTIONS Update

Providing regular indepth analysis, reporting and coverage of the Yemeni elections.

Official media: The heated debate

By: Yemen Times Staff

“When a state monopolizes media outlets, it then takes hold of power and thus, talking about peaceful transfer of power becomes impossible,” asserts Mohammed Qahtan, official spokesman of the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), “One method of democratic transition is when official media aren’t monopolized by the authority.”

Opposition parties always complain that official media favor the ruling party, both during and after elections, and that equal opportunity isn’t guaranteed in this regard.

Yemeni opposition parties, namely the JMP, have expressed concerns about the ruling party’s official media control. During the pre-election period, they issued a series of reports to demonstrate official media violations, either because they couldn’t get a chance to publicize their ideas or the ruling party still dominated official media.

Several workshops have been held to discuss neutrality of official media and election coverage and train people regarding these two issues. Election campaigning has begun and even reached a climax, but opposition parties still face the same problem.

On Aug. 25, General People’s Congress (GPC) presidential candidate

President Ali Abdullah Saleh criticized Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum (SCER) media coverage of an election rally for JMP presidential candidate Faisal Bin Shamlan. The SCER omitted portions of the rally, justifying that they contained “insult to another presidential candidate and democracy” and didn’t comply with election law.

Officials at the SCER, which controls official media’s election coverage, consider such coverage neutral and unbiased, not favoring one party over another. “This is the first competitive media. Official media equally broadcast the presidential candidates’ rallies and platforms,” SCER Vice Chairman Abdullah Hussein Al-Aqwa insists, “Such coverage is unique and for the first time, we’re experiencing a presidential competition such as that we’re witnessing nowadays.”

He further states that for the first time, citizens everywhere can watch what’s happening in the election process. “At first, some SCER members objected to broadcasting the presidential candidates’ campaign rallies, but President Saleh insisted on it,” he noted.

According to Al-Aqwa, Arab citizens in general aren’t accustomed to such coverage, adding that this is the Arab

world’s first competitive election process.

However, the JMP still maintains that the way its campaign rallies are broadcast is unfair, issuing numerous statements protesting official media. JMP officials allege that portions of Bin Shamlan’s rallies deliberately are omitted, adding, “Official media delay broadcasting the rallies until the day after they were held.”

Also, “The Yemeni satellite channel removed important parts of Faisal Bin Shamlan’s speech,” a JMP press release stated. For example, deleted portions of Bin Shamlan’s speech reference the relationship between the United States and the current regime, which allows the U.S. to “kill Yemenis in their lands,” and noted the importance of changing the current regime.

JMP statements also claim that official media is biased in favor of GPC presidential candidate Saleh.

The Human Rights Information and

Training Center (HRITC) criticized SCER and official media performance during the election campaigns at a Sept. 5 press conference in Sana’a.

During the press conference, HRITC revealed initial results of its supervision of SCER and official and private media performances during the campaigns’ initial stages, pointing out that official media didn’t differentiate between Saleh’s tasks as the nation’s president and his campaign rallies. HRITC also criticized official media for devoting considerable time to news promoting government’s performance and not including news to stimulate the public’s views.

“Citizens can make an informed choice during the election only if they receive accurate and balanced information, together with a variety of viewpoints, so as to be able to form their own opinions about candidates and parties,”

Slovakian expert Marek Mracka maintains.

In his paper presented at an Aug. 2 symposium organized by HRITC, Mracka added that while all media should offer responsible

coverage, it’s particularly incumbent upon state media to observe even more rigorous criteria since they are funded

Yemeni opposition parties, namely the JMP, have expressed concerns about the ruling party’s official media control.

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publicly. Citizens pay fees, therefore, public media have legal and moral obligations to secure the general public’s interest, not partisan or private interests.

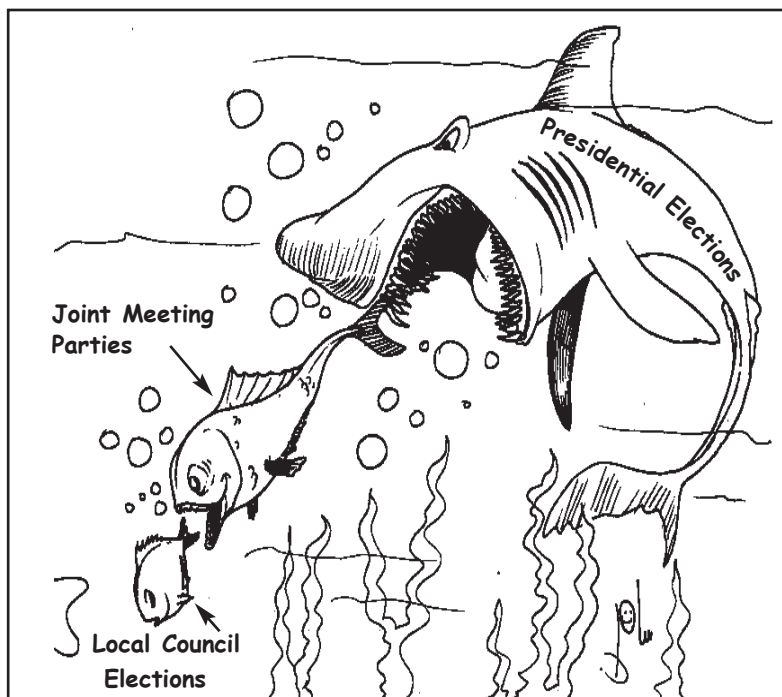
In this regard, in his 1999 annual report, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression announced several principles that should be respected in order to ensure a transparent, open and truly pluralistic election campaign in the media. The document set forth the following media obligations:

- During pre-election periods and in the interest of ensuring the most fully informed electorate possible, the state must ensure that media are given the widest possible latitude.
- State-owned (public) media must provide the public with fair and bal-

anced reporting to enable them to make an informed and unfettered choice in electing their representatives.

- All state-owned and state-controlled media (including print media) should report campaigns in a fair, balanced and impartial manner.
- State-owned media mustn’t be used as a propaganda communication tool for one political party or as an advocate for the government at the exclusion of all other parties and groups.
- A clear distinction should exist between news and press conferences related to functions of office and activities by members of the government, particularly if the member concerned is seeking election.

Elections through a pen and ink eye. Cartoons by Samer



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Words of Wisdom



The fall-out from technology advances, notably globalization, is clearly ahead of us. We need to grapple with this and the sooner we assess the issues and decide on what we need to do, the better prepared we will be. A main component of globalization is liberalization.

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

OUR
OPINION

Why these elections are important for Yemen

It's the talk of town. It's there in every house, street and shop and Yemenis of all ages and orientations are talking about the elections. Each person has different reasons and opinions, but everyone agrees the coming local council and presidential elections are important for Yemen.

Even the leading presidential candidates agreed the coming presidential elections are going to be free and fair. Local council candidates have never felt the seriousness of competition as they do today, and most important, the people feel their voice can make a difference.

Our hope as Yemeni people is that whoever wins will institutionalize the government and install a ruling system in which peaceful transfer of power exists and the public are involved in the state's decision making.

In the interview on Al-Jazeera TV, President Saleh was asked, "Why do it? Why go through these elections this way and allow for competition to exist?" A forward looking Saleh answered, "I want to create a democratic system and for Yemen to be an example for other countries."

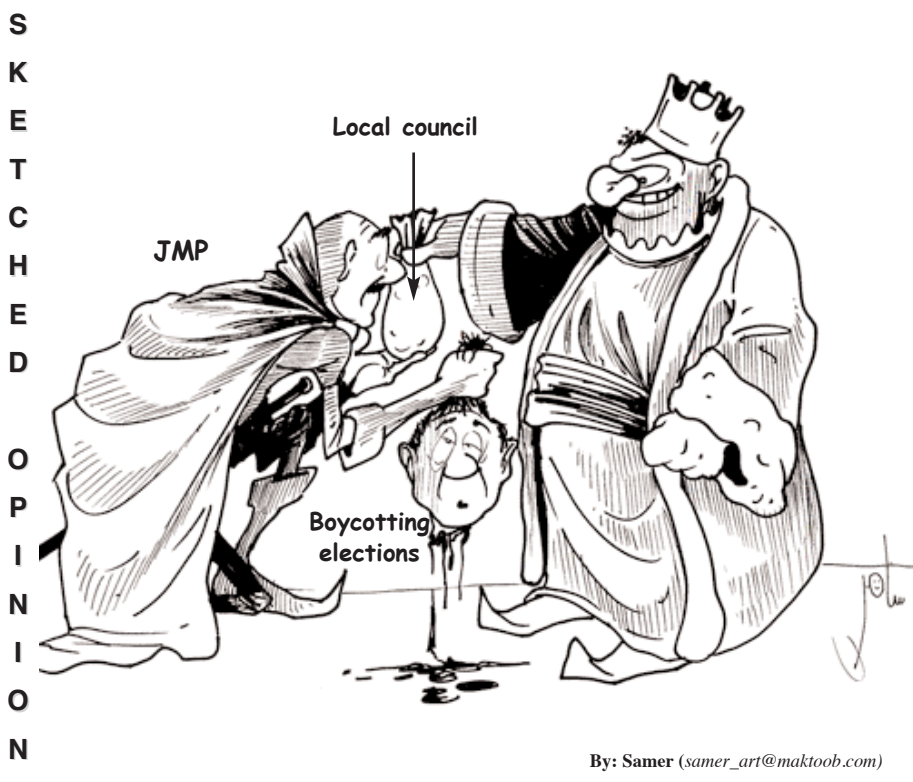
His answer, although ideal, arouses two points when I think of it: Why now and what affect does Yemen's experience have on neighboring countries?

For my first question, President Saleh indirectly answered when he said he was tired of being in charge and he felt Yemen is ready today for democracy. As to what kind of message this sends other Arab countries and whether this would create a backlash from other heads of state, he said that so far he didn't receive any direct criticism.

Similarly, the local council elections are also a breakthrough. Many unfulfilled promises of previous candidates have come into question today as local people learn from the past. There is an opportunity for new people to represent districts and a greater opportunity for women to be included in the political sphere.

We can't say there is real democracy in Yemen as yet, because there is so much more to be done. But this election is a step in the right direction. Today these elections are important as an opportunity for Yemenis to prove they deserve to live in a democratic system where their voice is heard.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf
Editor-in-Chief



By: Samer (samer_art@maktoob.com)

Let's do it
and let's do it well

While heading toward the first democratic process to choose the next president, Yemenis must remember that positive participation in the upcoming elections is as important as fairness.

In two days, Yemenis will participate in the first truly challenged presidential election, as well as their second local council elections. One thing they must remember – and be proud of – is that on Wednesday they will execute a new national achievement in their modern history because it's the first time they have a direct say in who's going to be the next president. People must be proud despite several challenges the election process has faced recently, including the loss of Yemeni lives during the candidates' campaigns, or potential problems on election day or afterward.

National achievements in modern history

Establishing the republican system four decades ago was the first in a series of achievements aimed at changing the miserable life of Yemeni citizens, who were in a critically bad situation under the brutal rule of the Imams, sultans and the British occupation. Being the first and still the only one of its kind in Arabia, the republican system was an advanced achievement in itself and enabled another national achievement to follow in 1990 with the unity and declaration of the Republic of Yemen.

Since then, Yemenis have been trying to realize their third national achievement – democracy. Along with democracy comes freedom of press and free elections. Despite challenges in recent years, Yemen has achieved a free press so

journalists usually will state, "It's ok, but not enough," which is a rather good level, considering the past and surrounding regional totalitarianism. Journalists indeed will push further.

Nevertheless, free elections have lagged behind and faced ups and downs in recent years. The 1999 presidential election was rather disappointing to Yemenis' expectations at that time and would've been a major drawback to Yemen's path to democracy if it wasn't the first presidential election in Yemen's history.

Participation is the key

The upcoming elections undoubtedly are more promising this time because of real competition in both the presidential and local council elections. Of course, we continue to witness wrong practices, but things are much better than before and even international observers agree.

However, the problem with the previous elections not only was their level of fairness, but also citizens' negative attitude toward the election process itself.

There was even a sense of

indifference among academics, students and civil society activists, who didn't engage enough in the elections. Most didn't even vote on election day, not because they were among those boycotting the elections for political reasons, but because they simply felt it was useless to participate.

Although Yemeni citizens seem more enthusiastic about these elections, it's imperative that all registered voters participate on Wednesday, including those who still wrongly believe there's no use. We must all realize it's our chance to freely and positively determine our future president and our local councils. And, in fact, it's our duty to do so.

Positive voter participation in two days is the true indicator of election success. Those who seek change in Yemen's political life, those who believe the competing alternative to the current regime is worse and even those with a different viewpoint must all participate in these elections rather than hanging back or waiting for the results and becoming disappointed.

Ultimate goal: free and fair elections

The upcoming election is a national merit and in itself can become a national achievement for Yemen and also a political achievement for both the ruling General People's Congress and the opposition Joint Meeting Parties. This achievement will be met if holding free and fair elections is the ultimate goal rather than who wins.

Hamdan Dammag is a computer scientist, a Yemeni poet and a journalist. He is the managing editor of Yemen Times.



By: Hamdan Dammag

Democratic practice
and national unity

It's an interrelated relationship between democracy and national unity. Anyone of us should not slip while practicing the democratic right, to impinge on national unity, the connecting element between our citizens. According to the democratic culture there is no major affiliation or



By: Iskandar Al-Asbahi

secondary affiliation that occupies the priority to or lords over affiliation of the homeland.

There is no one in our Yemeni society who is against the national unity exposing its fabric to a shaking. Our society is simple in its composition and there is no range of ethnicity, religion or sects, but rather one origin and one religion.

In the period before the revolution the national unity and affiliation had not taken root. The isolation imposed on Yemen by its rulers overcame this value. A citizen recently joked saying when he was unable to do anything to find himself with others who migrated to East Africa in the forties of the last century and when he was asked by someone if he was from Yemen he would deny his heritage. He didn't know he was from the country of Yemen. All that he knew was he had passed by the thicket of Yemen when he traveled for the first time to East Africa. He thought he

came from a village a little farther from the thicket of Yemen.

It was a period of imposed isolation which separated the society and made the society fabric too loose. But that was only an exceptional period and it disappeared after the September 26 revolution especially after Yemeni unity on May 2, 1990.

Although this value is as strong in our society as it appears today it does not mean it cannot be affected or influenced. The influence may come from domestic forces under various banners and hide behind democracy or by the external forces of so-called creative chaos that assume the same excuses and through them try to infiltrate societies.

Whatever the matter, the relationship between national unity and regional peace in any country is the connection and adherence. It's national unity that binds the citizens in the affiliation of the homeland and the state. Unity and national safety creates preservation and protection of the state integrity. Both of the national unity and territorial safety for lead to a strong national sovereignty. I do not believe that while practicing its democratic rights, our society will allow any attempt to impinge upon its national unity.

Iskandar Al-Asbahi is a Yemeni journalist. He is the editor in chief of Al-Mithaq weekly.

SILVER LINING

Please let it
be fair play

The two suicide attacks against the oil refinery last Friday are surely going to affect the fever of Wednesday's elections. The link made by the ruling party between the two attacks and the rhetoric of the opposition on oil issues is really dangerous. It is okay to exchange accusations except the topic of terrorism.

The ruling party held the opposition alliance accountable for the acts and said the people behind them are members of the opposition. On its part, the opposition tends to believe the ruling party is trying to "poison the elections atmosphere." In other words, it wants to say the ruling party is creating incidents to horrify the people.

This is really bad. I have written several articles, voicing concerns over the growing momentum of tensions and the consequent hostility between the two sides which might drive us into violence.

The two sides have been performing well and have demonstrated tremendous debates that have impressed everybody. The overall performance during the elections rallies is splendid. There have been a lot of interesting arguments around major issues and the people have a real choice on Wednesday.

I do not think anyone needs to spoil this important moment in Yemen's history after both sides

have done so well to reach it.

Now, your main challenge is how to persevere and push it forward. The ruling party does not need to fabricate such stories to attack the opposition by linking them with terrorist acts.

Similarly, the opposition coalition does not need to use violence to push the authorities toward foolish acts to suspend and stall the democratic experience in order to avoid defeat. Both agreed to the rules of a fair play which means there are winners and losers. They should try to keep their words to the people to have violence-free elections.

If the people vote for Saleh, he will be the first Arab leader to be elected through contested elections and the opposition would have played a pivotal role in this initiative. If he loses, which is not likely in my opinion, he said he would transfer power smoothly to his challenger Faisal Bin Shamlan, which again means he will be the first Arab leader to accept the choice of the people. In both cases, he will be the winner. And it is actually the people who are the real winners as they would have voted freely. So, please do not let stupid acts impede fair elections – let it be a fair play!

Mohammed Al-Qadhi is a Yemeni journalist and columnist.
(mhalqadhi@hotmail.com)



By: Mohammed Al-Qadhi

Why I ran against
Ali Abdullah Saleh

Anger, pure and simple. Anger that after 44 years we do not have one decent hospital to go to when we are ill. I travelled from Sana'a to Harath and noticed that the health units that dot the highway are all closed. Naturally with a budget of 2000 riyals a month how can they remain open?

Anger that after 44 years we are illiterate, sixty percent for women and fifty percent for men. Hurt to see our children crossing to the Saudi border at night to sell water to feed their families.

Upset at a spiraling population, 20,000,000 that mostly live in extreme poverty.

Anger at the high rate of unemployment. Disgusted by the monolithic prisons that tarnish the countryside.

As for the position of women; mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters, we have been relegated to the purdah. More women have placed the veil on their faces today than in my childhood, the 1960's, my teens the 1970's and twenties, the 1980's. Why?

How can we measure progress purely by the number of products we can now buy in the supermarkets? Or purchase of a \$10 million dollar villa with imported Italian marble, plus a kidney shaped swimming pool in the basement, and drive on super highways.

Yes we have had stability for twenty-seven, thank-you Mr.



By: Sumayya Ali Rajja

President.

Yes we have a united Yemen, thank-you Mr. President.

Yes we are selling our oil, thank-you Mr. President.

We admired you for your courage in leading Yemen twenty years ago.

We praised you for uniting the country.

But how can I vote for you today when according to one estimate, alone, the cost of printing your pictures all over Yemen. By one unit, the Military Company Ltd, (Muassassa Askaria) is 500,000,000 (five hundred million riyals) while the cost of 1500 health units across the country's total yearly budget is thirty six million riyals, 36,000,000. Is this rule by the people? Is this our brand of DEMOCRACY?

My vote is for Bin Shamlan. Yemen must change leaders in order to survive one more year let alone seven more years.

Sumayya Rajja is the first female candidate to run for the presidential office in Yemen.

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Offices

Aden Bureau:
Ridhwan Alawi Ahmed
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Tel: +967 (4) 217-156,
Telefax: +967 (4) 217157
P.O.Box: 5086, Taiz
Email: yttaz@y.net.ye

Ibb correspondent:
Nashwan Dammaj
Mobile: (+967) 733840609,
Email: naschuan2000@yahoo.com

Hadramout Correspondent:
Saeed Al-Batati
Mobile (+967) 733896986
Email: albatati88@yahoo.com
Fax: +967 (05) 360303

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Yemen Press Review

By: Mohammed Khidhr



Al-Wahda weekly, organ of the Nasserite Unionist Organization, 29 Aug.2006.

Main headlines

- Large-scale masses rally behind JMP presidential candidate
- Bin Shamlan: Change begins from head of power
- International report says Yemeni forces in continual deterioration
- Workers and employees of oil block 18 start open strike
- Head of supervising committee in al-Jawf killed
- While the minister in electoral mission, members of criminal investigation in Taiz kidnap a citizen
- Traffic police in Ibb retains cars carrying photos of Bin Shamlan
- Ministry of Civil Service postpones announcement of jobs

The political editor of the newspaper says in an article it is the right of any Yemeni social organization to dream of success of the candidate that it supports for the presidency of the republic but it is the right of Yemen more to have it succeed democratically. Democracy, as much as it is hope, it is historical responsibility dealing with great affairs in the first of which is that of change withal its implications of habits and conditions leading the society to the extent of its preparedness and ability to practice moral discipline of democratic right, in the practice and in accepting the change. We think there is no democracy devoid of those two rights: the right of soundness of democratic practice and the right of accepting the political change democratically. Here Yemen will succeed twice; the first in the success of democracy and the second in having a president selected democratically.

There might be some mistakes taking place here and there due to practice but

they must not represent a state of wantonness deforming and marginalizing the democratic experiment

However, when we study the history of Yemen and ability of its people to solve their problems by themselves, we will find a unified people capable of practicing their options with the highest ways and means and in a civilized manner.



As-Sahwa weekly, 31 Aug.2006.

Min headlines

- Change, the solution
- Bin Shamlan: We shall make Yemen happy anew
- JMP refuses to deliver names of its representatives in sub-committees but after its receipt of the electronic record
- JMP condemns editing of paragraphs of its electoral platform
- Military commanders practice election propaganda, foment against opposition

Writer Zaid al-Shami says in an article the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) has decided its position in the adoption of political struggle as its program and approach for changing the situations and embarked educating its bases and supporters to fully realize this is the best means for wringing out the rights and achieve justice and equality. Consequently, there is no need for wars, conflicts and vengeance and the use of force. The alternative of all that are the dialogue, agreement and balloting boxes as well as acceptance of the results.

This culture that is deepening day by day among bases of the JMP is alternative of the wrong mobilization that provokes the members and makes them hostile. And although peaceful struggle needs longer time, its consequences are

good and fruits are sure for the individual, the society and the state. The results will be quick if the ruling party obliged itself to the same approach and educated its members on meanings of dialogue, acceptance of the other. If it continues in the way of aggression with power, authority and money and imposing the opinion by the force of arms and frightening the citizen that change will threaten the unity, and end stability and security, this will slacken speed of the wheel of change but could not stop it.

The writer expresses his regret towards what he describes as ill practices by some officials in the ruling party, such as hostile statements and tearing photos of the JMP candidate. He says we are in dire need of the culture of peaceful transfer of photos before talking about peaceful transfer of power. If this situation continues in this way, how would it be in the day of voting and counting of votes and where would it stop after announcement of results?



Al-Wahda newspaper 30 Aug.2006.

Main headlines

- More than 200 tribes sign document terminating vengeance
- PM Bajammal: Yemen proceeds from seeking cultural integration in its vision of accession to the GCC
- FM press conference clarifies Yemen's stand versus regional and international issues
- Nasserite secretary of the political office: The opposition reached a stage of political and program maturity
- In the first half of this year, more than \$ 2 billion the value of oil exports
- Japan writes off % 7 million, total foreign indebtedness amounts to \$5 billion

- Academics and politicians affirm importance of the political reform to tackle failures
- In the past 7 months, more than one billion riyals retrieved to treasury
- Yemeni-Saudi campaigns for combating malaria in border areas

Writer Taha al-Amiri says in his article if the beginnings are indicating the results we have then to revise our calculations in more than one direction. However, the more prominent direction is the political and party consciousness and the mechanism of its dealing with matters in a way that is not limited to boundaries of dereliction, though that is what characterized some of the speeches delivered in electoral festivals and the slogans raised there. It is a fearful action when we find those who are supposed to stabilize values of civilized changes are the ones carrying them out.

There is much evidence that the elite need to rehabilitate themselves intellectually and culturally in compatibility with the changes and in line with democratic values in order to be able to take part positively in rooting process of values of democratic awareness among the people and society through their media and political address. Democracy, as a civilized culture, is not based on compositional speeches and transient reaction. There are intellectual, cultural and political constituents leading to such an address.

True we have corruption and wish to get rid of it and those causing it but against that we have also political, democratic and cultural corruption. We have corruption in practicing, behavior and consciousness. All those forms of corruption represent the immoral base of the financial and administrative corruption. This cannot be treated in the way some parties are following. Corruption does not mean there is no state.

Elections are raging and all are engrossed in their ramifications. There is

no talk about platforms and the criticism stamp has taken the shape of personification targeting the national political symbols. There is no critic of those criticizing a platform of those who are in power telling them you have said in your platform this and that and committed yourselves, so where is what you have promised to do? Instead of that we have so far found excesses and defamation.



Al-Wasat weekly, 30 Aug. 2006.

Main headlines

- The president stars his election campaign in Amran and Saada amidst difference with strong rivals
- The YSP member whose membership is frozen Amin Thabit offered to convert to the ruling party
- Bajammal assails the GCC
- Tribal mediation hands over two escapees of al-Qaeda
- Al-Baidhani drops intention to sue chairmanships of parliament and the Shoura Council
- The government bans exportation of fish to Saudi Arabia
- Al-Majidi cancels two of his elation festivals in the wake of the killing of his campaign coordinator

Editor in chief of the newspaper writes that the past weeks and the coming ones until the day of voting will not be confined to it in being an election season but also a fertile season for spreading rumors dealing accusations and trading with the issue.

What is going on these days of accusations against this or that calls shame and despair especially when they are issued by persons who have ridden the wave of opposition for reasons having nothing to do with the people or their issues. They have embarked, instead of

the authority, on distributing cars and monthly salaries in dollar to this or that who they have bought their loyalty, confirming truthfulness of their information from their secret and dangerous sources that have infiltrated the centers of decision.

It is regrettable that the rumor changes into a weapon directed randomly to a newspaper or writer merely because what he said was in variance with this party or that wants or an article was not equal to the anger of this person, has observed the fact in his writing. In a meeting of independent journalists with leadership of the opposition at the political development forum we asked them to help us preserve our independence by adoption of the fact and convey it poorly to the reader free from tendencies of power and the parties. I think those leaders blessed that approach. But the tragedy is those who cannot tolerate you unless you were a warrior with your sword without even informing you on the aim of the issue you are fighting for.

Maybe the motive behind arousing this topic is understood in this critical period. I this period there is inspection and search for evidence of accusation between the lines of what is written and to erect the gallows after secret trial, all of its components are one. All are unanimous on the evidence, not according to what is there but to what is derived from between the lines. Such a thing does not exceed its being a desperate attempt to annex what is independent not only to the authority but also to the opposition and even to persons.

However and in order to generalize this situation we have to admit that there are leaders from the opposition as well as from the authority who have encouraged the independent journalist to be a mouthpiece of the fact. That is what should be done if they wanted to establish a professional press work away from bickering of the authority and the opposition.

What democracy means in Muslim-Western relations

By: Zaenal Abidin Eko Putro

Many today argue that the world is engulfed in a terrifying "clash of civilisations" between the Muslim world and the West. Even though many refute the idea of such an international clash, it is clear that Muslim-Western tensions are playing out today in some parts of the world, with the most recent instance being the fighting between Israel and Hizbullah in Lebanon.

Another example of such a clash is a non-physical one that has occurred in the discourse on democracy. Most Western countries have accepted the idea of democracy and applied democratic political systems. However, only a small number of Muslim countries have adopted Western-style democracy. Some Muslim countries even reject this term and have created their own political systems based on Islamic principles of governance.

In addition, when some Muslim countries embraced democratic principles, the results were sometimes surprising and often viewed with dissatisfaction by the Western world. Specifically, the establishment of certain governments which came to power in free elections has resulted in Western criticism on several counts. One well-known example occurred in Algeria in 1990 when the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) won the election, only to be overthrown by a West-supported military. A more recent controversial election victory was Hamas' – a persona-non-grata in the eyes of the United States- which is still categorised as a terrorist organisation despite winning a free election in Palestine. The Hamas government has yet to receive any support from Western countries under the influence of the United States.

Misperceptions about the principles and implementation of democracy have caused a great deal of misunderstanding between Muslim and Western cultures. Many Muslim peoples fear democracy in their countries will result in the erosion of moral and religious values and would represent yet another invasion of Western cultures and

norms. Many Western cultures wonder whether democracy is compatible with Islam and fear the rise of Islamic extremist parties. And one specific concern that Muslim and Muslim academics have often differed on is whether democracy has room for shari'a (Islamic law).

Yet regardless of these obstacles, the Western world should continue to work with Muslim countries to help them build their unique versions of democracy. Efforts toward greater understanding of the various definitions and perceptions of democracy and toward the practical implementation of democracy in predominantly Muslim countries should be met with greater Western support of these processes.

One country that is often held up as a positive example of a democratic political system in a predominantly Muslim state is Indonesia. Following its independence in 1945, Indonesia decided not to become an Islamic state as such, but a democratic nation-state, and has not seen a rise in Islamic extremism or violence. Indonesia's experience with the emergence of the Party of Justice and Prosperity (PKS) as the sixth runner up in the last parliamentary election is an interesting case in point. In the 2004 parliamentary election, no less than 8.3 million voters gave their support to the party and helped establish its 45 representatives in parliament. The party was also successful in placing prominent members as ministers in a cabinet led by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Vice President Jusuf Kalla.

The accusation that overwhelming success by the PKS would cultivate Islamic radicalism and spawn terrorist groups was unfounded. On the contrary, the result of a survey conducted by Kompas Daily about this party in June 2005 showed that while most people tended to be pessimistic over the future implementation of political platforms in Indonesia, this opinion did not apply to the PKS. No less than 60.4 percent of respondents expressed their optimism about the positive image of the party. For many people, the victory of PKS and the emergence of other Islamic parties are considered a positive move

that will result in constructive change.

Unfortunately, this example has mistakenly been seen as the emergence of Islamic radicalism and terrorism in Muslim world by some. Yet, the Indonesian example fits with a trend that other countries have also seen when more radical groups, such as the IRA in Northern Ireland, have found room to participate in government, resulting in a decrease in violence and extremism. This suggests that the West should not impede the integration of radical Islamic groups into political systems.

What is clear is that a new perspective of democracy in predominantly Muslim countries, based on the needs of both the Muslim world and the West, must be developed in an effort to achieve long-term peace. Furthermore, Muslim and Western populations should aim for greater understanding and empathy towards the other. Above all, the Western world should take its first concrete step by giving more opportunity to Muslim scholars, governments, and civil society activists to practice their understanding about democracy in their own countries and consider opportunities to merge shari'a law with the idea of democracy. Some Western intellectuals such as John L. Esposito, John O. Voll, Jeff Haynes, and Martin E. Marty have tried to push the adoption of democracy in Islamic countries. In fact, many believe that there is a democratic system that is compatible with the basic principles of shari'a.

There are hopeful signs that the next steps in building mutual understanding between the Muslim and Western worlds are taking shape so that the current "clash" over the term democracy may yield a new hybrid version that combines the benefits of democracy in the West with the unique needs and circumstances of predominantly Muslim countries.

Zaenal Abidin Eko Putro is Executive Director of the Center for Asian Studies (CeNAS) in Jakarta. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews) and can be accessed at www.commongroundnews.org.

Jihad in Mideast could mean unholy war

By: Mohammad Yazid

During the life of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims at one point misunderstood the meaning of jihad (literally "struggle", though often translated as "holy war"). This happened after Muhammad, for the first time, led Muslims to military victory in the Battle of Badr in 623. During this fight, Muslim troops, consisting of 313 mostly ill-armed males, fought against the well-armed and well-equipped polytheist Quraish troops of Mecca, numbering over 1,000 and led by several experienced generals. This war broke out because the polytheists drove away the Muslims and seized all their belongings so that the latter had to move to Medina.

After this battle, Muhammad, in a sermon to the warriors of Badr, some 150 kilometres southwest of Medina, said, "In fact, we have returned from a minor jihad to fight the major jihad." His words took his comrades by surprise so that one of them asked him, "Which major jihad do you mean, oh Prophet?" And the Prophet responded, "the jihad against one's own desires."

Today, about 14 centuries later, Muslims, in several respects, have once again misunderstood the meaning of jihad. That this misunderstanding exists is easily observed from the great number of plans made in our country to dispatch volunteers to Palestine and Lebanon in response to Israeli attacks. Most of these jihadis have been mustered by such groups as the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI), the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and the Islamic Youth Movement (GPI).

Unfortunately, the recruitment system employed and the combat training provided to these volunteers show that the war against Israel is considered to be something like the Battle of Badr, namely one involving face-to-face combat. They apparently fail to realise that this war is conducted using super-sophisticated technology and is very different from the type of war that took place during the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

In terms of weapons technology alone, for example, Muslims lag compared with Israel, which enjoys the support of the United States. Israel also demonstrates superiority over Muslim armies in other respects, such as diplomatic skills. Should

these volunteers fail to pay attention to these aspects, this would be tantamount to failing to understand Muhammad's teachings, which lend great significance to the strategy of war and mental preparation.

The Prophet's message can be understood if one studies the strategy adopted in the Battle of Uhud, which took place the year after Badr, in which Muhammad stationed a number of skilled archers on Uhud Hill, some six kilometres south of Medina, after he studied the battle formations and strengths of each side. This battle was once again provoked by the Meccan Quraish, who were greatly upset after they were defeated at Badr.

What this means is that if Muslims fail to pay attention to various important aspects of winning a war in this modern age, they will have again misunderstood the meaning of jihad. Jihad, therefore, has changed in meaning from a holy into an unholy war leading to meaningless and unnecessary deaths due to a misunderstanding of its true meaning.

There are a host of things to be taken into account for those wishing to become jihadi volunteers, such as whether or not they are married, and whether they have made suitable arrangements for their families left behind in Indonesia amid the current economic difficulties. A misunderstanding that is based on a failure to think things through honestly and deeply is just the same as the failure of the Prophet Muhammad's comrades to understand the meaning of "major jihad", namely the war against one's own desires.

Jihad, which means hard work in the terminology of the ulama (religious leaders), means mobilising all existing capabilities and all that one possesses to uphold truth and virtue, and fight against iniquity and evil, with the expectation of receiving God's blessing in the process.

However, jihad has been interpreted by different groups according to their own understanding of the term. To a number of militant Muslim leaders, such as Osama bin Laden and Maulana Masood Azhar, the leader of Jaish-e-Mohammed, a banned militant outfit in Pakistan, jihad means killing.

If you look at chapter 29 verse 69 of the Qur'an, you will find that jihad does not mean killing, or being killed, but is about how to work hard so as to receive God's blessing. Jihad, for groups or individuals, is something that is essential as part of the journey toward spiritual progress.

While jihad has received different interpretations among Muslims, the plans hatched in Indonesia to dispatch jihadis to the Middle East has been criticised by a number of Muslim figures here.

Muhammadiyah chairman Din Syamsuddin is of the opinion that while conducting jihad is what he terms a human right, "... I need to remind all that the battlefield [in the Middle East] involves the use of modern weaponry. That's why military skills are necessary."

There are still many other areas where jihad could be waged, he suggests, by those wishing to assist the Palestinians and the Lebanese. Political jihad may be resorted to by continuing to exert political pressure on the United Nations to stop Israel's attacks. In the economic arena, jihad could be conducted by providing financial assistance. Or, one can also conduct a spiritual jihad by offering up prayers.

Meanwhile, Hasyim Muzadi, who chairs Nahdlatul Ulama, the country's largest Muslim organisation, has said that it is necessary for Muslims to unite. Arab countries, in particular, must join forces to stop the attacks by Israel. He argues that it would be better to dispatch peacekeeping troops to the Lebanon as a solution, rather than sending jihadi volunteers.

Taking into account the opinions of ulama and the correct understanding of jihad, jihadi volunteers should heed the government's suggestion that now is not the right time for them to go to the Lebanon. The most practical and realistic way forward for Indonesia would be to act constructively by contributing to the peacekeeping force in Lebanon and Palestine when this is established by the United Nations.

As Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda has put it, Indonesia is a country whose citizens are free to travel anywhere. Therefore, the government cannot prevent people from travelling. The only action that can be taken is to issue an advisory warning Indonesian citizens of the dangers they would face should they agree to be sent willy-nilly on a jihad to the Lebanon.

The writer is a staff member on The Jakarta Post's Opinion Desk. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews) and can be accessed at www.commongroundnews.org.

Elections, new school year and Ramadan reduce book fair visitors

By: Nisreen Shadad

Concluding its 10-day exhibition last week, the 23rd Book Fair in Sana'a witnessed approximately a million visitors and, despite the war, the participation of three Lebanese publishers, according to Dr. Faris Al-Sakkaf, chairman of the General Book Authority, the organizers of the fair.

The event included more than 320 publishing houses and more than 100,000 subjects in various fields, published mostly in 2005 and 2006.

Najib Al-Silwi, general director of the General Book Authority, explained, "To facilitate the book search process, the General Book Authority prepared an electronic guide with the help of the National Information Center. Readers simply wrote the name of the book they were seeking and then were presented a list of all publishing houses with that type of book."

"The CD also contained a brief introduction to Yemeni cities: their history, their leaders and how long they governed, a timeline from the Sheban period until May 22 – the day of integrity – and a gallery from each period," he added.

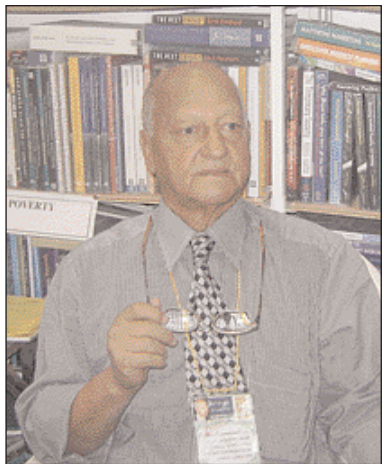
Information Unite manager Ahlam Al-Thawr affirmed the CD's significance, however, she noted that it involved only 80 percent of subjects because some publishing houses didn't list their books and laser CDs. It was the General Book Authority's first time managing the fair.

This year's visitors were less than last year, indicating an extremely strong relation between the fair's timing and current events. General Book Authority officer Mona Al-Hamli explained, "This year, it's the elections and the beginning of a new school year."

Mecca Company programming officer Farhali also wondered at this year's low attendance. "Though awareness about the importance of educational CDs is remarkable, this year's sold quantity was just 50 percent of last year's. Until now, I've sold only 35 percent and I only expect to reach 40 percent by the last day. I bet people are busy with the elections, the new school year and Ramadan approaching."

However, Ahmed Al-Qusabi from the Oman booth indicated, "Most of our books are sold because we gave a 70 percent discount from the first day to the last. For example, we sold a book costing YR 1,500 for YR 400; therefore, our discount was incomparable. You won't find any publishing house giving this discount from the first day."

The fair's timing also was unsuitable



Ahmed Foda, general manager of Middle East Observer newspaper.



A view from the 23rd Book Fair in Sana'a.

for Lebanese publishing houses, with Al-Fiqr Publishing House being the only one to participate from the very beginning. Manager Awad Qasim explained, "Our participation this year wasn't effective due to Lebanon's crisis. Additionally, the books we brought actually are available here in Yemen. We couldn't offer something new or bring books from Beirut due to transportation obstacles."

However, according to Ahmed Foda, general manager of the Middle East Observer newspaper, "This was the best time for us because we have book fairs in several countries in coming days."

Al-Silwi confirmed that the authority doesn't have the right to change the book fair's affixed timing for any reason. "We can't change the timing because the General Book Authority fixes the date with the Arab Unity Publishers."

Though this year's book fair was a great success, it wasn't completely smooth sailing. "Overlapping responsibilities between the General Book Authority and the Ministry of Culture resulted in widespread repetition when distributing invitations to several publishing houses to contribute, which obliged us to welcome all publishing houses receiving the invitation – whether from us or the Ministry of Culture – without exception," Al-Silwi explained.

Abu Ghazaleh Intellectual Property was one publishing house affected. Marketing officer Mazen Abd Al-Bari recounted, "Like usual, we dealt with the Ministry of Culture to reserve a stand. However, a week before the fair's opening, they told us we should deal with the General Book Authority. As a result, we couldn't reserve a special stand to advertise our products, so we joined the General Book Authority officer's stand."

"We really thank them, since they gave us the opportunity to participate; however, our books were unseen, though they are precious and rarely distributed outside. Attendance was low," he added.

While many book fair attendees may have found what they were seeking, prohibitive costs were a stumbling block to many. "Computer science books were so expensive that I didn't buy anything," computer engineering student Mohammed Abdu Sa'eed lamented.

Al-Samawi School seventh-graders Mabrouka and Lamy'a also were depressed about the fair's prices. They found an educational CD they wanted to

buy, but due to its high price, they had to find something cheaper.

However, Al-Nahda School third-graders Aseel Al-Syaghi and Bra'a Al-Ashwal were slightly more satisfied with the fair's prices: "They were half and half."

Teachers usually await the annual book fair to buy instructional materials and educational books, however, "This

Others were pleased with the book fair and its prices. "I mostly found the books I need – an interpretation of the Qur'an in English and Malay – and the price was cheap," remarked Zaidah, from Malaysia, manager of Adni School, an English Islamic school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Walid Al-Awil, a supplemental worker at Sana'a Dentistry College, stated,



Children love such book fairs.

year, educational CDs dominated, but educational aids had no place," Itbisam Ghalib observed.

Although teachers usually want education and psychology titles – and readily found them at the fair – those with scientific interests or specialties had difficulty obtaining the right book. "I'm eager to find biology and ideology books," commented Yemeni university student Adli Sa'd from Malaysia. Ali Al-Jarash, a visitor further noted, "Books on physics and electronics were scarce and their cost was high."

"Vast improvements in new books can't be ignored, especially in children's books. I think the prices were reasonable because these books aren't the originals."

"Prices can't be controlled," Al-Silwi noted, "The General Book Authority exempts all publishing houses from customs and sales taxes in order to support readers and make it easier for them to obtain books." Though the authority has tried all possible means, it can't discount book prices, though this year's cost were similar to last year's.



For the first time, big screens were used to guide visitors.

Mona Ali: wedding messenger of happiness

By: Abdullatif Al-Sidiq

Everyone in Yemen knows Mona Ali, whose voice is an important requirement for wedding ceremonies. She comes without invitation and she's present at all wedding festivals. Her voice is the key to "al-qafas al-dhahabi" – the gold cage.

Most know her by voice but they don't know what she looks like. They believe her unique and specialized voice was created to celebrate their marriages. Her voice competes with and wins over the lute, qualifying her to possess music with a distinguished and unparalleled rhythm.



Mona Ali

With its originality, her voice penetrates into the depths, announcing happiness and pleasure and repeatedly is heard across Yemen whenever there's a marriage occasion.

Ali began singing a year after the revolution erupted in Aden. She sang her first song, "Get away from me" (Khaleek Ba'eed), with singer Ayoub Tarish Al-Absi and the song was recorded on an album entitled, "Singing Disc" (Ustowanat Al-Tarab).

With a long sigh, Ali revealed that her family beat her continually because they were dissatisfied with her involvement in the arts, which was considered shameful as others looked down upon such artists.

Despite the fact that a Yemeni

Artists Syndicate's branch is located in Taiz, where she is from, and Ali knows its head, she says she hasn't received any benefit from it. "Generally speaking, they care about those who are present and forget about those who are absent," she said.

Ali was honored by Minister of Culture Khalid Al-Rowaishan during activities involving Sana'a as the Arab cultural capital. Al-Rowaishan also granted her a permanent salary, but it doesn't cover her medical expenses.

Being afflicted with illness, she began selling her household furniture, starting with the television and stereo. Other furnishings are to be sold to cover her treatment expenses.

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam 47

Translated by Edward FitzGerald

Then said another—"Surely not in vain
"My substance from the common earth was ta'en,
"That he who subtly wrought me into shape
"Should stamp me back to common earth again."

Literary Corner

By: Abu Al-Kalmah Al-Tayyibah

Yemeni Annals (Hawliat Yamaniyah): 1224 – 1316 AH (Part II)

Author: Muhsin Bin Ahmed Al-Harazi et al
Checked and Edited by: Abdullah Mohammed Al-Hibshi
Language: Arabic
Publisher: Ministry of Information and Culture
Year Published: 1400 AH/1980 AD
No. of Pages: 661 (II)

At this juncture, it is worth delving somewhat into the social order that prevailed in Yemen at the time frame chronicled in this book, by briefly looking into some of the socio-historical factors that helped shape that order. Perhaps a little historical background is also imperative. The Islamic Caliphate fell to the Abbasids (for more information on the Abbasids see this link: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbasid>) in the middle of the Eighth Century AD, on the pretext of avenging the death of so many of the Alawis [descendants of Ali, the Prophet Mohammed's cousin (PBAUH) and son in law], who for ninety years hence were relentlessly pursued by the caliphs of the Umayyad Dynasty.

However, the Abbasids, in turn, also turned against their cousins, the Alawis, because the latter ceaselessly continued to advocate for a more equitable Islamic government, which should uphold the human rights ordained by their grandfather, the Prophet Mohammed (PBAUH), as the essence of the Message delivered to the latter entails the removal of all forms of oppression and injustice, which the Abbasids, like their predecessors, the Umayyads, ruthlessly relied upon to maintain their hold on authority and power.

The Islamic State under the Abbasids began a slow process of disintegration until Baghdad became a mere symbolic capital of the Moslem world, and most of the territories under the empire either evolved as separate mini-states or entered into periods of continued struggles for regional power. Yemen, for a while, became enmeshed in such petty struggles for power and tribal conflicts.

The situation got unbearable even to most of the leading tribal and religious dignitaries that enjoyed powerful social influence in the country and around the middle of the Ninth Century AD, sought some expatriate assistance to help Yemen come out of this unstable state. They approached a leading scholar from the Alawi line (Yahya bin Hussein) known for his high virtues, piety, and disregard for the mundane desires of power and wealth.

They pledged allegiance to abide by his stern application of the justice of Shari'ah jurisprudence and accepted him as the Imam¹ of Yemen twice.

The first time that the Imam came to Yemen, there was great difficulty in imposing the rule of law. A few years later, the Yemeni leaders again pleaded with the Imam to leave his ancestral

home in Medina (in the Hijaz area of Eastern Saudi Arabia), where he was teaching and guiding people on proper adherence to Islam, and to come and bring law, order and peace to the country.

They promised this time that they would ensure that his rule and judgment shall be enforced. Thus Yahya Bin Al-Hussein (nicknamed "Al-Hadi", or the Enlightener because of his scholastic wisdom) established the Zeidi Imamate in Yemen, which on and off ruled all or parts of Yemen until September 26, 1962. Even with such pledges, Imam Yahya's rule was not a carefree one, although he was highly respected and approved of as a just and pious ruler.

Although the Zeidi Imamate is not by ordinance a hereditary one, there were a number of hereditary lines of Imam that intermittently ruled for different periods spanning the nearly nine hundred years that the Imamate prevailed as the dominant sovereign authority, especially in the North.

One of the most important principles of Zeidi philosophy is that rebellion against an unjust regime (even if an Imamic regime) is sanctified and even encouraged to ensure that Imams do not forget that their spiritual and temporal commitments to the subjects and to God are not compromised.

However, because of the absence of a formalized permanent process for selecting Imams and controlling any tendencies of abuse of power by the accepted Imam, there were many times that the state was beset with weak and stable authority, as many aspirants to the Imamate called for a political uprising, on the pretext that the existing Imam had abused his mandate or was unable to establish the justice and equity that are cardinal rules of an Islamic secular state.

Footnotes

¹ Imam has a double connotation of "Spiritual Guide" and Sovereign Authority when used in the political context, as it is used here. However high scholastic attainment in religious theology and jurisprudence has been granted this honorific title to many a leading scholar of distinction, such as Zeid bin Ali, Abu Hanifah, Ja'afar Al-Sadiq, Mohammed Idriss Al-Shafi'ee, Ahmed Bin Hanbal, etc. (all of the latter had Islamic sects named after them, but the first was the only one, who was asked to lead an insurrection against the unjust Caliphate. The others were also outspoken critics of political oppression and many of them were imprisoned and tortured by the rulers they were critical of in their times. Although it was expected that a Caliph should be of a high scholastic caliber as well, this was very seldom the case, as most of the caliphs that prevailed were hereditary dynasties up to the Ottoman Turks, who were forced out after World War I and the Western powers insisted that the Turks relinquish the title of Caliph altogether, and this ended the symbolic head of the Islamic Nation as a potential united political entity.

پاکستان اور افغانستان میں
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Interview with Jamal M. A. Sholan for the Yemen Times

“Remember one thing: it is the buildings that kill people, not the earthquake!”

A matter of seconds could easily destroy a civilization built in thousands of years. This was one of the many expressions defining the impacts of disaster, concurrently one of worst, is earthquakes. Yemen as a country is prone to earthquakes of a mild degree due to its geological nature and location. The worst in the recent history was the Dhamar 1982 earthquake which brought the attention to this small country south of the Arabian Peninsula and urged many international humanitarian organizations as well as national organizations and the government to work on this field in Yemen. The National Seismology Observatory Center (NSOC) based in Dhamar is one of the prominent national establishments in this field, and Mr. Jamal Mohamed Sholan, 48 years with a degree in geology specialized in Tectonics, is the General Director of the NSOC. Mr. Sholan is married with six boys and one daughter. Nadia al-Sakkaf from the Yemen Times met with Mr. Jamal Sholan General Director of the NSOC and filled in this interview.

Could you tell us about the seismological observatory center?

We started our activities through the installation of seismological stations and geological investigations for seismic hazard after Dhamar Earthquake Disaster in December 13, 1982. At that time no one had a clear idea about what a seismic hazard is, or the probability of earthquakes occurrences in Yemen. Today the center has more than fifty four employees including engineers, technicians and seismologists, as well as administrative staff.

Triggered by the Dhamar earthquake disaster and the excellent response of Yemeni government (especially appreciated, the response of the president Ali Abdullah Salih) as well as Arab and



Jamal Mohamed Sholan

friends, the Program for Assessment and Mitigation of Earthquake Risk in Arab Region (PAMERAR) was conducted by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (Kuwait). This was the starting step in founding seismic work in Yemen, through training and seismic network instruments supporting, of course with local financing to operate these seismic networks.

At that time, the roles and responsibilities of the different ministries and authorities were defined, in association with governorate of Dhamar and mandated group in the supreme council of reconstruction in Dhamar province. This could be considered as the foundation rock of seismology and seismic networking in Yemen, naturally because this step was a big technical and scientific challenge for our country. However, the actual steps of seismic networks installation were not achieved until 1989 when the financial approval and approval for Yemen/PAMERAR project were issued.

After unification in 1990 the center worked on covering whole of the country and this required reestablishing the network. And now with the support of the Supreme Council of Reconstruction in Dhamar which hosts the center, and assistance from officers in the ministry of oil and minerals and geological sur-

vey board the NSOC is operating well. All of us at the NSO Center are grateful to our colleagues and officers at the Geological Survey Board and the Ministry of Oil for their continuous support.

The Center operates through three seismic networks:

- Twelve digital seismic stations distributed in different parts of Yemen connected to central workstation in Dhamar by telephone lines.

- Fifteen strong motion stations also distributed in some selected sites or main buildings in major cities.

- Three telemetry stations observed local activity in the central portion of Yemen.

- Number of portable seismic stations used for filed and aftershocks activities.

Working in the seismic field requires a great deal of patience as we work around the clock 24 hours seven. Perhaps this is one of the factors why not many people

alarming, however, is that through reviewing the population areas figured in demographics map (figure 3), it is obvious that the population is concentrated on the most prone areas to earthquakes, and we can guess the scale of hazard during the next probable damaging earthquake.

That is really interesting, so what does this reflect on the buildings and construction in our country?

The importance of this Center lies in the fact that we represent the technical source for seismic information, files, annual seismic bulletins etc in Yemen. Producing this information and providing consultation are basic parts of our work. For instance, we established what we call the "seismic code for construction" which is criteria through which an establishment is said to be resistant to earthquakes or not.

It is our field of specialization and it is our responsibility to inform the authori-

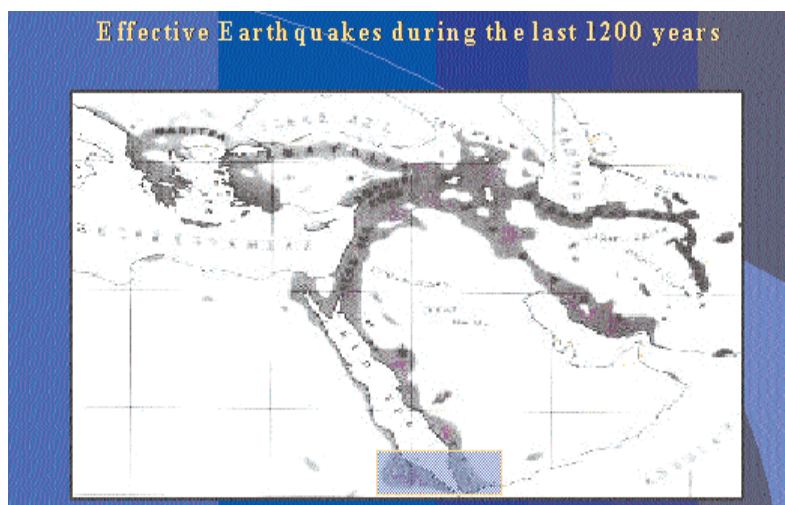


Figure 2: Earthquakes history through the past 1000 years in the region.

want to join this field.

Is Yemen a prone country to earthquakes?

Referring to the data collected from International Seismological Center in London and also from different professional sources and published papers. If you refer to (figure.1) you will see the seismological history through 100 years (upper picture) and through the 10 years (lower picture) earthquakes locations recognized by international seismic stations. I would like to mention here that one of our staff obtained his PhD in historical Seismicity under the Yemen-PAMERAR project.

The second figure (fig.2) indicates the earthquakes history through the past 1000 years in the region, which was reported by famous historical Seismicity Prof. called Ambraseys, N. N.

All the highlighted areas in the maps especially the most recent one which indicates the history of earthquakes in 10 years, provide indicators of probability occurrence of earthquakes. What is

ties of the minimum standards that must be ensured when constructing a new building. Through our work and field research we realized that the majority of constructions, recent and old are much below the required standards and if an earthquake is to take place – God forbid – Many of those building would easily collapse. The conditions of construction and the absence of standard building materials, designing controls, construction site selection and studies are factors that stand against a standard national infrastructure. In a previous survey of the buildings damaged because of the Dhamar earthquake, all concrete well-constructed buildings resisted the main shock (6.0 Richter scale), did not collapse or partly collapsed within 50 km radius from the epicenter. This however, will not necessarily be the case in the future.

The enforcing of the seismic code on construction is the responsibility of different governmental authorities; however we are always running and advancing efforts in order to highlight the criticali-

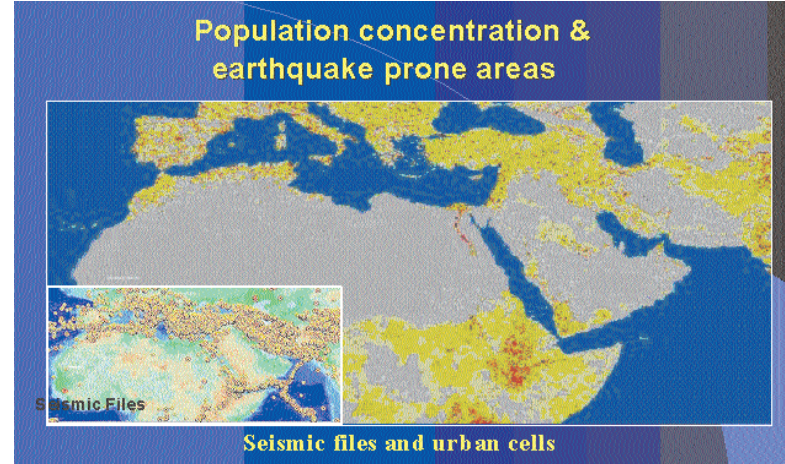


Figure 3: Demographics map of population areas.

ty of this issue and we try to inform as many people in decision making positions as we can.

We try also to conduct training and awareness sessions for the related authorities, but we are limited by our budget, and the response from the ministry of oil and minerals. We organized training programs for all center staff and we shared contents of this program with related authorities locally and internationally.

Awareness raising is considered as one of the important targets of the seismic hazard mitigation program. Our training, scientific work, seismic observation and any related work at the center is not sufficient to raise the public awareness. And although we had issues some newsletters, and daily, monthly, and annually seismic bulletins I still think it is not enough.

The Yemen Times' contribution to this field through this interview is very much appreciated. And I believe it is the duty of all mass media in Yemen to highlight and inform about these issues.

Do you have an emergency plan for mitigation in the case of an earthquake?

As a Moslem I know that earthquakes have been mentioned in several parts of our holy book the Quran. This phenomenon (earthquake) is continuous and dynamic and occurs in a repetitive way through because of the earth's motion and we cannot stop it. However, we can try to minimize the risks as much as possible and this could be done through public education and knowledge spreading. All technical and scientific solutions for seismic hazard mitigation is concentrated on building design, and soil condition. If we have good seismic resistant buildings and good sites selection for construction, the result should be fewer hazards.

This issue should be in the top national priority; because we had one big earthquake in Dhamar province before 23

years, and it made a negative impact on the economy. And we have remarkable seismic data observed in the western part of Yemen collected during the last 20 years a go. The Center's observation, analysis and reports on seismic issues are an on-going process and are being communicated on daily basis to all related authorities for last 12 years.

The population is concentrated on the most prone areas to earthquakes, and we can guess the scale of hazard during the next probable damaging earthquake.

In care of an earthquake, what are the procedures that the public should do?

Like I said there is no known way to prevent earthquakes, but it is possible to lessen the impact. The amount of devastation from an earthquake can be greatly diminished by building structures using earthquake resistant design, making the interiors of buildings safe from falling objects, and educating people about earthquake safety. However there are some roles that the public should follow in order to reduce the probability of risk. We distributed Arabic brochure containing these construction advances. They include:

- Remain calm and move away from furniture and light fixtures. Seek shelter under a sturdy desk or table. Each person must first put out any immediate fires, and shut off the main circuit breaker. Then, secure an escape route. If you are at home, keep the door open to ensure a clear exit. Do not rush out of the building, watch out for falling objects, and evacuate wearing functional clothing.

- If in the open-air, seek shelter immediately in an open space, away from buildings, street lamps and supply lines and remain there until the tremor is over. Should you be driving a vehicle, pull in immediately to the side of the street but away from buildings, trees, flyovers and supply pipes. Remain in the car for the duration of the quake.

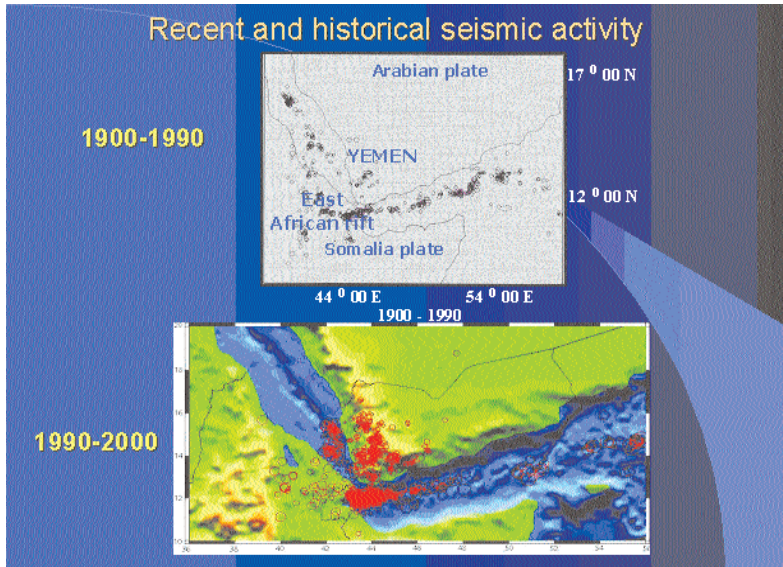


Figure 1: You will see the seismological history through 100 years (upper picture) and through the 10 years (lower picture) earthquakes locations recognized by international seismic stations.

About earthquakes

An earthquake is the sudden, sometimes violent movement of the earth's surface from the release of energy in the earth's crust. The crust of the earth when it is subject to tectonic forces, bends slightly. But, because the crust is rigid, when the stress or pressure exceeds the strength of the rocks, the crust breaks and snaps into a new position. Vibrations called seismic waves are generated and travel both through the earth and along its surface. These seismic waves cause the movement we call earthquakes.

Earthquakes are likely to occur within areas of the crust are fractures, known as faults, along which two crustal blocks have slipped or moved against each other. One block may move up while the other moves down, or one may move horizontally in one direction and the other in the opposite direction. Geologists and seismologists (scientists who study earthquakes and the processes that create them) have found that earthquakes occur repeatedly at faults, which are zones of weakness in the earth's crust.

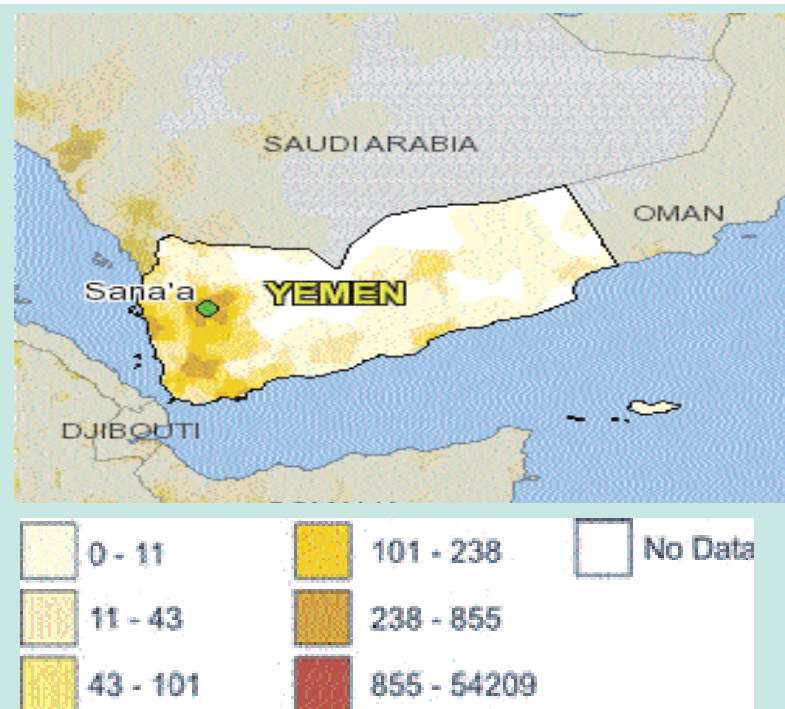
The surface of the earth is divided like a jigsaw puzzle into giant pieces called tectonic or crustal plates. These giant pieces move slowly over partially melted rock known as the mantle. As

they move, they slide along each other, move into each other, move away from each other, or one slips under another. On these active plate boundaries about 95% of all the world's earthquakes occur. California, Alaska, Japan, South America, and the Philippines are all on plate boundaries. Only 5% are in areas of the plates far away from the boundaries. These are called mid-plate or intra-plate earthquakes and are, as yet, poorly understood.

A magnitude 9.5 earthquake in Chile in 1960 was the largest known earthquake and resulted in over 6,000 deaths. It triggered a tsunami or seismic wave (incorrectly known as a tidal wave) that killed people as far away as Hawaii and Japan. Chile is also on a subduction zone. However, it was an earthquake in China in 1556 that caused the highest number of deaths and killed approximately 830,000 people.

Could earthquakes be predicted?

There is no way to accurately predict earthquakes, but forecasts have been calculated for different areas of the world. The difference between predicting and earthquake or forecasting it is that an earthquake prediction involves assigning a specific date, location, and magnitude for an earthquake. A forecast assigns a series of probabilities and a range of years and



Population map

SOURCE: UNEP/GRID GENEVA

magnitudes to a region. However changes in animal behavior could provide some indication of earthquakes. Changes in animal behavior before earthquakes have been observed and documented in different parts of the world, most recently in the northern California earthquake of October 17, 1989. It has been recorded that a fish in a high school biology lab in California would flip on its side before some

earthquakes. Dogs, cats, snakes, and horses has also been known to behave strangely before earthquakes. Since behavior is not earthquake specific, change in animal behavior can therefore result from other events, and it is impossible to determine beforehand what factor has caused the change. Also, the behavior is not consistent. Sometimes earthquakes occur with no previous behavior change.

Disaster Preparedness, Management and Recovery Programme

Disaster Preparedness, Management and Recovery is one of the thematic areas of the Yemen Government-UNDP Country Cooperation Frameworks that stretch from 1997 to 2006. The programme envisages a sustainable reduction in disaster risk to communities in multi-hazard prone areas of Yemen. A variety of components are proposed, which share a common aim to build national capacity, particularly through training. The key tasks are to initiate disaster planning, to assess risks and post-disaster needs, and to implement disaster risk reduction and recovery measures.

The overall budget of this programme is \$2.6 million. UNDP contributed \$750,000. The remaining is to be mobilized from non-core resources, including bilateral sources and government cost sharing.

Programme activities:

- The programme aims to strengthen disaster preparedness, management, response, and mitigation plans of communities, local governments, and district authorities all over the country. Specifically, it will support government efforts to:

- Help communities prepare contingency plans and train task forces for various activities in 20 governorates

- Form disaster management committees and teams at village, district, state, and national levels, including their approval and legal institutionalisation

- Facilitate disaster drills at all levels in September and May every year

- Prepare a disaster management plan, framework, and policy for the country and states, and facilitate sensitisation of all stake holders on disaster management

- Prepare and execute a National Training Plan for Disaster Management, including manuals and material for awareness, training and mainstreaming of disaster management in all training and school curricula

- Develop a national database on disaster risk management, a disaster resources network portal and risk and vulnerability indices for the country and states.

- Facilitate technology transfer in various sectors, such as disaster-resistant constructions, etc

- Hold consultations and studies in disaster risk management and global climate change linkages.

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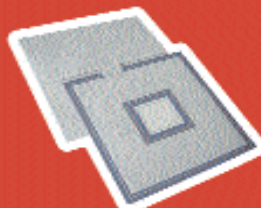
-Computer systems, accessories and appliances



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-Marriage cards and wedding appliances

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Yemen Scholarship Program

Sponsored by

Canadian Nexen Petroleum Yemen

As a reflection of their friendship and commitment to assist in Yemen's human resource development, Canadian Nexen Petroleum Yemen (CNPY) is pleased to announce a further 10 scholarships for post secondary study in Calgary, Canada. The Yemen Scholarship Program was originally initiated to celebrate CNPY's 10th anniversary in Yemen. To date, a total of 80 scholarships have been awarded to deserving Yemeni secondary school graduates. This highly successful initiative was extended in July 2006 to include an additional ten scholarships to be awarded by the Scholarship Steering Committee.

1. The ten (10) scholarship recipients will commence their respective study programs in September 2007 or September 2008.
2. Post-secondary study programs currently available for this scholarship competition:

Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)
4 Year Bachelor of Applied Technology Degree Programs

B.Tech - Computer Engineering Technology
B.Tech - Computer Technology

University of Calgary
4 Year Degree Programs

B.Sc – Electrical Engineering
B.Sc – Civil Engineering
B.Sc – Chemical Engineering
B.Sc – Mechanical Engineering
B.Sc – Manufacturing Engineering
B.Sc – General Mathematics
B.A. – Psychology
B.S. – Geophysics

3. To qualify for a scholarship all applicants must satisfy the following requirements:

- Must be a Yemeni citizen residing in Yemen for the past two years
- Age 17-22 years
- Must have English language skills
- Minimum of 80% overall average on secondary school certificate
- Commitment to undergo up to 400 hours of Yemen based English language training (if necessary)
- Commitment to return to Yemen after completion of his/ her studies in Canada
- Submission of all the required documents that are requested in this announcement

Selection Process:

Candidate selection will be based on high academic achievement, possession of English language abilities, and a personal interview. Both the University of Calgary and SAIT will not grant formal admission to their respective institutions until the scholarship recipient achieves a minimum TOEFL score of 220 (computer based exam) or 560 (paper based exam). Applicants who are in a position to sit for the TOEFL/ITP exam are encouraged to do so prior to submitting their applications. In order to broaden the accessibility of the scholarship program, high-achieving Yemeni secondary students from rural areas, who have not been able to access necessary English language training, are given the opportunity to complete intensive English language training at AMIDEAST in Sana'a or Aden (fully paid for by Nexen) if selected as a scholarship recipient.

For more details on the selection process, a detailed guide can be downloaded from the websites of Nexen and AMIDEAST (see section 4 of this announcement for more information).

Required Documentation:

- An application form completed in English
- Copy of secondary school grades or transcript
- Copy of personal ID card or passport
- Six certified passport sized photos

4. Scholarship application forms can be obtained from the following application distribution/collection centers :

AMIDEAST, Inc.
Algiers St., House No. (66)
Sana'a - Rep. of Yemen
Tel: 01-400279/80/81
Contact Person: Mr. Abdullah Al-Ghurbani

Mohamed Ali Othman School:
Near Road Constr. Authority
Taiz,
Tel: 04-223671/2
Contact Person: Ms. Samar Ahmed Moh'd

Hodeidah University
Hodeidah
Tel: 03-250600
Contact Person: Mr. AbdulKarim Al-Ward

AMIDEAST, Inc.
Khormaksar
Aden
Tel: 02-235069
Contact Person: Mr. Shakeeb AbdulHamid

Hadramout University:
University Campus, Al-Fowah Area
Mukalla, Rep. of Yemen
Tel: 05-360866/7/8 Ext. 112
Contact Person: Mr. Sabri Abdullateef Al-Shutri

Or you may download the application from either of the following:

http://www.nexeninc.com/Sustainability/Community/Yemen_Scholarships.asp

or

http://www.amideast.org/whats_new/announcements/nexen.htm

5. Completed application forms and requested documentation must be returned in a sealed envelope to any of the above noted application distribution/collection centers. Failure to comply with any of the information requirements will result in disqualification.
6. The closing date for accepting applications is **November 1, 2006**. Under no circumstances will applications be accepted after this date.
7. The Scholarship Steering Committee acting on behalf of Canadian Nexen Petroleum Yemen is committed to giving all Yemeni scholarship applicants equal, fair and competitive opportunities.

Al-Saqr Team

honoured at festival

TAIZ, Sept. 16 — Al-Saqr Team celebrated their first-ever Premier League victory with a festival last Thursday.

At Al-Shuhada'a Stadium the team celebrated with thousands of fans, schoolboys and schoolgirls and in the presence Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Dr. Rashad Al-Alimi, Ahmad Al-Umaisi, Chairman of Yemeni Football Federation and Minister of Youths and Sports Abdurrahman Al-Akwa'a.

The festival featured portraits about different sporting, heritage and cultural activities, which people have never seen in any sport clubs around the country.

Activities at the event covered reciting of national poems commending successful achievements reached so far by the team, which is led by Shawqi Ahmad Hayel.

The festival displayed a profile of the team's simple history, prior to



Al-Saqr Team

being led by Hayel, who supported the team lavishly and helped it attain commendable achievements. Thanks to Hayel's efforts, Al-Saqr Clubs has become a distinctive sport institution.

On the team's behalf, Hayel gave a speech in which he reviewed the club's profile and how it has become a distinctive sport institution with all the components of success and creativity.

Broken leg fears

for Hargreaves



Hargreaves will be missed by England if his injury is confirmed

England international Owen Hargreaves could face a lengthy spell on the sidelines with a suspected broken leg.

Hargreaves, 25, came off after 24 minutes of Bayern Munich's 2-1 league defeat by Arminia Bielefeld after colliding with opponent Thorben Marx.

"We think he may have a broken fibula. We will know more after an examination," said coach Felix Magath.

If the injury is confirmed, Hargreaves will miss England's matches against Macedonia and Croatia next month.

The midfielder, a transfer target for Manchester United, cemented his place in the England team at the World Cup.

Many questioned Sven-Goran Eriksson's decision to take Hargreaves to Germany in the summer, let alone start with the Canadian-born player.

But Hargreaves won over the doubters with a stellar performance in the quarter-final defeat to Portugal and has continued to shine in the three matches under new boss Steve

McClaren.

He has taken on David Beckham's number seven shirt in national colours and was also being courted by Sir Alex Ferguson.

However, Bundesliga champions Bayern blocked a potential move to Old Trafford after losing Michael Ballack in the transfer window.

Hargreaves was not selected by Magath as speculation over his future intensified, but since transfer deadline day on 31 August he has reclaimed a starting place in the midfield alongside summer recruit Mark van Bommel.

A first defeat of the season means Bayern slip back to third in the Bundesliga.

They were leading when Hargreaves went off following Van Bommel's early strike, but Bielefeld bounced back and grabbed all three points with a late winner from Jonas Kamper.

Source: BBC

US world championship leader grabbed

pole for the Australian MotoGP

The Honda rider lapped the 4.4km circuit in one minute 29.02 seconds, the fastest time of the weekend.

Kawasaki's Shinya Nakano was 0.23 secs back in second, ahead of title holder Valentino Rossi (Yamaha) in 1.29.27.

Hayden's team-mate Dani Pedrosa, second in the title race, could only manage the 10th fastest time of the session.

Italians Marco Melandri and Loris Capirossi, the only other contenders, were seventh and 13th respectively.

Hayden leads the world title race from Pedrosa by 22 points with four races remaining.

Rossi, who is chasing a sixth vic-

tory on the Australian circuit, is third, 26 points behind the American.

Hayden, 25, was happy with his fourth MotoGP pole, but said: "I need to find some better grip and better race pace. We've got some work to do, no doubt."

Italy's Rossi, third and 26 points behind Hayden in the standings, admitted an error had cost him.

"It was possible to get pole but I made a mistake on the final corner and I lost some time.



"Sure, Nicky is in front but we are close and we have a good setting for Sunday."

In Brief

Yemen hosts Weightlifters

Yemen's Economic and Commercial Capital, Aden hosts the Arab Weightlifting Championship, which involves Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Oman, Jordan, Somalia, Qatar, Kuwait and UAE. The event, scheduled for five days starting Sept. 15, includes competitions for men, women and youth, will take place in the closed hall in the morning and the afternoon everyday.

Aden clinches bodybuilding title

Aden's bodybuilding team won the top place of the Republic Championship, which involved 16 teams from different Yemeni governorates. The event was organized by the Yemeni Bodybuilding and Wrestling Federation in the capital Sana'a on Thursday. The competition involved the following weights: 60, 80, 75, 70, 65, and over 80 kg. The Aden team ranked first with 67 points, Sana'a second with 65 points and Hadramout third with 54 points.

Disappointing comeback for U17 football team

Yemen's under 17 football team returned from the Asian Cup of Nations' Finals, which ended last week in Singapore, with only one point. The team lost 1-0 to Iran in the opener, held Iraq to a 1-1 draw in the second encounter and was defeated 4-3 by Tajikistan in the final meeting.

Al-Telal prepares for Arab Champs away match

Al-Telal team from Aden prepares to play Molodyat Wahan from Algeria in an away game of the Arab Champs Round in Algeria. In the home meeting in Aden, Al-Telal drew the Algerian team 1-1.

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Al-Memdara: History of a bygone Yemeni handicraft industry



Al-Memdara in Aden.

By: Sara Abdulllah
Aden Bureau

Al-Memdara region in Aden historically is famed for its pottery industry extracted from the raw and natural soil. It formerly was one of Yemen's protected natural areas where one could find the thorny sesaban tree with small leaves used for kneading the mud to strengthen pottery during the production process.

In the past, Al-Memdara's *sesaban* and *asel* trees and peaceful habitat brought various bird species like hoopoe, Jawlaba and cow birds to the area, which afforded them safe breeding locations. However, the area was exposed to damage and increasing arbitrary construction, which didn't consider Al-Memdara's natural characteristics.

The area was named Memdara because of the local *madder* (pottery) industry, which excelled in the area. The area began with one family, who were the first professionals, then increased to seven families after British authorities wanted to construct an Adeni military communication post 2 km. east of Al-Memdara.

Al-Memdara also expanded in the 1960s when airport housing residents were resettled there via British military vehicles after a large fire damaged many airport residences.

Idrees Hanbla, owner of Hanbla Documenting Center in Aden, interviewed Sheikh Ahmed Mohammed Akbor in 1958 at one of Al-Memdara's pottery producing huts. Akbor said he settled in the area 30 years ago and began his craft there.

He explained that area pottery was

made from a mixture of mud and sesaban leaves kneaded by foot. The mixture then was shaped using conventional means to make various types of pottery like clay cookware, jars, *azeer* and *rushba* (used for drinking and saving water) and a pottery oven for baking bread. Such items first were produced as soft materials and then exposed to sunlight until firm. Later placed in special ovens to solidify, becoming light red-colored, the pottery finally was ready to market.

Al-Memdara was an excellent example of a Yemeni area that respected environmental rules, as Akbor carefully abided by British authorities' regulations at that time. Such regulations prohibited any destructive behavior toward standing trees.

However, following independence, several offenders severely damaged the protected area in 1990, attacking all of its

trees. No longer was Al-Memdara green and the birds that attracted both eyes and ears migrated elsewhere. All that remains now is the area's name and its recorded history as a home of Yemeni pottery.

According to one Al-Memdara potter, the area's pottery was exhibited at the first and most famous Yemeni fair in Leipzig, Germany before World War II.

Finally, Al-Memdara requires more state attention because it's historically known as the home of one of Yemen's traditional handicrafts. The area's natural environment, once rich with rare plants and birds, also should be cared for. The region needs official authorities and NGOs to protect its natural beauty and teach others its rich local history.

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