

# MEPA Newsletter

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 24, 2006 VOLUME 13, NUMBER 13



## MEDIA URGED CAUTION IN REPORTING CRIMES

JEDDAH, 23 June 2006 — Jeddah police chief Brig. Misfer Al-Zehami has called upon the media to exercise care when covering crime stories by only taking information from police sources and reporting on such stories only after the police have finished their investigations, Al-Riyadh newspaper reported yesterday.

Col. Misfer Al-Juaeed of the media department at Jeddah police, said that publishing news of crimes without waiting for investigations to be completed and without quoting credible police sources confuse and negatively affect probe.

He said, "Some criminal cases are under investigation and publishing information about them only help the criminals and make the job of the police even harder."

Al-Juaeed added, "Getting one-sided stories from eyewitnesses is not credible. You need to have correct information from authentic police sources who sometimes delay announcing their conclusions until they have ascertained the complete and full picture." Al-Juaeed gave an example of a report published recently in many Saudi newspapers about a young Pakistani woman who was allegedly raped by her father.

The colonel said that although the police investigating the case have not fully completed their inquiries but they have found the story to be quite different to what has been reported in the press.

Source: Arab News

## DUBAI POLICE CHIEF SLAMS PRESS FOR PUBLISHING 'BASELESS NEWS'

DUBAI — Lieutenant-General Dhahi Khalfan Tamim, Commander-in-Chief of Dubai Police, has warned that the consequences would be adverse if false and incorrect news was carried by some print media in the emirate without verifying their authenticity.

Publishing such news will not serve the country and the emirate, and disturb the law and order in the country, he said addressing a Press conference yesterday.

The approach of these newspapers is wrong and myopic, and would erode the credibility of the Press before the public, he observed.

Carrying such kind of news on the front page, apparently "with intent to confuse the public opinion" will not contribute in any form to the increase in the circulation of the newspaper or its sales since it is baseless and aimed at causing provocation at the expense of reality and public interest, he said.

"Such news create panic day after day in the ordinary citizen, who often gets scared of such misleading headlines," Lt-Gen. Dhahi remarked reacting to a report carried yesterday by a Dubai-based Arabic daily on a UAE national who went missing since 1993, and his heart-broken father passed away in agony after failing to find him again.

The report in the Arabic daily dated September 3, 1993, claimed that Ahmed Mohamed Al Marzouki left his residence at Al Safa neighbourhood in Dubai at sunset, and had not returned home since then. Neither Police nor his parents have cracked the mystery that shrouds his disappearance all these past years, the story read.



Lt-Gen. Dhani said such report was baseless as the police are carrying out investigations. The police had recovered some bones from a grave, which were sent for forensic and DNA testing.

The reports matched that of the deceased and the police said that the man was declared dead. However, a military medal was also found near the grave which probably belongs to one of the GCC country's armed forces, Dhahi said, adding, investigations are underway.

The report had also stated that the missing man's family members are still hoping for his return, especially his mother, who was not convinced by his long absence. With tears streaming down her cheeks when she remembered him, his mother is living on in the belief that her son would come back some day, the report which was splashed with a banner headline on the front page yesterday, stated.

"Ahmed is one among our nine brothers, and never left the neighbourhood. When he wanted to meet his friends, he took them to a house in the same neighbourhood as he was committed to return home and always took permission from his mother whenever he went out," his eldest brother, Hassan Al Marzooki, was quoted as saying in the report.

"We were worried the night Ahmed, who was 19, went missing and we did not inform the Police with hope that he would return next day. Our worries grew and we asked his friends, who said they did not know anything about his absence," Hassan recalled. "We, however, did not report the matter to Dubai Police then and did so only on the third day," he added.

Police, he said, spared no effort in looking out for him, and were "always in touch with us," he said. "After 15 days since we lodged a missing report, the law-enforcement authority told us that they had found his Mazda car parked in front of a hotel in Dubai."

According to Hassan, police have not so far unearthed any evidence that helped them to complete the search and investigation. Hassan, though, presumed that his brother must have parked his motor vehicle near the hotel and left along with someone to an unknown place. None of his friends, however, were missing.

Following a six-month search for Ahmed, Dubai Police had decided to close the file as there was no use looking for him any more. However, his family continued searching for him.

His brother expressed his heart-felt sorrow over the death of his father before seeing his son.

"My father died two years ago, after had been waiting for his missing son for the past 12 years during which he was undergoing deep sadness, which affected his health," Hassan said.

Ahmed's mother, who has been subject to treatment four times a week for stomach ulcer, simply said: "My son had no enmities and no criminal records."

She was sad because she does not know the fate of her son. "I have lost my flesh and blood, and I do not know whether he is dead or alive," the heartbroken woman is quoted as saying in the report.

Hassan refused to have his brother's picture carried in the paper afraid of hurting the feelings of his ailing mother, the report added.

**Source: Khaleej Times**



## **PRESS 'MUST TARGET YOUTH'**

The newspaper industry has to tune into the younger generation, those between 16-34 years old, to combat declining readership, according to presentations given at the First Annual Young Reader Round Table, held in Moscow.

The Round Table was being held on the sidelines of the 59th annual World Newspaper Congress (organised by the World Association of Newspapers WAN) which began in the Russian capital.

The head of the WAN said that his organisation had attracted criticism for choosing to hold its congress in Russia, where Russian President Vladimir Putin has been accused of clamping down on the media by human rights groups.

WAN chief Timothy Balding said that the newspaper group would take the opportunity to "reinforce our constant and repeated message that Russia needs a strong, free and independent media for its political and economic development."

Marcelo Rech, editor of the Brazilian Publication Zero Hora, which targets a youth readership, said that in 2005, 41 per cent of the readers fell into the age group of 10-29 years old.

In order for newspapers to attract this audience, they have to completely change their approach towards them.

Issues which are important in their daily lives must be reflected in newspapers and must be presented in a way that does not patronise them.

The Spanish newspaper El Mundo presented one of its most successful ventures, Aula, a publication that is directed solely for the 14-18 age groups.

It is an 8-page daily supplement, launched in 1999, and is delivered free to 4,000 schools in Spain and available to 300,000 students.

Bringing the publication to life would have cost El Mundo US\$4 million (Dh15 million). However, the publishing house managed to get the publication fully financed by sponsors, according to Tommaso Prennushi from the publishing house.

But this aspect of sponsorship raised concerns among some of the audience who expressed their reservations on the possibility of sponsorship influencing editorial content.

Aralynn McMane, Director of the WAN Young Readers Programmes warned editors and publishers that they needed to involve young readers in what goes on in the newsroom.

WAN awarded the Golden Pen of Freedom to the Iranian journalist Akbar Ganji, jailed for several years for articles implicating regime officials in the murders of opposition intellectuals and writers.

**Source: Gulf News**