

Letter from Jim Moore:

Dear Class,

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>The Internet is globalizing, and the culture of the
>Internet--entrepreneurial, forward-thinking, open--is traveling with it. In
>a sense, the web brings "water" and other nutrients to creative, energized
>people living in far flung places around the world--and connects them
>together into a loose, pan-global society of cultural activists.

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>As the web globalizes, social, political and legal issues abound. Local
>Autocrats don't appreciate the enhanced freedom of information and assembly
>that emerges in web-based networks of activists. Local Monopolists don't
>appreciate disruptive technologies and business models. For example,
>voice-over-Internet undercuts the whole complex of international telephone
>"settlements" that flow to developing world telcos.

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>As the Autocrats and Monopolists fight to retain control, the law is used to
>restrict the freedoms enabled by the Internet. Often this happens at the
>most basic level. For example, private satellite terminals are illegal in
>many parts of the world, in order to force international communications to
>flow through the monopoly, usually-state-controlled telcos. As the Internet
>flows through state-controlled computers, access to sites deemed subversive
>is blocked.

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>The good news is that the law can also be used to promote the freedoms
>enabled by the Internet. Anti-trust and competition laws can be used to
>challenge monopoly control of infrastructure. Freedom of speech and assembly
>on the web can be fought for and won. One's allies in this work form a
>strange mix: in addition to local entrepreneurs and attorneys, one works
>with NGOs and international aid organizations--such as the United Nations
>Development Program, with bilateral aid organizations such as USAID, as well
>as with the World Bank and other international financial institutions. In
>addition, certain multinational companies are very supportive. Technology
>companies such as HP, Intel, Cisco, Sun and Microsoft have proven quite
>helpful.

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>To get a feel for what is going on, consider the following: In early
>October I traveled to Jordan for a technology conference, and was mightily
>impressed with the open, pluralistic, competent community of people thriving
>there. Jordan can be an important source of BOTH technology people and
>open, innovative thinking for the entire Middle East. This is why Jordan
>matters.

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>I wrote up a brief trip report. Before I could send it out, a top USAID
>official was assassinated, non-essential US staff of projects began to be

>pulled out, and uncertainty about war in Iraq deepened. So I kept holding
>back sending out my little story, hoping for a bit more stability and
>information...
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>Then a few days before New Year, Robin Miller's more recent trip report on
>Jordan was referenced on Slashdot (Slashdot December 26, 2002). His story,
>which I commend to you, inspired me to go ahead and send mine out, as well.
>Both are similar in spirit and conclusion: Life goes on in the Jordanian
>tech community so far, despite the challenges. And life there is quite
>interesting!
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>So attached to this email is my trip report--complete with pictures! Please
>enjoy!
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>Warm regards, and see you on the 17th!
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>Jim Moore