

Using social media with a sense of civic duty

JUST like the girls have been banned from using certain words in the house, I have been banned from Twitter!

Well actually I was banned from checking Twitter or "tweeting" by my husband last year when problems began in Bahrain. I was especially asked not to go on Twitter at night, as he said it made me "too upset", "emotional" and "aggressively defensive" - which is not healthy before going to sleep!

To think that out of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of good honest tweeters out there, only a couple managed to ruin it for me.

And the dilemma was that even though I knew they were outright lying about everything they posted, I couldn't "unfollow" them. Instead, I allowed my blood to boil further by wanting to know what they were posting every five minutes.

Twitter, an online social networking or "microblogging" service, allows users to send and read text-based posts of up to 140 characters and was launched in July 2006.

The service rapidly gained worldwide

popularity, with more than 140 million active users as of this year generating 340m tweets daily and handling more than 1.6 billion search queries per day.

Twitter's rapid growth made it the object of intense interest and a fair amount of ridicule, with it being derided as high-tech trivia or just another time-wasting device, which I would have to agree with.

However, its use in Iran to organise protests and disseminate information in the wake of the disputed presidential election of June 2009 in the face of a news media crackdown brought it new respect.

Prince Walid bin Talal of Saudi Arabia recently announced he had taken a \$300m stake in the company, representing roughly three per cent.

Twitter has become an essential tool for following and understanding the momentous changes sweeping the world, specifically for us here in the Arab region. Although smart, fast and human while other sources feel a little impersonal, Twitter

has also become a tool for anyone and everyone to say what they want and how they want. It is almost like throwing the chips in the air, letting them fall where they may and standing back to watch the outcome.

But if there is indeed such a thing as a Twitter revolution in the Middle East, it's more to do with how the tool has transformed the way the outside world sees us in the region.

Twitter can be a great thing, if people say good things.

For example, in 2010 American comedian Stephen Colbert tweeted a link to support the environmental effort in the

wake of an oil spill off the Gulf of Mexico. The tweet took off like never before and got the crazy figure of 37,000 retweets.

However, when people have something to complain about, Twitter becomes a quick sounding board that can cause a viral Twitter fire. And this is why my husband banned me from tweeting at night!

I honestly used to look outside my window

while going through some of the tweets, doubting myself and wondering if there really was a war going on in my back garden - because according to some, we were under fire left, right and centre! If this wasn't enough, websites have also upped the ante where the potential for gossip is concerned.

Take Facebook, for instance. When you log in you have a whole homepage that summarises which friend said what to whom and who sent someone a virtual present.

When I log on, not only do I have to scan the dozens of "add new friends" requests that pile up in my inbox, but I also find friends who have poked me, tagged me, sent me fuzzy bunnies or cupcakes and others who have written on my wall!

However, love it or loathe it, we must come to the realisation that social media is not a game or a useless pastime, it is how people talk to each other today.

And because it is self-policing and gender neutral, there should be a strong sense of civic duty - of social consciousness - when using it.

By the way...
REEM ANTOON



Woman is jailed for killing lover

Passenger, 68 dies on flight to Indonesia

By ANIQA HAIDER

A COMMERCIAL jet made an emergency landing in Bahrain yesterday after an Indonesian passenger died on board.

The Royal Brunei Airlines flight was on its way from Saudi Arabia to Jakarta, Indonesia, when Abdulqadir Masan, 68, suffered a heart attack.

He had just completed an Umrah pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina with his wife Muslihah.

He died on board the flight, prompting the pilot to touch down at Bahrain International Airport.

Health

The 68-year-old's health had deteriorated in Saudi Arabia, Indonesian consular affairs head Rifqi Fikriansyah told the GDN yesterday.

"He died in the plane, which was flying from Jeddah to Jakarta and had to make an emergency landing in Bahrain," he said.

"An emergency team took immediate action and transferred the body to the Salmaniya Medical Complex morgue.

"We will arrange the repatriation after getting the death certificate and completing legal formalities.

"The airline has agreed to help us repatriate the body.

"His wife was moved to a hotel and their relatives in Bahrain are consoling her.

"She will accompany the body to Jakarta."

Family festival at Marina Club

A FAMILY festival is lined up tomorrow at the Marina Club, in Manama, from 3pm to 10pm.

It will feature face-painting, henna artists, a DJ, traditional bazaar, pet show and swimming.

Entry costs BD1 for adults and is free to children under 15.

By NOOR ZAHRA

A WOMAN who claimed she was acting in self-defence when she stabbed her lover to death in a knife frenzy was yesterday convicted of manslaughter.

Judges found that she had used too much force because of the size of the knife and the location of the dead man's injuries.

The 30-year-old Indian was jailed for three years and six months by the High Criminal Court, which also fined her BD100.

She was jailed despite claiming that she only fought back after coming under attack from her boyfriend - who she said stabbed her a total of 13 times after accusing her of having an affair.

The incident happened last December while the couple were drinking at a house in Riffa.

Her boyfriend accused her of seeing someone else before grabbing a 17cm knife from the kitchen and stabbing her twice in the stomach, according to court documents. The woman said she screamed and begged him to stop, but he stabbed her four more times in the same place.

She managed to get to the kitchen and pick up a 27cm knife, which she repeatedly plunged into his stomach and chest as he continued stabbing her - before he collapsed in a pool of his own blood.

The woman, who was also convicted of living in Bahrain illegally, will be deported upon completion of her sentence.

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■ Mr Al Khan, sitting, at the book signing

Book explores pearl diving heritage

A BOOK highlighting Bahrain's pearl diving heritage was launched yesterday at Al Riwaq Art Space, Adliya.

Photographer Abdulla Mohammed Al Khan signed copies of *The Book of Pearls*, which has been researched and compiled by Hussein Mahroos.

Mr Al Khan started his career as a photographer in the

1950s after being inspired by his father.

In 1962, he became a professional photographer and started to record the history and development of Bahrain.

He is the founder of Bahrain House of Photography, which has more than a million images of Bahrain and other GCC states over the last 40 years in its archives.