

## business

# Al Khobar becomes first Mena city to pilot 5G

● The 5G ultra-high speed mobile broadband is set to revolutionise the internet in the years ahead

The National | Al Khobar

Al Khobar, a city in Saudi Arabia's oil-rich Eastern Province, became the first city in the Middle East and North Africa to test 5G wireless connectivity after it launched a pilot project last week, the Kingdom's Ministry of Culture and Information said.

"Because the capabilities of this technology are very high, it will pave the way for the development of other technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), virtual reality and robots," the ministry cited a United Nations telecoms body report on the pilot as saying. The 5G ultra-high speed mobile broadband is set to revolutionise the internet in the years ahead.

Developing next-generation broadband and other communications technologies is one of the pillars of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 economic diversification plan to reduce the country's



Al Khobar to award 5G licences to operators by end of 2019. - Pic Bloomberg



Launch will pave way for entry of technologies such as Internet of Things, virtual reality and robots

dependence on hydrocarbons. A sophisticated digital infrastructure is seen as crucial to supporting the development of the private sector and creating jobs for Saudi nationals. The Kingdom set up the National 5G Taskforce last year with the aim of overseeing the administrative, regulatory and other changes required to introduce next-generation mobile broadband. Led by a steering committee, it oversees the progress

and engages with stakeholders including the government, telecoms operators, equipment vendors etc. Al Khobar's pilot was subsequently launched after Saudi Arabia's national telecoms regulator, the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC), issued licences for testing a 5G mobile network using 100 megahertz (MHz) channels with a bandwidth of 3.6-3.8 gigahertz (GHz) – the speeds required for 5G.

# Riyadh to exclude German firms from govt tenders

● Move likely to hit Siemens, Bayer and Boehringer Ingelheim as well as carmaker Daimler

● Saudi Arabia is a significant trade partner for Germany, generating 2017 exports worth 6.6 billion euros (\$7.7 billion), according to Germany's statistics office

Middle East Monitor | Riyadh

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has ordered that no more government contracts be awarded to German companies, in a sign of continued irritation over Berlin's foreign policy in the Middle East, German magazine Der Spiegel reported on Friday.

Citing no sources, it said the move was likely to hit major companies such as Siemens, Bayer and Boehringer Ingelheim as well as carmaker Daimler.



Saudi Crown Prince

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Siemens last year won an order worth around \$400 million to deliver five gas turbines for a combined heat and power plant being built in Saudi Arabia. Daimler soon after secured an order for 600 Mercedes Benz Citaro buses from Saudi bus operator SAPTCO.

A senior German businessman in Saudi Arabia, who asked to remain anonymous, told Reuters on Friday that especially the healthcare sector was currently feeling added scrutiny when applying for Saudi tenders.

# Qatar bans products from Arab Quartet



Inspectors will visit stores to insure compliance with the ban. Pic Bloomberg

Bloomberg | Doha

Almost a year after Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut ties with Qatar, the country has decided to stop consuming goods from its rivals.

Qatar's economy ministry ordered shops to strip shelves of products imported from the four countries, according to a circular sent yesterday.

Inspectors will visit stores

to insure compliance with the ban.

A spokesman for the economy ministry didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt cut economic and diplomatic ties with Qatar on June 5, accusing the country of financing terrorist groups, having close ties with Iran. The rift forced Qatar to shift import routes to Kuwait and Oman, and buy goods from Iran and Turkey.

# Egypt bans YouTube for a month

IANS | Cairo

Egypt's top administrative court ordered yesterday to block YouTube streaming website for one month over hosting a video that denigrates Prophet Muhammad of Islam, the Egyptian lawyer who filed the lawsuit said.

"The ruling is final, unappealable and enforceable," Xinhua quoted lawyer Mohamed Hamed Salem as saying. A lower administrative court has previously ordered the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) to do so, but the latter appealed against the ruling, citing it was hard to implement.

The top administrative court rejected the NTRA appeal on Saturday and upheld the temporary ban as a final, unappealable ruling.

The lawsuit dates back to 2013 when the Egyptian lawyer demanded to ban YouTube in Egypt until the offensive clip on Prophet Muhammad (PUBH) and other anti-Islamic videos are removed. "The ruling is a punishment for YouTube website that will cost it massive economic losses," Salem said.

The controversial video first appeared on YouTube in 2012, raising a wave of anti-American outrage in the Muslim world.

# Alwane Bahrain teams up with 'Khair Plus'



Emad Al Asfoor and Ammar Awachi

TDT | Bahrain

Alwane Bahrain Society has joined hands with "Khair Plus" initiative to promote it among women societies and female volunteers. The initiative will provide a professional website along with a package of solutions that includes payments solutions, for societies to utilize without bearing any cost. Ammar Awachi, chairman of Alwane Society, said that a package of IT support that "Khair Plus" avails is also offered to female entrepreneurs, businesswomen and businesses that run social responsibility projects to develop the community. Awachi emphasized on the importance of extending the proper support to women who run civil societies, entrepreneurs, businesswomen in order to shift

their mindset toward a knowledge-based economy and utilization of new tech trends in order to maximize the benefit. Emad Al Asfoor, CE of Bab Al Bahrain company, the proprietor of "Khair Plus" said that the initiative in its 4th phase was able to provide more than 40 civil societies with e-payment solutions and funds management with high accuracy and transparency. Al Asfoor added that he is proud of the achievement made so far.

Al Asfoor shed light on the importance of cooperating with Alwane Bahrain Society to maximize the efforts to reach out to the targeted audience being, in this case, female entrepreneurs, businesswomen and women societies for the purpose of encouraging them to take advantage of the new digital solutions.

# Kuwait's VAT delay is credit-negative: Moody's

The National | Kuwait

Kuwait's decision last week to delay the implementation of VAT is "credit-negative" for the country as it signifies a slowing down of fiscal reform efforts amid rising oil prices, according to a Moody's report.

The decision may cost Kuwait up to 1.6 per cent of its \$114 billion of gross domestic product in foregone revenues, although the net fiscal effect will more than offset by the recent rise in oil prices, the rating agency said.

"The decision clearly illustrates how if oil prices remain around their current levels, the resolve for reform among some GCC countries is likely to weaken," the report said. "It significantly increases the probability that some countries may delay or even cancel their VAT plans."

Kuwait announced last Tuesday it would delay the introduction of a 5 per cent VAT until 2021, three years after the original implementation date agreed with the other GCC countries to reduce their dependence on oil revenues. Only Saudi Arabia and the UAE have implemented it so far, while the remaining countries have notionally agreed to implement it this year or at the start of 2019.