



A musical evening was held on Saturday at Arab Organisation headquarters building, Shuwaikh by the Spanish Embassy to mark the 400th anniversary of Don Quixote De La Mancha.—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Majority of mothers see children’s appreciation as the best gift

By Zainab Al-Doukali

KUWAIT: Children across the Arab World will express their love to their mothers today as they celebrate the Mothers Day. Most children think that doing the house chores is the best gift they can give their mothers. Many families begin the celebration with breakfast in bed, serving the mother’s favourite meal. Others prefer to take their mother out for dinner to her favourite restaurant. In addition, children do not forget to buy a present and leave a love letter on her pillow. Kuwait Times spoke to a number of women and asked them about what they wanted and expected from their kids on this day.

Mothers in general like to feel that their kids appreciate their efforts. Fatma Khaled said, “I don’t want my kids to give me any present. Knowing and feeling that they appreciate my role in the family and show me respect and gratitude is enough for me.” Another mother told

Kuwait Times, “Last year, my kids wrote me love letters. I really appreciated that, and I hope that they do the same this year. I believe that there is nothing more impressive than expressing your feelings. ‘You are the best mother in the world’ is all I want to hear.”

When it comes to love and tenderness, nobody can deny the fact that mothers care more about their children than fathers do. Mona Ahmed told Kuwait Times, “Last year, my kids prepared a special day for me. They didn’t allow me to do anything in the house and they took care of everything. It was a wonderful day and I felt that they were prepared to do anything in order to satisfy me.”

Mona who has six children said that she doesn’t want anything except to see her kids grow and take on the challenges of life. She said, “I raised my kids in a specific way, and I hope that they will be able to depend on themselves. I want to see the results of what I invested all

these past years.”

A Kuwaiti mother, who was overwhelmed with tears while speaking about her son said, “My son used to celebrate this day with me every year, and each time he tried to express his appreciation and his love for me. I just want to see him soon, and I hope he comes back during the next few months. He studies in the United States and I haven’t seen him for months. I don’t want anything; I just want to see my boy. I really miss him.”

Some people take the opportunity of such an occasion to make up for their mistakes, especially those who have tasted what it is really like to raise kids; they have realized a mother’s real value. Sumaya Mohammed told Kuwait Times, “I hope make it up to my mother, because I didn’t before. Now, I have kids and I understand what it means to care for your children. My mother sacrificed a lot for my sake, I hope I can make it up to her.”

## KISR completes project

KUWAIT: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research completed a project that involved assessment of level of non-natural colorants in foods in the local market and assessing consumption rate of these in children aged 4-14.

KISR General Manager Dr Abdelhadi Al-Etaibi yesterday said the project, co-financed by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and the Ministry of Health, included surveys of foods consumed by

3934 male and female students, Kuwaitis and others, over a 24-hour period twice in the academic year 2001-2002.

The results prompted the team who conducted the study to recommend adjustment of current permitted levels of additives and setting of a limit for colorants in particular in food items. There was also a recommendation to conduct a study to assess the health complications resulting from high consumption

of these additives by young children.

The team urged promotion of awareness on effect of consumption of preservatives, colorants and other additives in food on health and particular emphasis on younger consumers through all media. This must coincide with, they stressed, considerable encouragement of proper production and healthier food products by local industries. —Kuna



Kuwait choir at the rehearsal on Saturday.

Sheikh Sabah contacts Doha leaders

# Kuwait offers to help Qatar in face of terrorist threats

KUWAIT: Kuwait, which strongly condemned Saturday’s blast that rocked Qatar killing one person and injuring several others, expressed solidarity with the Doha authorities and pledged to support them in any way required. Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said Kuwait “is prepared to put all its means at Qatar’s disposal because any-

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Cabinet held its weekly session yesterday presided by the Prime Minister and economic and human development issues of domestic significance dominated the session.

The ministers began business with review of a letter to Sheikh Sabah from the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau Carlos Gomes Jr. concerning boosting of relations between the two states.

The ministers then reviewed the results of the 53rd session of the ministerial production review committee and the 135th OPEC ministerial meeting in Isfahan, Iran. Energy Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad also

reviewed the results of deliberations on the record crude oil prices and Opec’s efforts to counter this situation.

Closer to home, Justice Minister Ahmad Yaqoub Baqer reviewed ministry accomplishments, specifically opening of six justice services centres to facilitate procedures for citizens.

The centres offer services that cover notification of absentia criminal sentences, payment of fines and penalties, payment of bail, imposing and lifting of travel bans, depositing of funds of alimony and child support sums, and issuing of testimony of good conduct certificates and much more. This step is calcu-

lated to highly relieve pressure on ministry resources, staff and time.

There was also the issue of boosting Kuwaiti sports standards and the cabinet approved a cooperation agreement on youth and sports issues with the government of Venezuela and also gave approval on signing the Copenhagen Declaration on Anti-Doping in Sport.

The issue of citizens’ claims to State property and progress in related cases also came up and the ministers reviewed the concerned committee’s administrative, organizational and technical recommendations.

The ministers also approved

the resolutions listed in the report of the committee charged to the duties of the municipal council.

Assembly agenda and issues was also given due stress and there was also the usual review of reports on the recent Arab and international political developments.

The cabinet also reviewed the details of an agreement signed with the Islamic Republic of Iran, virtue of which the latter is to supply Kuwait with natural gas.

Energy Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Ahmad pointed out the agreement would have the beneficial effect

of taming down cost of fuel used in energy production as well as conserving the environment, in addition to the obvious of supplying the State with its need of natural gas.

The ministers also expressed approval over steps taken so far concerning marine LNG import.

The ministers also addressed the issue of a legal and judicial cooperation agreement between the two states and the cabinet approved the concerned draft law and referred the matter to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah prior to referral to the parliament. — Kuna

## Saudi reform programmes going well

JEDDAH: Dr Abdullah Omar Naseef, former deputy chairman of the Shoura Council and former secretary-general of Muslim World League, has said that women driving is not un-Islamic and could be introduced in the kingdom gradually, beginning with cities such as Jeddah and Riyadh.

Naseef also said that Saudi Arabia’s reform programmes were going well and he described the municipal elections as a good beginning. “Next time, there will be elections to regional councils and the Shoura Council. We don’t know when but they will come,” he said.

Referring to the newly amended Naturalization Law that allows expatriates who have been living in the Kingdom for more than 10 years to apply for Saudi citizenship, Dr. Naseef said priority would be given to those who have been here for decades and whose families are divided as well as to professionals required by the country.

Dr. Naseef, who is also vice chairman of the King Abdul Aziz National Dialogue Centre, emphasised the important place of women in Islam. “Women enjoyed equal participation in every field in the early days of Islam. Later people drifted away from Islamic teachings and denied women their basic rights but that should not be blamed on Islam,” he said.

“Depriving women of their rights should not be allowed. At the same time, women should be aware of religious teachings and should not behave in an un-Islamic way. Some things are indeed un-Islamic and create problems. These problems are present in the West which did not realize their danger until it was too late. We don’t want the same thing to happen here,” he added.

Dr. Naseef continued, “The participation of women in elections, their membership of the Shoura and other things such as driving will come gradually. People are afraid that if they allow women to drive, it will create confusion but a gradual introduction is possible in order to avoid problems. It may not be a problem in Jeddah or even in Riyadh. In other areas, it may cause unnecessary confusion and dissatisfaction.” “There is nothing in Islam that prevents women from driving,” he added.

Dr Naseef downplayed the poor turnout of voters in the nationwide municipal elections. “In the course of time, more people will register and take part in voting. People usually are reluctant and busy with their own affairs. - Arab News

### KUWAIT DIGEST

## Women’s issue shifting balance of political power

By Raymond Barret

Power, like gravity, is a natural force that has certain universal characteristics regardless of where you might be on the globe. While its basic principles may not be subject to change, the level of power that particular groups enjoy in relation to one another does tend to be more dynamic in nature.

The last few weeks in Kuwait have witnessed one such shift, as the various Islamist groups that exist both inside and outside parliament have seen their political girth decrease slightly, over one issue in particular. But of all the contentious ideas milling around Kuwait and the Middle East at the moment, what issue of national importance has caused this particular fuss? Is it state security, given the violent clashes the country has witnessed between police and so-called jihadists over the last few months and the subsequent government crackdown on certain Islamist organisations?

Is it the issue of foreign shareholders in the development of the northern oil fields, which will be of paramount importance to the long-term development of Kuwait? Is it about future dealings with Iraq and whether these relations will take place within or outside the GCC? The answer, as you may already have guessed is no.

The phenomenon that has pushed the government to remind parliament that it retains the right to dissolve the elected body is women’s suffrage and the possibility of women holding political office.

The recent months have seen a variety of so called liberal legislation to counteract a perceived swing towards fundamentalism in certain political circles. However, the past has shown that enacting new laws in Kuwait does not necessarily mean that

they are going to be enforced. For example, it might surprise some people on their next visit to a ministry to find out that smoking in government buildings was outlawed years ago. Also, the use of mobile phones while driving along with compulsory seat belt use are other reminders of how rigorously some laws are pursued.

However, this time the government seems to be intent on seeing these electoral changes through even though they are deemed by some to pander to a western agenda. A recent law outlawing unlicensed charities from collecting money has seen the disappearance of that traditional Kuwaiti landmark, the Islamic charity booth from such areas as Fahaaheel and Salmiya.

All of these government initiatives have been very played out in the public arena. The government has supported a large media campaign on state television and radio supporting women’s rights. On top of this, there have been reports and pictures in local newspapers showing the aforementioned charity booths being removed from the streets by officials from the relevant ministry.

However, the cliché states that all politics is local, and the fact that the government seems to have a won on issues such as Kuwaiti Mujahadeen fighting in places like Iraq and Islamic charity work overseas is no guarantee that Islamist groups will be as easily dissuaded on an issue much closer to home, that of political rights for their mothers, wives and daughters.

A demonstration outside parliament last week saw over 500 people support the government on the issue of granting women voting rights, though a proposed counter demonstration by groups opposed to this never took place. Whether they are biding their time or accepting the inevitable is something that remains to be seen.

## Love for music building cultural bridges

By Velina Nacheva

KUWAIT: All it takes to be a part of Kuwait Singers is to have a genuine passion for singing. The 53-member mixed choir of amateur singers go through once a week rehearsals to deliver beautiful music with a professional flavour.

Its members represent all walks of life, teachers, journalists, engineers, doctors, businesspersons and housewives. They hail from all over the world and belong to all age groups, from teens to mid-60s. For Mike Kempster, the music director and conductor of the choir, it is “a thoroughly enjoyable bunch of people to be with”.

“Kuwait Singers is a fun choir and this is the overriding feature,” Mike said, adding that the atmosphere at rehearsals is enjoyable, so is the time spent on stage during concerts.

“Love for music and willingness to attend a two-hour weekly practice is what the singers share in this choir,” Mike explained. He also said that only little homework was

needed for learning the lyrics of the musical pieces. Reading music is not necessary for the singers, he pointed out, adding, nor is it mandatory to possess a perfect voice. “There is as much coaching and hints to get the best out of a voice as possible,” he revealed.

Bulgarian Irina thoroughly enjoys being part of the choir and says her motivation to join them sprang from her undying passion for music. “I come here to sing and for two hours I completely forget everything else. The obvious lack of cultural life in Kuwait is thus wonderfully compensated,” she said gushingly.

Mike has his own reason to be involved and committed to Kuwait Singers. As he puts it, “we all come for the joy of singing and then return home completely refreshed”.

Mike, who is the choir’s director for the last four years, humbly refers to himself as “the idiot who stands with his arms around”. In his typical British sense of humour he introduced to Kuwait Times everyone who enters the rehearsal venue at the Gulf English School in Rumaithiya. “He is South

African, he is from Wales, he is from Austria, not Australia or she is from the US.” Mike goes on with a smile, as the singers come in one after the other for their weekly rehearsals.

He then introduced the Columbian Juan Saavedra, chairman of the ‘decision-making committee’ saying, “This is a very nice gentleman”.

Armed with his 22 years’ experience in teaching music back in the UK, Mike reveals he has been involved with music for ‘as long as he could remember’. About his devotion to Kuwait Singers, he remarked, “when it stops being fun I will pack up”. For Irina, who joined the choir two years ago, Mike is a great leader with liberal ideas and creative approach who makes the atmosphere extremely pleasant”.

Nicolette, a South African in her 30s, joined the choir a year ago but says she has the same motivation - her love for music. A music teacher by profession, she says she gets fulfillment, pleasure and fun from being part of the group. “It is a nice breakaway and

it is something to look forward on a Saturday evening. It is a relief from work, the kids and also it is just being yourself.” Nicolette said, adding that it is also a chance to learn about other countries and cultures.

The predominantly expatriate choir is a diverse mixture of people from 22 nationalities, different professions and backgrounds. There are slightly more females in this mixed group of singers and the bigger part of the singers are teachers, be it music, drama or language. “You name it and they are here,” Mike says referring to the choir making up of South Africans, Australians, Bulgarians, French, New Zealanders, Austrians, Koreans, Indians, Romanians and others. “It seems that Kuwait Singers are predominantly an English speaking group,” Mike said. However, the repertoire of the choir is not restricted to compositions in English only. An example for a variety of styles, languages and genres is the concert to be held in mid-May, which will include two English pieces and the rest will be in Spanish and probably Italian.