



This photo received yesterday courtesy of the Irving Police Department shows a handmade clock made by teenager Ahmed Mohamed. — AFP

MUSLIM SCHOOLBOY ARRESTED IN US FOR HOMEMADE CLOCK

CHICAGO: A Muslim schoolboy arrested in Texas after a teacher mistook his homemade clock for a bomb won invitations to visit the White House, Google and Facebook yesterday amid a surge of public support. President Barack Obama congratulated Ahmed Mohamed, 14, on his skills in a pointed rebuke to school and police officials who defended his arrest amid accusations of Islamophobia. "Cool clock, Ahmed. Want to bring it to the White House? We should inspire more kids like you to like science. It's what makes America great," Obama tweeted.

A photo of Mohamed standing in handcuffs while wearing a t-shirt with the US space agency NASA's logo was retweeted thousands of times in a matter of hours and "#StandWithAhmed" became the top trending hashtag on Twitter. The son of Sudanese immigrants from Irving outside Dallas, Mohamed told the Dallas Morning News he hoped to impress teachers by bringing the clock to school on Monday.

'They Took It Wrong'

"My hobby is to invent stuff," the teen said in a video posted on the paper's website, filmed in his electronics-filled bedroom. "I made a clock. It was really easy. I wanted to show something small at first... they took it wrong so I was arrested for a hoax bomb." Mohamed loved robotics club in middle school and was hoping to find something similar at MacArthur High school, but did not get the reaction he hoped for when he showed the clock to his engineering teacher. "He was like, 'That's really nice,'" Mohamed said. "I would advise you not to show any other teachers."

When the clock's alarm went off in another class, his teacher told him it looked like a bomb and confiscated it. The school called the police and Mohamed was taken away in cuffs amid suspicion he intended to frighten people with the device.

Police said yesterday they have determined that Mohamed had no malicious intent and it was "just a naive set of circumstances". Irving police chief Larry Bond insisted that Mohamed's ethnicity had nothing to do with the response. "Our reaction would have been the same either way. That's a very suspicious device," Bond told reporters. "We live in an age where you can't take things like that to school."

He insisted officers did the right thing when they handcuffed Mohamed and brought him to a juvenile detention cen-

ter for questioning. All prisoners are handcuffed for their own safety, Bond said, adding "unfortunately we've had people jump out of cars".

A school district spokeswoman also stood by the establishment's response, telling reporters that anyone who saw the homemade clock would understand that "we were doing everything with an abundance of caution." A photo provided by police to local media showed a flat, rectangular red digital clock face screwed into the dark plush interior of a silver case along with a circuit board and some wires.

'Bring Your Clock'

White House spokesman Josh Earnest called the incident an opportunity to "search our own conscious for biases that might be there." "At least some of Ahmed's teachers failed him," he said, adding that "this has the potential to be a teachable moment". The Council on American-Islamic Relations said the heavy-handed response was suspicious given the political climate in Irving, where mayor Beth Van Duyne has claimed that Muslims are plotting to impose Sharia law in America. "This all raises a red flag for us," said Alia Salem, who directs the council's North Texas chapter.

Wired magazine was among those who responded to the incident with a mixture of humor and horror, posting an article entitled "How to Make Your Own Homemade Clock That Isn't a Bomb". Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg told Mohamed to "keep building," saying: "I'd love to meet you." Zuckerberg may have to wait. Along with the invitation to astronomy night at the White House next month, Mohamed also got invitations to drive NASA's Opportunity rover and visit Google. "Hey Ahmed - we're saving a seat for you at this week-end's Google Science Fair...want to come? Bring your clock!" the online giant tweeted.

Mohamed's family launched a Twitter account yesterday to thank his supporters using @StandWithAhmed as his handle. "Thank you fellow supporters. We can band together to stop this racial inequality and prevent this from happening again," read a tweet that included a photo of the smiling boy in his NASA t-shirt holding two fingers up in the sign of victory. The hashtag #StandWithAhmed had been tweeted over 370,000 times by early afternoon yesterday, Twitter said. — AFP

MP ASHOUR URGES PROBE INTO 'ABDALY' CELL...

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In another development, the constitutional court postponed for the second time a highly anticipated ruling on a gender segregation law at educational institutions. The court set Sept 30 for the next hearing. The court is looking into a challenge by a Kuwaiti lawyer against the law enacted about 15 years ago that requires segregation between male and female students at universities. The lawyer insists that the law is not in line with the Kuwaiti constitution, which calls for equality.

Separately, the family of Kuwaiti Guantanamo bay detainee Fayeze Al-Kandari said that a committee

responsible for Guantanamo detainees recently informed them that Fayeze would be released soon. Notably, Kandari's case was reviewed at a recent hearing and Kuwait's embassy in the US confirmed that his release process was going on according to plan.

Meanwhile, chairman of the Guantanamo detainees' families committee Khalid Al-Odah said that along with lawyer Eric Lewis, they were notified of Kandari's release within 45-60 days, if all goes normal. Odah added that the US defence secretary would notify Congress in writing about the council's decision pending turning Kandari over to Kuwait authorities, where he would be subjected to the same procedures his fellow detainees had undergone on returning home.

SAUDI POLICE ARREST TWO MILITANTS AFTER SHOOTOUT

WEAPONS, BOMB BELT SEIZED

RIYADH: Police in Saudi Arabia said yesterday they had arrested two suspected militants and were hunting two others who fled following shootouts and raids that netted automatic weapons and a bomb belt. The gunfire occurred in separate districts of Riyadh on Tuesday night as officers pursued an investigation into "deviant groups", the interior ministry said in a statement. Saudi authorities use the term to refer to Islamist extremists, although the ministry did not specifically mention any group.

The raids came after a series of attacks this year claimed by the Islamic State group that killed dozens of people in Saudi Arabia. Two suspects opened fire and threw a grenade at police trying to arrest them in a residential area in the capital's Monsia district, the ministry said. Ahmed Al-Zahrani, 21, and Mohammed Al-Zahrani, 19, were detained.

At the second location, a Saudi coffee shop in Riyadh's Dharma district, the suspects tried to flee in a vehicle after spotting the police. "They then heavily opened fire at security officers," who shot back and disabled their vehicle, the statement said. The suspects then "seized a citizen's vehicle by force and took off in it."

Television pictures showed forensic police examining a pick-up truck with bullet holes in its windshield. Officers found a bomb belt in the truck, the interior ministry said. As the manhunt continued, Al-Ekhabria television showed police checking cars on a highway. Searches of the residential complex and coffee shop revealed a laboratory potential used for bomb making, several automatic rifles and pistols, ammunition, more than 400,000 riyals (\$106,000) in cash and "sketches of targeted areas," the ministry said.

The incident occurred days before next week's hajj pilgrimage in western Saudi Arabia. The event is expected to draw about two million Muslims from around the world. In the latest attack claimed by IS, 12 members of a police special weapons unit and three workers died during prayers when a suicide bomber infiltrated a mosque at their headquarters in the southwestern city of Abha in early August.

Another IS-affiliated group, "Najd Province", said it carried out attacks on Shiite mosques in May that killed 25 people in the kingdom's Eastern Province. Najd is the central region of Saudi Arabia. The same group claimed a June attack in Kuwait which killed 26 Shiite worshippers and wounded 227. IS last year seized large parts of Iraq and Syria, where they have carried out widespread atrocities and inspired attacks elsewhere in the world. The Sunni extremists of IS consider Shiites to be heretics. They have also singled out Saudi police for attack.

Saudi Arabia and its Sunni Gulf neighbours last year joined a US-led military coalition bombing IS in Syria. In July, the interior ministry said it had broken up an IS-linked network and arrested more than 430 suspects involved in attacks and plots. Last December, police arrested three alleged supporters of IS for shooting and wounding a Danish citizen. The resurgence of extremist violence comes a decade after Al-Qaeda waged a campaign of shootings and bombings against foreigners and Saudi security personnel. — AFP

ARAB SOLIDARITY, FEAR OF IRAN BRING GULF TROOPS TO YEMEN

MARIB DESERT IS KEY GATEWAY TO HOUTHISHELD SANAA

SAFER, Yemen: The glitzy skyscrapers and 21st century comforts of Dubai feel very distant from the barren sand dunes of Marib in central Yemen, the latest strategic prize in a regional power struggle pitting the wealthy Gulf Arab states against Iran. But Salem, who plies the featureless landscape in an SUV that pulsates with American hip hop music, has no regrets about joining thousands of other young soldiers from the United Arab Emirates in one of the poorest corners of the Arab world.

"Me, I don't know very much about Yemen, but Sheikh Mohammed knows much more and we must do our duty," said Salem, referring to the ruler of Dubai who is also the prime minister of the UAE. "I know Yemen's an important country and next to all of ours. Whatever happens here we can't ignore - it will spread to Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. Iran won't stop until it spreads its Persian empire over everywhere here," said Salem, a bearded youth wearing a camouflage head wrap and designer sunglasses.

Armed with high-tech Western weaponry, Gulf Arab soldiers are fighting with newfound determination against what they see as the expanding influence of Iran, their non-Arab and Shiite arch-foe, in a war that has ravaged Yemen for six months. The oil-producing province of Marib has become a key battlefield between Iranian-allied Houthi militia and a coalition of Yemenis and Emirati, Saudi and Bahraini troops. Marib forms a gateway to the Yemeni capital Sanaa 120 km to the west, which the Houthis seized last year.

Mindful of similar sectarian-fueled conflicts fragment-

ing other Arab states such as Iraq and Syria, the Gulf Arab and Yemeni fighters see their common cause in Yemen helping to revive a sense of Arab solidarity. "They're not foreigners to us, they're brothers," said UAE-trained Yemeni soldier Abdul Wahad Al-Shadaddi, sitting in the bed of a Toyota pickup with comrades who, like him, tote AK-47s and have bandoliers of bullets draped over their shoulders. "For six months we've fought and suffered in Marib, keeping just a few small districts until they came to our aid. Because they fight for a just cause, God will grant them and us victory, and our province will be ours again in two weeks."

The coalition wants to restore a Yemeni government ousted by the Houthis in March, a development seen by the Sunni Gulf Arab states as a sign of Shiite Iran's expansionist intentions. Tehran denies providing military support to the Houthis. The coalition intervention in Yemen was initially limited to air strikes but now also includes a ground war and, despite the Gulf Arabs' far superior firepower, it is not proving easy.

A Houthi missile killed more than 60 Gulf Arab troops stationed in Marib province on Sept 4, including 52 Emiratis, the worst loss ever suffered by the UAE military, one of the most advanced in the Arab world. The losses have deepened the sense of personal engagement in the war among the Gulf troops. "We're not going to forget our blood. It's now a personal thing for the soldiers, (even though) we came to support the Yemenis," said Brigadier General Ali Seif al-Kaabi, commander of UAE forces in the area. — Reuters

KOC TO START OFFSHORE OIL EXPLORATION

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Attar noted that the company has a strategic goal to boost its output of free gas by roughly one billion cubic feet per day as planned according to discovery operations, and to make use of high technology in the improvement and development of oil exploration and production. Attar was quoted saying by KUNA Kuwait still wanted to lift output capacity to 4 million bpd by 2020 and sustain this level to 2030.

KOC's investment chief Mohammad Al-Abdeljaleel said the company has recently completed several oil and gas projects in northern Kuwait. Concerning future projects in north Kuwait, he said the company would set up three new production centers, a new water center and a water injection and treatment center. In western Kuwait, the company has completed projects in the field of oil gathering, acid gas treatment and refining. Abdeljaleel pointed out. — Agencies

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