

## Local

## War of rumors



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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It is no secret that the world is going through a real crisis both globally and regionally, because the situation is delicate and critical. The problem is not in the crisis itself, because it can be resolved quietly behind closed doors. But rumors can easily shatter morale by creating unnecessary concern amongst the public.

Rumors are known as a means of psychological warfare. This makes it a threat to small societies such as ours, especially when some add their own views, wishes or comments as reliable sources. There is no doubt that news spreads quickly today, whether bad or good, due to the presence of social media and the proliferation of satellite TV and a large number of mobile devices. The rumor may be military, political, economic or social, but remains a method of psychological warfare.

These days, because of the volatile situation in the Gulf region, rumors abound, touching events such as war and political relations, which affects people and what goes on behind closed doors. It is difficult to read the political scene and economic situation in the Gulf region because it is not possible to predict what could really happen in the next few months and what the situation will be.

Recently, rumors have begun to increase. No one denies the tension in the Gulf region as well as in US-Iranian relations. This has a negative impact on the region, not because it is a sign of a devastating war, but because people worry about their future and lives. The fact is that war in any Gulf or Arab country will ignite the whole region with a war in which no one will emerge victorious and which will cause victims, in addition to damaging vital security facilities.

Any calls for war and conflicts undermines the importance of dialogue and diplomatic solutions, either by hinting or by declaring openly, so I hope everyone will not rush to disseminate abusive opinions and conclusions that could fuel the situation and increase anxiety among the people.

A rumor can be transmitted verbally or through the media, and is intended to break morale. It has an effective speed and influences people's minds and emotions. It tampers with them by formatting public opinion, making it one of the most important means of psychological warfare.

I believe that the speed of the rumor depends on the transparency of the government in dealing with it. Lack of quick transparency and clarification by government agencies and the dissemination of right information can make rumors grow. I do not agree with those who demand legal deterrence against those who spread rumors, especially on mobile devices or social media, because minds do not have walls. By educating people about any rumor, especially ones that are affecting the political or economic situation, the government should bear its responsibility for clarification and transparency.

I wish from everyone to be wary of transmitting false information that would destabilize the security of a country or state, and pay close attention to people who use their time to spread rumors, whether religious or intellectual, which is very dangerous.

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Hundreds of craftsmen work in various fields in the traditional Souq Al Mubarakia. Here we see tailors at their sewing machines. \_ Photos by well known photojournalist Saleh Taqi

## Scammers target perfume buyers



IN MY VIEW

By Nawara Fattahova

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Scammers work through a variety of means to make their money off unsuspecting victims. From emails to telephone calls to whatsapp messages. In the Gulf we suffer a lot from scammers, both based in the region and ones working in neighboring states.

A new scam in Kuwait is targeting women via telephone calls. Sellers of counterfeit perfumes are making cold calls to local numbers, then pretending to be from well known local perfume shops. They offer 'promotional' rates on luxury brand perfumes and free delivery to your home.

Ibtisam is one of those who bought these perfumes, as the caller convinced her she can exchange any of the perfumes that she didn't like at the local store. "When I received the phone call, I was doubtful about the genuineness of these perfumes, but when the caller assured me that I can exchange them at the well-known store if I change my mind, I trusted him, as I didn't imagine he could be lying," she told Kuwait Times.

After telling her friend about this great promotion, she

was shocked by her response. "My friend said she is sure that this offer is a scam, as this popular store doesn't have a delivery service and doesn't need to hold such promotions as it's already very much frequented by customers. So I had doubts and went to the store to find the truth. Unfortunately, the store's staff told me I wasn't the only one asking about this, as tens of people had come with a similar complaint," explained Ibtisam.

"I paid KD 39 for three perfumes, which are worth over KD 90. After what they told me at the store, I realized the perfumes I bought are counterfeit. So I didn't even open them and gave them away as gifts to my young niece. I tried to call the number of the seller, which was a landline, but they never answered. I didn't file a case at the police station as my husband refused to let me file a complaint," she concluded.

Visiting this store, the staff told Kuwait Times many people had been complaining about the fake perfume delivery scam since July. The saleslady said the management filed a case at the police station, as these scammers are spoiling their reputation by using the name of their store.

Fake perfumes usually have a similar smell as the real fragrances, but are much less intense. So if the original perfume lasts for a couple of hours, the fake perfume will disappear after a few minutes. Fake perfumes are also available at traditional markets and exhibitions, and never cost more than KD 5. So be careful and don't get scammed by random callers offering discounted perfumes!