

FASTTELCO ORGANIZES FRIENDLY GATHERING FOR STAFF

KUWAIT: FASTtelco, Kuwait's leading internet service provider, held a breakfast gathering in Jumeirah Hotel for its employees and upper management earlier this week. The friendly get-together was headed by CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Thani, who lauded the employees of FASTtelco for their hard work and dedication throughout the past months, culminating in the release of several customer-centric products and services that target different customers' needs.

The CEO also reiterated the company's commitment to developing its human resources, who are considered the main drive behind any company's success, adding that in light of current international trends, the telecom and digital services sector plays a vital role in the lives of many people from different sectors. FASTtelco recently launched new fixed high-speed internet plans on a postpaid basis, breaking away from the limitations of traditional prepaid yearly payment. Starting from KD 11 for an unlimited



capacity of internet, the plans range in speed from 10 Mbps to 100 Mbps, making use of the increase number of areas covered with fiber optics. Customers

who opt for the fixed internet service will enjoy an unparalleled reliable speed of internet at their home, with flexible payment mode on a monthly basis. All plans

offer an unlimited capacity of internet with no daily or monthly cap.

FASTtelco also launched a fully equipped state-of-the-art data center. The announcement comes to further reiterate FASTtelco's commitment to being one of the leading companies in information technology solutions, and the company of choice for prospective clients searching for ICT solutions, catering especially for the needs of corporate and businesses. FASTtelco will provide a suite of managed hosting services tailor-made to fit corporate and business needs.

These services are ideal for corporate and businesses looking to better manage their data, platforms and applications. The new data center provides end-to-end IT solutions to customers in various sectors including financial, healthcare, media, e-commerce, educational and governmental. The center is fully equipped to deliver an exceptional experience in services and solutions like managed CPE, cloud services, NOC and

operations, data center consultancy, and much more.

This is especially important today, where businesses are faced with growing challenges to respond efficiently to new digital trends in IT, security and control. FASTtelco strives to be the trustworthy choice among its growing customers as it continually transforms its services to meet the needs of the digital world, ensuring peace of mind with end-to-end solutions and 24/7 NOC, in addition to opportunities for scalability and maximum return of investment.

FASTtelco recently announced its new identity earlier this month, adopting a refreshed look with vibrant colors and a new design. The move comes to change the ISP's market by introducing innovative products and plans that fulfill customers' growing needs through technology. FASTtelco was recently acquired by Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of the international Ooredoo Group, in a move to bolster the telecom service provider's presence in the Kuwaiti market.



FRANCE: A picture taken in Cournon-d'Auvergne on the outskirts of Clermont-Ferrand, shows an hologram of French presidential election candidate for the far-left coalition La France insoumise Jean-Luc Melenchon gesturing during a campaign meeting. —AFP

FRANCE'S MELENCHON RETURNS WITH CAMPAIGNING HOLOGRAM

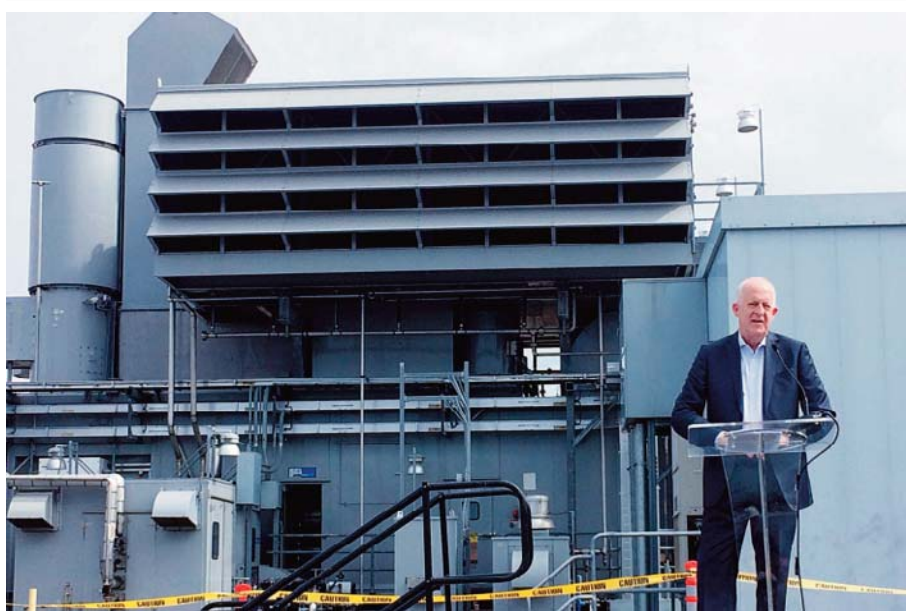
DIJON, France: French presidential candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon made a return to hologram campaigning Tuesday, beaming himself and his far-left message to six cities as far away as the overseas territory of Reunion. For his last major rally before Sunday's nail biting first-round vote, the resurgent left-winger killed seven birds with one stone by transmitting his onstage appearance in Dijon to crowds in Nancy, Grenoble, Montpellier, Clermont-Ferrand, Nantes and Le Port on the Indian Ocean island of Reunion.

The Communist-backed firebrand has made a surprise breakthrough in recent weeks, with polls suggesting he has a shot at a place in the May 7 run-off as the race has dramatically tightened. Far-right leader Marine Le Pen and centrist Emmanuel Macron have led for weeks, but polls now show a four-way race with the two frontrunners tied on 22-23 percent, conservative Francois Fillon on around 21 percent, and Melenchon surging as high as 20 percent.

Melenchon and his holograms used

Tuesday's rallies to hammer home his program, which includes huge spending increases and a pledge to renegotiate all European Union treaties, to crowds totaling 35,000 people across France, his team said. "The people's program is about being able to live off your work with dignity, to be looked after when you're sick, to be able to stop working when it's time," he said. And he took a swing at the super-rich, deadpanning: "Being a billionaire does nothing for personal happiness. It's just an accumulation of worries, which we'd want to take away."

Melenchon's program promises greater job protection and a 100-percent tax on personal earnings over and above 400,000 euros (\$430,000). He denied that his euro skeptic stance amounted to wanting to leave the bloc, saying: "Don't believe what they tell you." A tech-savvy campaigner with more than a million Twitter followers, Melenchon turned heads in February when he first made simultaneous hologram appearances at campaign rallies, a first for a French presidential campaign. —AFP



CALIFORNIA: Ron Nichols President of Southern California Edison (SCE), talks during a news conference at the SCE Center Power Plant in Norwalk, California. —AP

CALIFORNIA UTILITY LAUNCHES FIRST HYBRID POWER SYSTEMS

NORWALK: A California utility has launched unique systems combining a hybrid battery and gas turbine to produce and store electricity for use during hot summer months and other times when power demand soars. The new Hybrid Electric Gas Turbines are the first of their kind in the world, officials with Southern California Edison and manufacturer General Electric said during an event Monday near Los Angeles. The new systems will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution by 60 percent and save millions of gallons of cooling water annually, Edison said.

There were no numbers on how much consumers might save. But officials said increased reliability and the reduced environmental impact will lead to significant cost reductions for the utility, which will be passed on to customers in the form of low-

er bills. Edison President Ron Nichols said the twin systems that went online March 30 operate somewhat like a hybrid car - drawing first on the battery, then switching over to the gas turbine if power demands spike.

Energy output is combined between turbines and new 10-megawatt lithium-ion battery storage units. As a result, the systems do not burn fuel when they're on stand-by, significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. And they can be turned on immediately to push power into the grid to compensate for outages or increased demand. "The battery is there at the flick of a switch," Nichols said. The systems are running in Norwalk and Rancho Cucamonga at plants built to provide extra juice following an especially hot summer that strained the grid. —AP

FACEBOOK WANTS TO AUGMENT YOUR REALITY

COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGES INTO REAL-WORLD SURROUNDINGS

SAN JOSE: Facebook wants you to sit in your bedroom wearing a headset and take a virtual vacation with faraway friends and family. Or use your smartphone's camera to spruce up your dinky apartment, at least virtually. The promise of augmented and virtual reality was a big focus of Facebook's annual conference for developers on Tuesday. CEO Mark Zuckerberg kicked off the gathering of programmers and other tech folks by talking about augmented reality tools he envisions on Facebook. Augmented reality involves the overlay of computer-generated images into real-world surroundings. Zuckerberg said new phone-based applications might let you create a three-dimensional scene from a single two-dimensional photo or splatter the walls of your house with colorful digital art. (You'd see the digital additions by looking "through" your phone at the augmented physical world.)

Making chores more interesting

Facebook executives stressed that the technology is still in its early stages, and that the "journey to the future of augmented reality is just 1 percent finished," as Deb Liu, vice president of platform and marketplaces, put it. Zuckerberg envisions the marriage of augmented reality and Facebook's camera feature enabling people to make even mundane chores, like doing the dishes, look entertaining with digital effects. Of course, it could also result in people staring into their smartphones even more intently as they marvel at an alternate reality instead of their actual surroundings. "Over time, I think this is going to be a really important technology that changes how we use our phones," Zuckerberg predicted. Facebook also launched a virtual world, called Facebook Spaces, designed to let users of its Oculus Rift VR headset hang out with avatar versions of their friends in a virtual world. It's the first time the company has connected the Rift to its social network in a meaningful way, though it's a development Zuckerberg hinted at when the company bought Oculus back in 2014 for \$2 billion.

Coming your way... Eventually

While the new tools and features are impressive, analyst Jan Dawson of Jackdaw Research cautioned that that "most of them won't be in users' hands anytime soon." That's especially true for the Spaces app, since relatively few of Facebook's 1.9 billion members are using



CALIFORNIA: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg speaks at his company's annual F8 developer conference in San Jose, Calif. —AP

Oculus's VR headset, which sells for about \$500 and requires an expensive computer to make it work. But Facebook could still have the edge on rivals such as Snapchat, which also launched some augmented reality features on Tuesday, likely to coincide with Facebook's news.

"Facebook has the resources to move fast in this area and the audience to spread those features much more widely than Snapchat," Dawson wrote in a brief research note. Snap representatives did not immediately respond to an email for comment on Tuesday afternoon. Facebook's focus on smartphones over high-tech glasses or headsets makes sense given how familiar they are, said Gartner analyst Brian Blau. "People already have cameras and are used to having fun and being creative with them," he said.

"This will give people a chance to experience augmented reality in a way that isn't so scary or off-putting." Until the past year or so, it seemed like it would be at least another decade before augmented reality would have a chance to become a widely used technology, said Ficus Kirkpatrick, Facebook's director of engineering.

But advances in image and object recognition, along with the ubiquity of smartphone cameras, "has put us on the course to bring augmented reality," Kirkpatrick said in an interview.

Chatting with companies

Facebook also announced a bevy of updates to Messenger, its increasingly independent messaging app. Messenger head David Marcus claims the app has become the de facto "white pages" of messaging, since people can find and chat with friends without knowing their phone number. Now, Messenger wants to do the same for businesses, creating a "yellow pages" of sorts that let companies communicate with their customers. Messenger will also let people chat with outside businesses as a group. That would, for instance, allow groups of friends to share Spotify playlists or to make a restaurant reservation through OpenTable that keeps everyone on the same page. The idea is simplify what might otherwise require a flurry of texts and sharing of links. —AP

ONLY 5% OF LARGE COMPANIES TO MEET IT REQUIREMENTS OF THE NEW DIGITAL BUSINESS

DUBAI: Dell EMC announced the results of a new study conducted by Enterprise Strategy Group (ESG), which revealed that a majority of senior IT leaders and decision-making managers of large companies surveyed around the world indicate their organizations have yet to fully embrace the aspects of IT transformation needed to remain competitive. While there is a clear imperative for companies to transform their legacy IT, digital transformation is becoming the driving force to making IT transformation a top priority.

However the ESG 2017 IT Transformation Maturity Curve study commissioned by Dell EMC shows 95 percent of survey respondents indicate their organizations are at risk of falling behind a smaller group of industry peers that are transforming their IT infrastructures, processes and delivery methods to accelerate their goals of becoming digital businesses. Many organizations still measure application cycle times in months, if not years; have isolated infrastructures; and continue to grapple with rigid legacy architectures - all barriers to undertaking a successful digital transformation.

"These findings mirror how the vast majority of customers are telling us they need to optimize their existing infrastructures to take advantage of digital-age opportunities," said Mohammed Amin, Senior Vice President, Middle East, Turkey and Africa at Dell EMC. "However, the

research shows that most respondents are falling behind a small and elite set of competitors who have cracked the IT Transformation code, and they're competing more vigorously because of it. As organizations progress in their IT Transformation investments, they can overcome the conflict between legacy IT and digital business initiatives to real-



Mohammed Amin

ize their goals, speed time to market and increase competitiveness."

The ESG 2017 IT Transformation Maturity Curve study was designed to understand the role that IT Transformation plays toward becoming a digital business. ESG employed a research-based, data-driven maturity model to identify different stages of IT

Transformation progress and determine the degree to which global organizations have achieved those different stages based on their responses to questions about their organization's on premise IT infrastructure, processes and organizational alignment.

Based on the global survey responses, the 1,000 participating organizations were segmented into the following four IT Transformation maturity stages: Stage 1 - Legacy (12 percent): Falls short on many - if not all - of the dimensions of IT Transformation in the ESG study. Stage 2 - Emerging (42 percent): Showing progress in IT Transformation but having minimal deployment of modern data center technologies. Stage 3 - Evolving (41 percent): Showing commitment to IT Transformation and having a moderate deployment of modern data center technologies and IT delivery methods. Stage 4 - Transformed (5 percent): Furthest along in IT Transformation initiatives.

The majority of respondents (71 percent) agree that IT Transformation is essential to ongoing business competitiveness. Of the "Transformed" companies, 85 percent believe their organizations are in a "very strong" or "strong" position to compete and succeed in their market over the next few years contrasted with 43 percent of the least mature companies. The "Transformed" organizations report the most progress in leveraging IT resources to speed product innovation and time to market; automating

manual processes and tasks; and running IT as a profit center rather than a cost center.

These companies: 96 percent exceeded revenue targets last year, more than two times the least mature. Are eight times more likely than the least mature organizations to report a highly cooperative relationship between IT and the business. Made "excellent progress" running IT as a profit center rather than a cost center (seven times more likely than the least mature). Are seven times more likely than the least mature organizations to have IT viewed by the business as a competitive differentiator. Leverage IT resources to speed product innovation and time to market (six times more likely than the least mature organizations).

According to ESG, the adoption of modern data center technologies, such as scale-out storage systems and converged/hyper-converged infrastructure, can improve the agility and responsiveness of infrastructure provisioning. IT project delivery and application development. The study found: 54 percent of all respondents use converged or hyper-converged infrastructure to support applications. 58 percent of all respondents have adopted scale-out storage systems in some capacity. Roughly 50 percent of respondents are committed to software-defined as a long-term strategy and have begun to implement, evaluate or plan for software-defined technologies