

Kuwaitis celebrate 11 years of Amir's reign



'Awesome' Serena beats Venus to set Slams record



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TRAVELERS DETAINED, BARRED FROM FLIGHTS TO US AFTER TRUMP BAN

7 COUNTRIES HIT • SYRIANS BANNED INDEFINITELY • CHRISTIANS EXEMPT

Min 06°
Max 19°
High Tide 13:52
Low Tide 07:23 & 19:08



(Left) US President Donald Trump - with Vice President Mike Pence (left) and Defense Secretary James Mattis (right) watching - signs an executive action on 'extreme vetting' at the Pentagon in Washington on Friday. (Right) An Iraqi man stands next to an ad for a 13-day trip to the United States at a travel agency in the capital Baghdad yesterday, a day after Trump signed the executive order to suspend refugee arrivals and impose tough controls on travellers from seven mainly-Muslim countries, including Iraq. — AP/AFP

IMMIGRATION CURBS CAUSE CHAOS, PANIC, ANGER WORLDWIDE

MIX OF DESPAIR, RESOLVE FOR US MUSLIMS

WASHINGTON: Four days after President Donald Trump was inaugurated, mental health counselors hosted a webinar on how their fellow American Muslims could cope. They surveyed the political landscape: a White House framing Islam itself as a threat, a surge in anti-Muslim hostility and suspicion of immigrants in general. The counselors offered tips such as limiting time on social media. And they cautioned against withdrawing in discouragement, worried about losing whatever foothold Muslims have gained in public life since the crucible of Sept 11. "It's very easy to tell a story of victimization, fear, feeling ... not welcome in our own home," said Ben Herzig, a Massachusetts therapist with a specialty in Muslim mental health. "But the narrative of Islam in American can be a positive one." While many express alarm at Trump's statements, Muslim leaders are

pushing back. They are organizing protests, hosting elected officials at their mosques, building ties with other faith groups and encouraging Muslims to run for elected office. Many of these initiatives had been planned before the general election, but have taken on a new urgency since then.

Trump signed an executive order Friday setting "new vetting measures" to keep "radical Islamic terrorists" out of the United States. The order indefinitely stopped Syrian refugee and immigrant entry into the US, suspended all refugee entry for four months and suspended refugee admissions for three months from countries with terror concerns, naming majority-Muslim nations including Iraq, Syria and Iran. The new president and his supporters say his measures are needed to strengthen national security.

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NEW YORK: In this Jan 25, 2017 photo, Muslim women shout slogans during a rally against President Donald Trump's order cracking down on immigrants living in the US at Washington Square Park. — AP

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's sweeping ban on people seeking refuge in the United States and visitors from seven Muslim countries caused confusion and panic among travelers yesterday, with some turned back from US-bound flights. Some who were already in the air when Trump signed the executive order were detained on arrival, the New York Times reported. Immigration lawyers in New York sued to block the order, also saying numerous people have already been unlawfully detained.

The new Republican president on Friday put a four-month hold on allowing refugees into the United States and temporarily barred travelers from Syria and six other Muslim-majority countries. He said the moves would protect Americans from terrorism, in a swift and stern delivery on a campaign promise. The ban affects travelers with passports from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. "I'm establishing new vetting measures to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States of America. Don't want them here," Trump said. "We only want to admit those into our country who will support our country and love deeply our people," he said.

Trump's executive order specifically says no visas will be issued for 90 days to migrants or visitors from the seven Muslim-majority countries. It also bars Syrian refugees from the United States indefinitely, or until Trump himself decides that they no longer pose a threat. "This is big stuff," he declared at the Pentagon, after signing the executive order entitled "Protection of the nation from foreign terrorist entry into the United States." Trump's order also cut the number of refugees the US plans to resettle in fiscal year 2017 - which is calculated from last October - from 110,000 to 50,000.

The action prompted fury from Arab travelers in the Middle East and North Africa who said it was humiliating and discriminatory. It drew widespread criticism from US Western allies including France and Germany, Arab-American groups and human rights organizations. Iran condemned the order as an "open affront against the Muslim world and the Iranian nation" and vowed to retaliate. Of the seven countries targeted, Iran sends the most visitors to the United States each year - around 35,000 in 2015, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

The ban extends to green card holders who are authorized to live and work in the United States, according to Gillian Christensen, a Homeland Security spokeswoman. It was unclear how many green card holders would be affected, but exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis. Legal residents of the United States were plunged into despair at the prospect of being unable to return to the United States or being separated from family members trapped abroad. Immigration lawyers worked through the night to help stranded travelers and enforcement at entry points was uneven.

"I never thought something like this would happen in America," said Mohammad Hossein Ziya, 33, who came to the United States in 2011 after being forced to leave Iran for his political activities. Ziya, who lives in Virginia, has a green card and planned to travel to Dubai next week to see his elderly father. "I can't go back to Iran, and it's possible I won't be able to return here, a place that is like my second country," he said. Saleh Taghvaeian, 36, teaches agricultural water management at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, said he feared his wife will not be able to return from Iran after a visit.

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KUWAIT DROPS 36 PLACES IN LATEST DEMOCRACY INDEX

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kuwait dropped 36 places in the 2016 Democracy Index compared to a year before, the second sharp fall in international indices in less than a week after the state dropped 20 spots in the 2016 Corruption Perception Index.

Kuwait ranked 121st out of 167 countries worldwide and eighth among Arab countries in the latest edition of the Democracy Index released by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), down from 85th worldwide and second in the Arab World in the 2015 index. Most notable was the fact that the drop in Kuwait's ranking also meant a demotion of its category. The United States was also demoted from a 'full democracy' to 'flawed democracy'.

Meanwhile, the top five democratic nations according to the index are Norway, Iceland, Sweden, New Zealand and Denmark respectively. The bottom five are Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Chad, Syria and North Korea. In the Arab World, Tunisia remained in first place (69th worldwide) followed by Lebanon (102), Morocco (105), Palestine (110), Iraq (114), Mauritania (117), Jordan (117), Kuwait (121), the Comoros (124) and Algeria (126).

In the 2016 Democracy Index, the average global score fell to 5.52 from 5.55 in 2015 (on a scale of 0 to 10). Some 72 countries experienced a decline in their total score compared with 2015, almost twice as many as the countries which recorded an improvement (38). The other 57 countries stagnated, with their scores remaining unchanged compared with 2015.

PLENTY OF ROOM FOR 'BAD DUDES' AT GUANTANAMO

GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba: It's been almost a decade since the last detainee landed at Guantanamo Bay. Most of the jail's camps are now mothballed and the inmate population is down to just 41. But after years of shrinking operations at the notorious military prison, commanders are now bracing for a potential U-turn under the new administration of President Donald Trump.

Trump has said he wants to load up Guantanamo with "some bad dudes," and a draft executive order circulated by US media this week suggests he is poised to indefinitely halt all detainee releases, including five men who had been cleared for transfer under his predecessor Barack Obama. "We are planning for all contingencies," prison spokesman Captain John Filostrate said. "We are able to transfer detainees - or take more detainees - at a moment's notice."

Trump has also said it would be "fine" if US terror suspects were sent to Guantanamo for trial, and the executive order arguably opens the possibility that Americans, even those arrested in the United States, could end up here. Filostrate, who stressed he has not received any new orders, said Guantanamo could easily take about another 200 detainees if needed. Trump has provided few specifics about his Guantanamo plans, but the draft executive order says the facility is a "critical tool" in the fight against "radical Islamist groups."

About 780 men have been held at Guantanamo since it opened in 2002, and most of the basic infrastructure that housed them remains. New inmates would be primarily housed in Camp 6, a medium-security facility that opened in 2006 at a cost of \$37 million, where the bulk of the current 41 inmates are detained. The facility sits close to the blue Caribbean coast and its outer perimeter is a chain-link fence covered with sniper netting and topped with razor wire.



In this Feb 2, 2002 file photo, a detainee from Afghanistan is carried on a stretcher before being interrogated by military officials at the Camp X-Ray detention facility at the Guantanamo Bay naval base in Cuba. — AP

Other new arrivals could be held in Camp 5, a detention facility that was closed last year as the population dwindled. It currently is being repurposed as a medical center. Filostrate said other prison camps could quickly be reactivated if need be, though most likely not the infamous Camp X-Ray. — AFP