



PHOTOS: MAJEED MOHAMMED

BEYOND BORDERS: The Belgian bloggers meet in Bahrain.

Which explains the sheer dynamism in some of the entries in the Bahblog community. The Bahrain blogosphere truly cuts through geographical divides. Bahrainis living outside the Kingdom, expats who once lived here, all continue their love-affair with the country through blogs. Some of the seasoned bloggers in Bahrain have for the last 18 months been meeting regularly to exchange views.

And the recent international meet which had bloggers from Belgium — some of them meeting face-to-face for the first time — underscored what blogs have indeed achieved: Break down barriers (except blocks, but of course).

Frederik Haentjens, who initiated the international bloggers meet along with Mahmood, says that even if some bloggers chose to remain anonymous, it is possible to develop your own community because through constant interaction one starts recognising the writing style, the vocabulary, and punctuation or the lack of it... "This meeting is a perfect example of blogging breaking down virtual and reality barriers."

Some of the Belgian bloggers, who were in Bahrain run "shocklogs" — weblogs to produce shocking discussions by posting various shocking content. "They have a specific audience," explains a shocklogger. "We try to provoke people and get reactions with moderators keeping a balance between what is right and wrong. With a shocklog, things could be so radical that if, for example, you open with saying you have a yellow flower, at the end of five

BLOG VS DIARY

Bloggers still debate on where a personal diary ends and a blog starts. The essential character of a personal diary — personal — is lost in blogs, obviously. The Internet is abuzz with the blogs vs diary debate with the more creative ones coming up with elaborate differences between the two.

Here is from vaidehinatu.blogspot.com: "It (diary) follows the rhythms and tunes of only one soul. Should a diary be this open so anyone can access it...? ... once everything goes on-line, things become less personal and more generic..."

For the uninitiated

Blogs (for weblogs) are web-based publications consisting primarily of periodic articles normally in reverse chronological order. Blogs range in scope from individual diaries to arms of political cam-

ments, it would have become blue... People tend to start on political debates even when the subject is not related to it."

Mahmood calls his blogs — in English — as "bridge blogs" that aim to bridge cultures. For him, every blog is a reaction. "I am not creating news but responding to news that provokes

paigns, media programmes, and corporations: Wikipedia

John Berger coined the word 'weblog' in Dec. 1997. Peter Merholz condensed it to 'blog' in 1999.

Blogging became as easy as a three-step process with the launch of Blogger by Evan Williams and Meg Hourihan.

(Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>)



blog has never been blogged. "I don't censor myself, I believe in freedom of expression and constructive journalism. I am not a professional journalist but I know where the lines are."

He doesn't mind holding a point of view even if it is controversial as long as it leads to a constructive platform. In essence, he is for freedom of expression that comes with social responsibility. "I ought to be responsible. For better or worse, I am looked at and sometimes emulated."

The satisfaction from blogs, most bloggers agree, comes from the comments to their posts. Mahmood says the experience of reading the first comment to his post was "unbelievable — here was someone actually reading my rambling."

Mahmood feels that blogs have become alternative media that sometimes even gives out news breaks. "Blogs are not just alternative media; it is citizen journalism." Reiterating the credibility factor of blogs, he says, "Very rarely do you find a blog that does not link to a reference or refer back to the source of original idea..."

He rates Kuwaiti blogs as exciting in content and style; Omani blogs as "nice and mushy," Saudi blogs as "careful and cautious," the UAE ones as occasionally "interesting" but with too many snooty bloggers, and Qatari blogs as "non-existent."

But Bahrain does take the crown for sheer vibrancy: "There is nothing we don't write about..."

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BLOGGERS... A WHOLE NEW WORLD