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QEWC to operate Umm Al Houli project from July

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In brief

QATAR | Decision

Health certificates for laundry workers to stop

The Ministry of Public Health announced that the Department of Medical Commission will stop issuing the annual health certificates for laundry workers as of the beginning of March. They will only be obliged to undergo medical examinations at Medical Commission when they enter the country for the first time for the purpose of obtaining a work visa. The decision is in accordance with the recommendations of the concerned authorities in the ministries of public health, municipality and environment, and economy and commerce, since laundry workers' job does not pose a danger in the transmission of infectious diseases.

QATAR | Music

Singer al-Kubaisi wins Golden Panther award

Well-known Qatari musician Fahad al-Kubaisi won the 'Best Male Khaliji Singer Award' at the Golden Panther Music Awards 2018 in New York, US. The artist posted a message of thanks on Twitter along with a picture of him with the award. The Golden Panther Music Awards are described by the organisers as "the world's biggest fan-voted" award show, which pay tribute to "today's most influential and iconic" artists. Besides being a singer, al-Kubaisi is also known as a "record producer, fashion model and human rights activist".



ARAB WORLD | Conflict

Russia calls daily truce in Eastern Ghouta

Russia called a daily "humanitarian pause" in Syria's Eastern Ghouta, bowing to pressure to halt the carnage in the rebel-held enclave where bombardments eased late Monday after hours of deadly raids. A UN Security Council resolution for a 30-day truce had remained a dead letter since it was passed on Saturday, and Moscow, the Damascus regime's main backer, ended up setting its own terms to stem one of the worst episodes of bloodletting in Syria's seven-year-old conflict. **Page 9**

INDIA | Bollywood

Superstar Sridevi died of 'accidental drowning'

Bollywood superstar Sridevi died of accidental drowning in Dubai, the city's police department said yesterday. The post-mortem report showed that the actress died due to drowning in her hotel apartment's bathtub after she lost consciousness. The 54-year-old actress, known simply as Sridevi, died on Saturday. The cause was initially reported to be cardiac arrest. Sridevi was in Dubai to attend a family wedding. **Page 17**

Iraqi leadership thanks Emir for Qatar's support

QNA
Doha

His Highness the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday at his office at the Al Bahr Palace with the visiting Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, Saleem Abdullah al-Jabouri, and his accompanying delegation.

At the outset of the meeting, the Iraqi official conveyed the greetings of Iraq President Fuad Masum and Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to the Emir, wishing him good health and happiness and wishing the Qatari people more progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Emir entrusted the Iraqi Speaker to convey his greetings to Iraqi president and prime minister, wishing them health and wellness and the Iraqi

people further development and progress.

Al-Jabouri also conveyed the thanks of Iraqi leadership and people to the Emir for Qatar's efforts in supporting Iraq at various levels, especially in the fight against terrorism, as well as the great support that Qatar has pledged for the reconstruction of Iraq at the international conference recently hosted by Kuwait.

On his part, His Highness the Emir affirmed Qatar's firm stance and support to the unity, security and stability of Iraq.

The meeting reviewed the strong bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and ways to strengthen them, besides the latest developments in Iraq and the region.

The reception was attended by HE the Advisory Council Speaker, Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Zaid al-Mahmoud. **Page 2**



His Highness the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani meeting the Iraqi Council of Representatives Speaker Saleem Abdullah al-Jabouri.

'Major sports events promote peace, human rights values'

Qatar sees major sporting events as unique opportunities for spreading the values of brotherhood, solidarity, peace and human rights, HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani has said.

In his opening address at an event titled 'Hosting major sports events: promoting respect for human rights', which was held yesterday on the sidelines of the 37th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, HE Sheikh Mohamed said the absence of fair play, honesty and neutrality results in irresponsibility and violations of rules and regulations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said in a statement.

In the absence of accountability for these violations, the "rules are absent and thus the game itself is absent", it was observed. Sports and human rights reinforce each other, he stressed, and sports can become a universal language because it has strong potential for the development and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, in a way that can greatly contribute to the promotion of solidarity, diversity, equality, tolerance and justice. **To Page 3**

FM urges rights council to end siege violations

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani yesterday called on the United Nations Human Rights Council to end the violations resulting from the illegal siege and unilateral coercive measures taken by the siege countries against the Qatari people, and to hold accountable those responsible for the violations while compensating the victims.

Speaking yesterday during the high-level segment of the 37th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, HE Sheikh Mohamed also stressed the need for the international community to reach a political settlement for the Syrian crisis and provide humanitarian assistance to the people there in order to meet the urgent needs, stress-



HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani addressing the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva yesterday.

ing that Qatar would spare no effort in providing assistance.

The Foreign Minister said he had briefed the council during its previous session on the repercussions and violations of human rights due to the illegal and unilateral coercive measures taken by the siege countries against the Qatari people.

"This was reaffirmed in the last report of the technical mission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights after visiting Qatar in November (2017)," Sheikh Mohamed said. "It included an objective description of the grave and flagrant violations of human rights by the siege countries against the citizens and residents, be it in Qatar or in their own countries, and this continues to this very day. **To Page 3**

Qataris satisfied with govt's performance

As many as 98% of Qatari nationals are satisfied with the government's performance during the crisis and 88% believe that Qatar is able to survive under this crisis for many years, a Qatar University (QU) survey has found.

The Social & Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at QU yesterday unveiled the results of the survey on the Qatari citizens' points of view about the Qatar's blockade from a legal, political, economic, and social perspective.

Titled "Qatar against the blockade", the survey was supervised by a team of Qatari experts and researchers including SESRI director Dr Hassan al-Sayed, policy department head and

the study's project manager Dr Majed al-Ansari, QU College of Business and Economics dean Dr Khalid Shams M A al-Abdulqader, QU Sociology Programme co-ordinator Dr Fatima Ali Hussain al-Kubaisi, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs official spokesperson Lulwah al-Khater, as well as a number of Qatari research assistants at SESRI.

The study was conducted in November 2017 through telephone interviews. A random sample of 889 Qatari nationals (aged 18 and above), who are currently in Qatar, provided their points of view about the Qatar's blockade from a legal, political, economic, and social perspective.

From the legal perspective, Dr al-

Sayed noted that the study showed that around 62% of Qatari nationals agree and 17% of them do not agree that the participation of citizens through elected councils does not lead to the fast deterioration of political conflicts between countries.

The study revealed that 67% of nationals find that it is important to live in a democratic country. These results show an improvement as they doubled since a recent study conducted a few months prior to the blockade (34%).

From the political perspective, Dr al-Ansari observed that 90% of Qatari nationals are interested in watching the news in order to get acquainted with the daily progress of the crisis. HE

noted that 62% of Qatari nationals find that Qatar should achieve full independence of regional alliances, which highlights the lack of trust in the regional environment. In this context, 86% of Qatari citizens find that Qatar should explore alliance opportunities with new countries in the region.

Dr al-Ansari also noted that 79% of Qatari nationals consider that Al Jazeera Channel serves the Qatari interests and has played an important role in resisting the "media war" by the media outlets of the siege countries against Qatar. The results also showed Turkey as Qatar's first ally (72%), while Kuwait came second (16%), followed by other countries (12%). **Page 2**

Vodafone Qatar appoints new CEO

Vodafone Qatar has appointed Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah al-Thani as new chief executive officer and Rashid al-Naimi as managing director.

Al-Naimi, who is the chief executive of Qatar Foundation (QF) Endowment and responsible for QF's investment portfolios, has been elected as managing director with immediate effect.

Sheikh Hamad will replace Ian Gray who has decided to retire and step down following the company's annual general assembly, scheduled to be held on March 19, 2018.

Sheikh Hamad, who holds a BA in Computer Science from the University of Ottawa in Canada, currently holds the role of Vodafone Qatar's chief operating officer.

Since joining Vodafone Qatar in 2013, he has served in several roles including senior business development manager, head of public sector sales and sales director.

Under his leadership, Vodafone Qatar's enterprise market share grew substantially as did the company's position as an ICT (information communication and technology) and mega projects service provider. Before joining Vodafone Qatar, he held multiple ICT-related roles in the oil and gas sector.

"We are at the beginning of a journey that will bring us closer to providing a converged digital ecosystem with smart solutions. I am certain that Vodafone Qatar will play a crucial role in driving the digital transformation in support of the Qatar National Vision 2030," Sheikh Hamad said. **Business Page 1**



Vodafone Qatar's new CEO Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah al-Thani

Jewellery and watches show concludes on a high note

The 15th edition of the Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition (DJWE) 2018 concluded yesterday on a high note, recording more than 21,000 visits to the prestigious event over six days at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC).

The exhibition, under the patronage of HE the Prime Minister and Interior

Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani, featured more than 490 international brands, representing a wide variety of luxury watches and jewellery.

DJWE 2018 also provided visitors with the opportunity to acquire new knowledge through the first forum, daily sessions and workshops that discussed

topics related to the jewellery and watch industry.

"DJWE is a true model of success, sustainability and development. Over the past 15 years, the exhibition has succeeded in reinforcing its position on the global calendar of jewellery events, as evidenced by the attendance of top executives of major brands at

the show," Qatar Tourism Authority's exhibitions director Ahmed al-Obaidli said.

"The increase in exhibition area, visitors, side events and sales are all testament to the exhibition's success," he added. "This remarkable performance is thanks to the support provided by HE the Prime Minister and Interior Minister

to business events and the tourism sector as a whole in pursuit of a more diverse national economy."

The huge exhibition space at DECC allowed fine jewellery shops in Qatar to showcase their collections in their pavilions, offering visitors a fascinating journey of art, elegance and heritage.

On behalf of Fifty One East, Bader Abdullah al-Darwish, chairman and managing Director, said: "In every edition of the DJWE, since its inception, Fifty One East, the eldest and most prestigious department store in Qatar, has been offering a new touch that enriches the fair?" **To Page 8**
See also Pages 4,5,6,7,8



PM receives message from Iraqi premier



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani received a written message from the Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi, pertaining to bilateral relations between Qatar and Iraq and ways to develop them, as well as topics of mutual interest. The message was delivered by Charge d' Affaires at the Iraqi embassy in Qatar, Dr Abdel Sattar al-Janabi, while meeting the prime minister yesterday.

Deputy PM holds meetings in Geneva



HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani meeting the Swiss Foreign Minister, Ignazio Cassis on the sidelines of the 37th session of the Human Rights Council, in the Swiss city of Geneva yesterday. HE Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani also held separate meetings with Japanese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Manabu Horii; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid bin Ra'ad al-Husseini; International Labour Organisation Director-General, Guy Ryder; and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President, Peter Maurer. The meetings reviewed bilateral relations, enhancing prospects of co-operation, and regional and international issues.

Advisory Council discusses report on National Tourism Council draft law

QNA
Doha

The Advisory Council held yesterday its regular weekly session under the chairmanship of HE the Speaker Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Zaid al-Mahmoud.

At the outset of the meeting, HE al-Mahmoud briefed the Council on the meeting held last Tuesday with a delegation of senior officials of the US Congress, and his meeting on Sunday with the Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives and his accompanying delegation, adding that during the two meetings parliamentary relations between the Advisory Council and the US Congress and the Iraqi Council of Representatives and ways to support and develop them, in addition to a number of issues of common concern were discussed.

The Council then discussed the supplementary report prepared by the finance and economic committee on a draft law establishing the National Tourism Council, as well as the committee's report on a draft law on tourism regulation.

The Council members' discussions focused on the necessity of developing the tourism sector in the country because of its economic, social and cultural benefits, in accordance with public order and public morals, in a way that does not affect the safety of society or the security and stability of the country.

The Council also discussed during the meeting the report of the finance and economic committee on the draft law on business sectors.

Additionally, the Council approved the three draft laws, and decided to submit its recommendations thereon to the cabinet.

Meanwhile, the Finance and Economic Affairs Committee at the Advisory Council held a meeting yesterday within the 46th Ordinary Session, chaired by its rapporteur Ali bin Abdullah al-Misnad al-Mohannadi.

At the meeting, the Committee examined a draft law regulating the investment of non-Qatari capital in economic activity and decided to continue studying it at its next meeting.

Qatar and Kazakhstan hold meeting

QNA
Astana

The first session of the political consultations between Qatar and Kazakhstan was held yesterday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan in Astana.

The Qatari side was chaired by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi, while the Kazakh side was chaired by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Akylbek Kamalidinov.

The ambassador of Qatar to Kazakhstan, Ahmed bin Ali al-Tamimi, and the Director of Asian Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Hamar attended the session.

The consultations touched on the means of enhancing and developing bilateral relations in all fields of mutual interest, as well as exchanging views on developments in the Gulf and Middle East.

Environmental impact of projects constantly reviewed

QNA
Doha

Qatar constantly takes into account the environmental impact of projects, HE the Minister of Municipality and Environment Mohamed bin Abdullah al-Rumaihi said.

Taking part in the Ministry of Municipality and Environment's celebration of Qatar Environment Day 2018, held annually on February 26, the Minister said that the government has brought in several pieces of legislation and regulatory laws to protect the environment.

The Minister also stressed the government's efforts to protect Qatari farms in order to achieve a qualitative balance in production and a large percentage of self-sufficiency by 2020.

This year's Qatar Environment Day event was organised under the slogan "Our Environment Our Heritage" at the Al Majda area in Shamal.

HE al-Rumaihi said observ-

ance of Qatar Environment Day reaffirms the importance of protecting the environment of the country and its natural resources, and the keenness to preserve the environment, leaving it clean and healthy for the future generations.

Talking to reporters, the minister called for preserving the green areas and refraining from misusing them by stepping on plants and driving over them.

He said it was the collective responsibility of citizens and expatriates, and not only that of the government, to protect the environment. HE al-Rumaihi said the Al Majda area has become a natural reserve that visitors and hikers can access without cars to avoid damaging its elements and trees.

The Minister added that the future plans of the Ministry in this context are to expand oversight and the scope of environmental protection.

As part of the event, activities related to environmental protection, such as cleaning and landscaping, were held, in addition to workshops and entertainment programmes for children.



HE the Minister of Municipality and Environment Mohamed bin Abdullah al-Rumaihi plants a sapling to mark Qatar Environment Day 2018.

More rain expected today, tomorrow

The wet spell is expected to resume in the country as the Qatar Met department has forecast scattered rain - which may be thundery at times - today along with strong winds in some places.

Some rain is likely tomorrow as well.

The weather office has issued a warning for similar conditions, as well as high seas, in offshore areas, too.

The Met department has

urged people to be cautious and check weather conditions before venturing into the sea in view of the expected conditions.

In a report yesterday, the department said weather charts indicate that there are chances of rain in the country on Tuesday and Wednesday (February 27 and 28). The weather is expected to gradually become partly cloudy to cloudy and there is a chance of scattered rain, which will mostly be light to moderate in inten-

sity but may become thundery at times in some areas, accompanied by strong winds, according to the forecast.

The prevailing winds will be northeasterly to southeasterly, moderate to fresh.

Today, the wind speed may go up to 25 knots inshore during thundershowers and 22 knots offshore, with the sea level rising to 7ft. The temperature in Doha is expected to range from 19-25C today; yesterday, it was 18-24C.

Qatar, Ecuador 'keen to boost bilateral trade'

By Ramesh Mathew
Staff Reporter

Latin American nation Ecuador is seeking co-operation, if not assistance, from Qatar for realising its long-time dream for a large petroleum refinery, with a capacity for refining approximately 325,000 barrels of crude per day (bpd), said the country's Minister for Foreign Trade and Investments Pablo Campana Saenz.

The minister informed this in an interaction with journalists who met him on Sunday night at a reception held in his honour by Ecuador's ambassador to Qatar Ivonne A-Baki at her official residence. A number of ambassadors, and other diplomats serving in Qatar, besides a host of Qatari officials and businessmen also attended the dinner reception.

While speaking about the proposed petroleum refinery, the minister said it would be one of the largest foreign investments in the entire South America, totalling approximately \$10bn. "We are exploring various possibilities like setting it up as a joint venture between Qatar and Ecuador or as Qatar's own venture. Russia's Gazprom is also evincing interest for a tie-up for building the refinery," said Campana Saenz.

Currently there are three smaller refining facilities in Ecuador, which together could refine about 170,000bpd. Ecuador's daily production is close to 545,000bpd. About 65% of its oil is used for meeting Ecuador's own requirements and the remaining is exported to neighbouring countries, said the minister.

While expressing happiness at the deliberations he had with Qatar's Minister of Economy and Commerce HE Sheikh Ahmed bin Jassim bin Mohamed al-Thani, Qatar Airways CEO Akbar al-Baker, representatives of the Qatar Chamber, Qatar Businessmen Association, Katara Hospitality chairman among others, Campana Saenz said Qatar and Ecuador expressed their desire to increase the bilateral trade to significant levels, capitalising on the strengths of each other.

The minister said a 25-member team of private entrepre-



Pablo Campana Saenz
PICTURE: Ram Chand

neurs from Ecuador would visit Qatar towards the end of April and a Qatari business delegation would reciprocate it with a visit of Quito sometime in June.

In his talks with the Qatar Airways, the Ecuador minister reiterated his country's appeal for a direct passenger flight to Quito from Qatar. A few weeks ago Ecuador ambassador A-Baki had also made a similar request, citing the Ecuadorian capital's accessibility and proximity to at least three South American countries.

"Ecuador is at the centre of the Earth and it would be convenient for people of a number

of South American countries to travel to the Gulf region, if direct flights are operated between Qatar and Quito", said the minister, while reminding that there are two weekly cargo planes operated by Qatar Airways between Doha and Quito.

Yesterday, the minister also met the officials of Qatalum, exploring possibilities for ventures in Ecuador. Campana Saenz also sought Qatar's co-operation in investing in a massive social housing project, numbering approximately 325,000 homes across Ecuador.

Replying to a query, the minister said Ecuador is ready to share its expertise in such areas as mining, construction, services sector and shrimp farming.

While hoping that their dollar-based economy and political stability would help his country attract investments from abroad, including Qatar, Campana Saenz said Ecuador is also offering tax benefits to foreign businessmen, investing in projects in the country's economic zones. "Remarkably good tax benefits of up to 20 years are given to such investors," he added.

Over 80% of Qataris have positive view about nation's economy

More than 80% of citizens have a positive view about Qatar's economy, a latest survey by the Social & Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University (QU) has revealed.

QU College of Business and Economics dean Dr Khalid Shams M A al-Abdulqader observed that 84% of Qataris were positive about Qatar's business and trading, noting that the results have

improved compared to around 55% from a study conducted in January 2016.

"The expectations of Qatari citizens with regard to the future of business and trading in Qatar have also improved to reach 96% after the blockade, while they were 72% before the blockade," he explained.

On entrepreneurship, the study showed that 77% of Qataris consider there are many investment opp-

portunities and 34% are planning to start an entrepreneurial project.

On product prices, the results revealed that 31% of Qataris consider that the product prices are not high, while 27% consider that products are expensive and 33% consider that the prices of some products were high and some not high. Regarding products quality and availability in the market, 88% of Qatari nationals

pointed to high quality and 71% to their availability.

From the social perspective, QU Sociology Programme co-ordinator Dr Fatima Ali Hussain al-Kubaisi noted that 75% of citizens have relatives at the siege countries, which highlights the deep social, religious and cultural bonds in the Gulf. She also noted that 70% of Qatari citizens were not able to see their relatives since the beginning

of the crisis, while 69% were able to meet their relatives in Qatar.

Dr al-Kubaisi observed that 52% of Qataris were able to connect with their relatives through telephone calls, and 20% connected through WhatsApp, while 10% could not connect at all, reflecting the negative impact of the blockade on social and familial relations. Additionally, 47% of Qatari citizens confirmed that their relations

with their relatives did not change despite blockade, while 26% said that their relations have deteriorated.

QU president Dr Hassan al-Derham said, "The study provided a realistic and academic analysis on the economic, social and political reality in Qatar after the unjust blockade. The announcement of the study's results today with transparency shows that Qatari society lives in an atmosphere of pure freedom."