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UDC posts QR220mn profit in first quarter

SPORT | Page 1

Samba, Haroun hope to wow at home in season-opener



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In brief

ARAB WORLD | Conflict
Deal to evacuate Syria's Yarmuk refugee camp

A deal has been reached for the evacuation of the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmuk where Islamic State group fighters have been holed up in southern Damascus, state media reported yesterday. The transfer of "terrorist groups" to rebel-held areas of northwestern Syria would begin today, said the official SANA news agency, which did not name IS militants. It came hours after the Syrian government and rebels agreed to evacuate opposition fighters from the areas of Yalda, Babila and Beit Sahem, also in southern Damascus, according to SANA. **Page 11**

ASIA | Diplomacy

N Korea offers to shut nuclear test site in May

North Korea has promised to shut its atomic test site within weeks and invite American weapons experts to verify its closure, Seoul reported yesterday, as new US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Washington had an "obligation" to pursue peace. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un - who may meet US President Donald Trump as early as next month - also said Pyongyang would have no need for nuclear weapons if it were promised it would not be invaded, according to Seoul. Friday's historic meeting saw Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in agree to pursue the complete denuclearisation of the peninsula. **Page 14**

QATAR | Weather

Strong winds expected today

Strong winds are expected in parts of the country at times today, the Qatar Met department has said, while also issuing a marine warning for windy conditions and high seas. The wind speed may go up to 28 knots offshore and 22 knots inshore, with the sea level rising to 9ft. Slight to blowing dust is also likely in inshore areas along with a hot day and some clouds. The temperature is expected to range from 26-34C in Doha today.

PAKISTAN | Politics

Imran Khan woos poor in election pitch

Pakistani opposition figure Imran Khan yesterday vowed to sweep to power in upcoming elections, promising radical change for the poor at a campaign kick-off rally in Lahore that has long been the power base of ousted premier Nawaz Sharif. With the red-brick minarets of Lahore's Mughal-era Badshahi mosque in sight, Khan outlined a populist 11-point plan to usher in a new era of prosperity. **Page 19**



HE the Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs Dr Issa Saad al-Jafali al-Nuaimi and ILO project office head Moussa Oumarou lead the inauguration of the ILO Doha office at Qatar Tower yesterday. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

Pompeo stresses need for unity among Gulf allies

Reuters
Riyadh

New US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stressed the need for unity among Gulf allies during a brief visit to Riyadh yesterday.

In advance of Pompeo's visit, US officials told reporters the US secretary of state would urge Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman and King Salman to resolve the Gulf crisis in a series of meetings on Saturday and yesterday.

In joint remarks with al-Jubeir, Pompeo said: "Gulf unity is necessary and we need to achieve it."

Addressing the rift between Qatar and its neighbours, Pompeo told reporters after leaving Riyadh: "We are hopeful that they will, in their own way, figure out how to remove the dispute between them."

Officials said Pompeo called for an end to the blockade because the US believes it has enabled Iran to exploit disunity in the Gulf by enhancing its influence in Yemen and Syria, The Associated Press news agency reported.

Saudi Arabia, along with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, cut off travel and trade ties with Qatar last June, accusing it of supporting terror-

ism and Iran on the other side of the Gulf.

Doha has denied the accusations and has said its three fellow Gulf countries aim to curtail its sovereignty. For its part, Iran denies supporting terrorism or having sought to develop nuclear weapons.

The United States, which has military bases in Qatar and some other countries in the region, is trying to mediate the Gulf crisis. Trump is also pushing for a resolution.

Pompeo met earlier with Saudi King Salman for about 15 minutes before heading directly to Israel, for talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Just hours after being confirmed as Trump's top diplomat, Pompeo set off on a whirlwind trip to Nato in Brussels and Middle East allies.

The trip comes as Trump considers whether or not to abandon a self-imposed May 12 deadline for the Iran nuclear deal he sees as deeply flawed. He has called on Gulf allies to contribute funding and troops to stabilise areas in Iraq and Syria where a US-led coalition has largely defeated Islamic State militants.

Asked about Saudi troops on the ground in Syria, Pompeo said: "We will sit down and talk about... how to best make sure that this is not Amer-

ica alone working on this, it's the Gulf states working alongside us."

Britain said yesterday that it, France and Germany - the other signatories to the 2015 deal along with Russia, China and the European Union - had agreed the Iran accord was the best way of stopping Tehran from gaining nuclear weapons.

"(We) committed to continue working closely together and with the US on how to tackle the range of challenges that Iran poses - including those issues that a new deal might cover," a statement from British Prime Minister Theresa May's office said.

The 2015 agreement limited Iran's enrichment of uranium for nuclear fuel to help ensure it could not be turned to developing bomb material, and Tehran secured a removal of most international sanctions in return.

Iran has repeatedly said its ballistic missile programme has nothing to do with its nuclear work and is non-negotiable.

Trump sees three defects in the deal: a failure to address Iranian ballistic missiles; the terms under which UN inspectors can visit allegedly suspect Iranian nuclear sites; and "sunset" clauses under which key limits on the Iranian nuclear programme start to expire after 10 years. **Page 11**

Qatar welcomes opening of ILO office in Doha

The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (MADLSA) has announced the opening of an International Labour Organisation (ILO) office in Doha yesterday.

The launch of the ILO's first office in the Gulf region, marks a key moment at the start of implementing a three-year technical agreement signed in October 2017 by the Government of Qatar and the United Nations agency.

The agreement will strengthen national labour laws, build government employees' enforcement capacity and ensure employment and recruitment practices are in line with international best practice.

"Qatar welcomes the opening of the ILO office in Doha," said HE the Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, Dr Issa Saad al-Jafali al-Nuaimi, who led the opening of the office.

"This is another step towards ensuring Qatar has a labour system that reflects global best practice. The Government of Qatar now has another partner to promote and protect the rights of our guest workers," he said.

The ILO Doha office will help facilitate ongoing co-operation between the Government of Qatar and the ILO, which will work closely with the MADLSA.

The technical agreement focuses on five areas: improving wages, improving work and occupational health and safety inspections, implementing a contractual system and improving work conditions and procedures, strengthening prevention measures for forced

labour and human trafficking (including the prosecution of those involved in it), and giving a voice to labourers and enforcing complaint mechanisms.

A number of projects have been implemented since the start of co-operation between the two parties in January 2018.

These include holding a workshop focused on reviewing the minimum wage, and organising an occupational health and safety conference which addressed issues to protect workers from fatigue during the summer.

Workshops for specialised government officials were also held, tackling ways to fight forced labour and human trafficking, and establishing mechanisms to strengthen the complaint system for workers.

In May, workshops will be held to raise awareness of the domestic workers' law, wage protection and the ministry's law on summer working hours.

"Qatar leads the region when it comes to labour rights. The technical expertise and guidance of the ILO will be crucial as Qatar transitions to a modern labour system that meets the highest standards not only in the GCC but in the world," the minister said.

In October last year, the International Trade Union Confederation praised Qatar's commitment to protecting workers' rights and assured that the conditions it had called for had been met.

In the same month, Human Rights Watch's Middle East Director Sarah Leah Whitson called on other countries in the region to follow Qatar's example and take similar steps to monitor and reform their labour practices.

EU grants Silatech €5mn for empowering Yemenis

QNA
Doha

Silatech, an international non-governmental social development organisation, has succeeded in obtaining a European Union grant of €5mn for its ongoing efforts to achieve stability in Yemen through the empowerment of youth and women.

Within this co-operation, Silatech, that works to connect young people to jobs and economic opportunities through employment and entrepreneurship, will establish a fund implemented by its field partner Al-Amal microfinance bank which will provide grants to more than 10,000 youth (18-35

years), in addition to providing training to 5,000 young people.

Furthermore, the initiative supports Yemeni women as they represent 60% of the targeted youth in the project, seeking to achieve a world in which youth including young women are involved in the economic development of their societies.

The initiative also seeks to contribute to support rural youth and small productive projects that may help them improve their economic situation; reducing poverty and unemployment, as well as the problem of rural youth migrating to cities in search of jobs.

Silatech had submitted an innovative proposal in early 2017 for a European Union grant of €5mn.

QP in long-term deal to supply Vietnam with LPG and naphtha

• This is the first time that Qatar is selling LPG and naphtha on long-term basis

Qatar Petroleum (QP) has announced an agreement to supply Vietnam with up to 2mn tonnes per year (tpy) of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and naphtha for 15 years.

The long-term agreement was signed by Qatar Petroleum for the sale of Petroleum Products Company (QP-SPP) and Long Son Petrochemicals

Company (LSP), a subsidiary of The Siam Cement Public Company Limited. Qatar Petroleum acts as the marketing agent for QPSPPP.

The agreement will commence with the start of Vietnam's first green-field petrochemical complex, which is being constructed on Long Son Island, 100km southeast of Ho Chi Minh City. The large facility is expected to begin production in 2022.

Qatar Petroleum President & CEO Saad Sherida al-Kaabi welcomed the signing of the agreement and said: "We are pleased to enter into this agreement for the supply of naphtha and LPG to Vietnam. This agreement has a significant

importance as it is the first time that Qatar is selling LPG and naphtha on a long-term basis as well as the first time that we are selling directly to Vietnam."

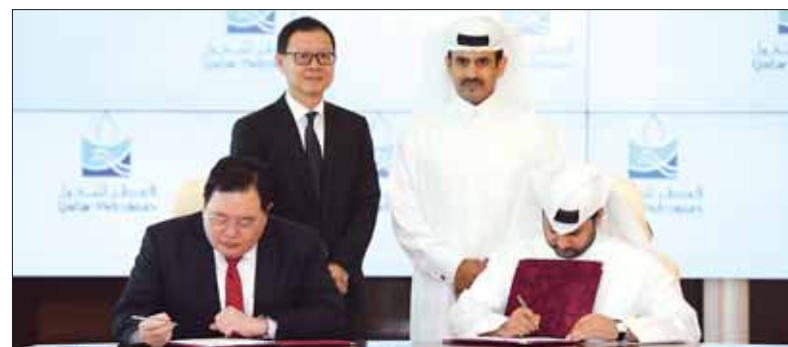
Al-Kaabi said: "I would like to thank LSP and its shareholders for their trust in Qatar Petroleum by entering into this agreement for the supply of feedstock to LSP for the next 15 years. This is an important project for Vietnam and the new agreement reflects the trust of the markets and customers in Qatar Petroleum as a reliable supplier."

"We attach great importance to partnerships that would help our customers meet their energy needs. This agreement will expand Qatar's footprint into

the growing markets of Southeast Asia and we believe that LSP is the right partner for us in this endeavour."

Cholanat Yanaranop, president, SCG Chemicals Company and Board Member, LSP, said: "This agreement is very crucial to LSP. It provides the security and flexibility of feedstock to LSP's olefins flexible feed cracker, which will enhance the competitive advantage of LSP over its peers."

The LSP Project will have a million tonnes per year ethylene cracker with flexible gas and naphtha feed to yield in total olefins production capacity of up to 1.6mn tonnes per year depending on the feedstock mix.



Saad Sherida al-Kaabi with Vietnamese officials as QP signs a long-term agreement to supply Vietnam with up to 2mn tonnes per year (tpy) of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and naphtha.

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Call to set up chamber for high-end fashion

By Ramesh Mathew
Staff Reporter

It is high time Qatar that constituted a chamber for promoting and producing high-end fashion apparels and accessories, a well-known Italian designer told *Gulf Times* yesterday.

"There is considerable interest among the local population for premium luxury goods and accessories," observed Valeria Mangani, Italian designer and former vice president of Alta Roma (the Italian Chamber for High Fashions).

"Qatar, with an abundance of financial resources, should not always remain a consumer state. Instead, the state should encourage those showing interest in manufacturing luxury premium goods and accessories at the local level," she suggested.

The designer was in Doha to promote Italian brands at the five-day Heya Arabian Fashion Exhibition which concluded at the Doha Exhibitions and Conventions Centre yesterday.

She is also the CEO of the Valeria Mangani Company, one of the prominent names in the business of luxury goods.

Mangani, who had started the work to set up a school for fashion in Doha last year said there has been a growing interest in fashion apparels and accessories among the local youngsters and such a school would go a long way in promoting and developing the country as a top fashion destination.

The designer who is promoting Made in Italy Luxury LTT, led a team of four Italian companies at their pavilion in the Heya Arabian Fashion Exhibition. BKIB, Anita Bilardi, Maison Vi, Kristal B were the four Italian brands that took part in the expo this year.

"Every time, we, at Alta Roma, introduce new brands at the exhibition in Qatar, our chamber has been able to send a large number of Italian firms to this country in the last six years since the start of the exhibition," she said. Heya expo is held once in approximately six months and the previous edition was held in November last year.

"Organising two exhibitions of high-end fashion apparels and accessories is no mean challenge and Qatar is doing an admirable thing to promote such businesses in a big way. And the growing numbers at the exhibition reflect the real potential of this country in the market of such premium goods," said the entrepreneur, who also highlighted the need for a similar expo for local men to be held simultaneously.



Mangani displaying a mink bag for the Doha show. PICTURE: Ram Chand

This is because Doha now has such a massive convention centre which has adequate space for hosting two or three expos simultaneously. "Such simultaneous exhibitions would not only help the organisers of such events but would also be able to encourage more acclaimed brands to exhibit their products at one time, at comparatively lesser overheads. This would also give more opportunities for customers to choose from," she added.

Mangani also plans to bring some fast developing brands specialised in footwear making from her country in the next exhibition. "Our footwear has extensive appeal and reputation across the Gulf region and Qatar is one of four main markets," she added.

More than 15,000 attend Heya expo

The 13th Heya Arabian Fashion Exhibition that concluded yesterday attracted more than 15,000 visitors throughout the five-day event, a 15% increase year-on-year, organisers have announced.

Bringing together fashion enthusiasts, families and aspiring designers, the exhibition showcased more international brands of abayas and modest fashion collections than ever before with more than 300 local, regional and international brands attending from over 18 countries. More than 60 brands joined in this edition from Kuwait and Oman.

This year saw the largest number of established and emerging Qatari designers, with more than 190 of exhibitors from Qatar, representing a 75% increase from the Spring/Summer 2017 edition.

New partnership with Bedaya Center to advise aspiring young Qatari entrepreneurs on their professional path, along with previously forged partnerships with Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) and Qatar Business Incubation Center (QBIC), provided visitors with valuable expertise in everything from fashion marketing to finance, to how to get a fashion business off the ground. In addition, adding depth to this year's programme were the collaborations with the Ecuadorian, Hungarian and Turkish embassies to help nurture and develop local design talent. Heya's packed schedule of 11 workshops, five forums and four multi-brand show stopping fashion shows drew huge crowds. The event displayed the latest collection of abayas, kaftans, jalabiyas, evening gowns, veils and other accessories as well as perfumery and make-up.

Highlights included a special appearance by renowned Indian celebrity TV star Krystal D'Souza and film actress Sana Khan who hosted an insightful forum on 'What's In and Out on Social Media', along with Omani influencer Areej Balushi, giving exhibitors and visitors the opportunity to meet with the Bollywood celebrities and ask questions around fashion, style and trends on social media in the fashion industry.

In addition, the VCUarts Qatar hosted a series of workshops and forums developed to teach the basics of fashion design. Closing out the show was the exclusive Awards Ceremony with the top two prestigious awards going to Al Khooor for the Visitor's Choice Award, and La Creme for the Exhibitor's Choice Award. Heya Arabian Fashion Exhibition was brought to visitors by Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) and delivered by partners Design Creationz, who put on a world-class fashion exhibition.

Jawaher al-Khuzaei, acting director of communications and marketing at QTA said: "The 13th edition of Heya Exhibition, held under the patronage of HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, was a great success in terms of the number of participants, activities and the number of visitors, which is a sign of the position the exhibition has now as one of the most anticipated events in Qatar and the region." "The Qatar Tourism Authority supports private initiatives in organising innovative events locally, things that enhance the diversity of the events' programme, as supporting the private sector remains one of the core objectives within the authority's strategy", she added.

Local brand Maqdeem 'provides inspiration'

Local contemporary fashion company Maqdeem has led the brand's inspirational success story at this year's Heya Arabian Fashion Exhibition.

The brand's young and creative Qatari founders, Maqdeem al-Naama and Aisha al-Naama, who are also sisters, took to the stage to answer questions with the aim of encouraging and motivating aspiring local designers to start their own label. The sisters discussed how their brand's journey began in 2015, their passion to empower women with confidence through fashion and the challenges they have faced and overcome to enjoy commercial success.

The journey wasn't simple; both girls have full-time jobs and demanding schedules, yet their determination to bring modernity into traditional conservative clothing has paid off and demand for their collections is continually rising - so much so, that they will soon be launching their biggest collection yet, according to a press statement.

Talking about her participation at Heya, Maqdeem al-Naama said: "We've really enjoyed being part of the discussion panel at Heya and being part of this unique event that brings so many businesses together under one roof. It's given us a platform to share our story and demonstrate that hard work and determination go a long way in ensuring success. These events and discussions provide the much-needed collaboration, support and inspiration that ambitious designers and young businesses need to learn and thrive."



Maqdeem abayas.



Maqdeem al-Naama and Aisha al-Naama.

that brings so many businesses together under one roof. It's given us a platform to share our story and demonstrate that hard work and determination go a long way in ensuring success. These events and discussions provide the much-needed collaboration, support and inspiration that ambitious designers and young businesses need to learn and thrive."

Held under the patronage of HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad al-Thani, the 13th edition of Heya Arabian Fashion Exhibition concluded yesterday at Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre. It brought the largest display of local designers to date, with more than 190 local brands participating in the event, the statement noted.

The exhibition showcased abayas, modest fashion designs and accessories from 18 countries - Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Turkey, Morocco, Lebanon, Iraq, India, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Ecuador, Hungary, the UK, Spain and Italy.

Maqdeem blends modern style, comfort and Arab cultural values, and a small selection of the collection could be viewed at their exhibition stand. Maqdeem was also taking custom-orders for their abayas. From May, they will also be taking pre-orders for their summer collection. The modest-dress summer collection is inspired by travel and nature and will be their largest collection of ready-to-wear women's clothing to date, the statement added.

HBKU scholars join experts at tech conference

Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU)'s College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS), College of Science and Engineering (CSE), and Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI) scholars contributed prominently to the second Gulf Region Education Assistive Technology Conference (GREAT 2018) conducted last week.

Held under the special patronage of the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, the highly anticipated event was organised by the Mada Assistive Technology Centre, a Doha-based, non-profit organisation dedicated to providing a gateway between persons with disabilities and the world of information and communication technology.

Hundreds of experts in the field of assistive technology (AT) in addition to end users, educators and entrepreneurs gathered at the panel discussions and workshops to learn more about the four conference focus domains: education, e-learning, independent living and innovation.

The first day of the conference kicked off with a panel discussion on 'Innovation in Assistive Technology: Challenges and Opportunities.' The discussion was moderated by Dr Dena al-Thani, assistant professor at CSE, and involved several participants, including Dr Ahmed K Elmagarmid, executive director of QCRI; Mohamed al-Jefairi, an inventor; Dr Tony Stockman, senior lecturer at Queen Mary University of London; and Mursi Seraj, a Qatar Academy student. The panellists guided the audience through the founda-



A panel discussion at the event.

Dr Ahmed K Elmagarmid, executive director of QCRI; Mohamed al-Jefairi, an inventor; Dr Tony Stockman, senior lecturer at Queen Mary University of London; and Mursi Seraj, a Qatar Academy student. The panellists guided the audience through the founda-

Mary University of London; and Mursi Seraj, a Qatar Academy student. The panellists guided the audience through the founda-

tion concepts of AT innovation today.

Dr al-Thani said, "Presenting our prototype at an occasion with such a varied international audience is a privilege and a testament to the strength of our research potential at CSE. Excellence and innovation continue to be the cornerstones of our daily work and we are proud to see it culminate in a tangible result at GREAT 2018."

Dr Elmagarmid emphasised the drive behind QCRI's engagement at GREAT 2018. He said, "We regard sharing knowledge for the greater benefit of the community as an organisational responsibility. Our participation today is in line with our values to not only conduct research but also actively engage in a constructive exchange of knowledge with fellow researchers from around the globe. Annual platforms such as GREAT are essential to ensuring a steady flow of communication."

The HBKU Innovation Booth, which was as part of the conference's Innovation Zone, showcased a locally developed AT prototype titled, Visually Impaired Interaction with Search Engine Results Representation, developed by Aboubaker Agle, PhD student at CSE. This remarkable showcase was further exhibited as part of the Innovation Theater - a platform for focused discussions between subject experts.