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Al Arabi lift cup in thrilling finale



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In brief

QATAR | Meeting

Emir holds talks with British PM

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani yesterday met with British Prime Minister David Cameron at his residence outside the capital London. They discussed bilateral relations and reviewed regional and international developments, particularly the situation in Syria.

QATAR | Accident

Four youths die in crash

Four Arab youths died in an accident on the Mesaieed-Wakrah road yesterday evening when the four-wheel-drive vehicle in which they were travelling was involved in a collision.

AMERICA | Choice

US nominee for World Bank chief

US President Barack Obama yesterday nominated a Korean-American known for work fighting HIV/Aids in impoverished countries to lead the World Bank, a job emerging economies are contesting for the first time.

AFGHANISTAN | Unrest

US soldier charged with 17 murders

A US soldier was formally charged yesterday with 17 murders over the killings of civilians in a village in southern Afghanistan, US forces said in a statement released in Kabul.

BUSINESS | Energy

Oil rises on drop in Iranian exports

Oil prices rallied yesterday on news that Iranian oil exports have fallen significantly this month as tightening Western sanctions have caused some buyers to stop or scale back purchases.

Zubarah's heritage list hopes get a lift

More than 600 students from different schools in Qatar have visited the archaeological excavation and restoration project since January

By Bonnie James Deputy News Editor

The Qatar Museums Authority and the University of Copenhagen have launched an innovative outreach programme at Al Zubarah Archaeological Site, hopefully going to place Qatar on the Unesco World Heritage List for the first time.

More than 600 students from different schools in Qatar have visited the archaeological excavation and restoration project since January and learnt about the site's history and the ongoing conservation efforts.

Dr Iman Saca of St Xavier University in the US - the project's senior consultant on heritage education and outreach - told Gulf Times that the efforts focused on two main trajectories. The first is outreach to schools, which is mainly achieved through in-school presentations and hands-on activities, in addition to field visits to Al Zubarah.

The second trajectory focuses on sharing the work and gaining knowledge from Qataris through conducting anthropological fieldwork.

"This approach allows us to build relations with the people living closest to the site, and has tremendously enriched our understanding of Al Zubarah, the northwestern region of Qatar, its people, traditions, as well as their relations to the land and the sea," Dr Saca observed.

Prof Alan Walmsley, who directs the archaeological research at Al Zubarah, pointed out that in view of its size and success, the outreach programme was exceptional in Qatar for its innovation, active involvement and educational value.

"Following encouragement from Qatar Museums Authority chairperson HE Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, our team members have embraced outreach activities with enthusiasm, working to four key concepts: observing, experiencing, questioning, and learning," he said.

The team has worked very hard to create a pioneering programme that introduces school children and students to the ongoing archaeological excavations, to handle some of the objects, and through this innovative 'hands-on' experience learn about Qatar's important past.

"Dozens of e-mails and handwritten letters thanking the team for the tours of the site highlight the resounding success of the programme," Prof Walmsley recalled.



A group of students visiting the excavations in Al Zubarah.

Excavations and conservation, which have been underway at Al Zubarah since October 2011, are nearing their seasonal end this month (March).

"Due to the harsh summer climate we have to suspend work during the hottest time of the year," pointed out Prof Ingolf Thuesen, who directs the conservation work.

"Although we can't work at the site throughout the year, we have nevertheless made significant progress in conserving this fragile site during this fieldwork season."

Following an extensive period of testing of different building materials and cataloguing all the stone and mortar used in the original construction of the town, the restoration of Qatar's largest archaeological site is now well under way.

Parts of the outer town wall, towers and palace have all been consolidated and restored.

Specialists have also begun to restore the Al Zubarah Fort, built in 1938. Wooden lintels - attacked by rot, fungi and termites over the years - had to be replaced using traditional construction techniques.

The first phase of restoration of one of Qatar's most symbolic historic buildings is now almost complete, with a second phase scheduled to start in October 2012.

"We want to make the fort a living and functioning building again," asserted Prof Thuesen. "And we want it to be at the heart of the publicly accessible site."

As part of Al Zubarah's Unesco nomination bid, the QMA and the University of Copenhagen have been working out strategies for the presentation of the site to visitors in concert with the restoration work.

On-site interpretive panels, a system of walking tracks, information leaflets and infrastructure for visitors are all being developed.

Although this work will take several more months to be fully realised, the ongoing outreach programme is the first crucial step in setting the scene for heritage education in Qatar.

"Taking care of a nation's heritage requires knowledge, Prof Walmsley said while explaining that children and young people are keenly interested in history and will be the guardians of Qatar's heritage, culture and values in the future.

"This is why we want to give them every opportunity to learn about the past through experiences, observation, and active involvement, using Al Zubarah as an example; this makes heritage real and personal.

"The results of the outreach activities undertaken at the site will inform the scope and design of a future visitor centre dedicated to the northwestern region of Qatar," he added. Page 20

EU slaps travel ban and assets freeze on Assad's wife

AFP Brussels

The European Union took aim at Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's family yesterday, targeting his wife, mother and sister in fresh sanctions aimed at ending months of relentless brutality.

Tightening the noose as government forces bombed towns and clashed with rebels in several parts of Syria, EU foreign ministers reiterated a plea for Assad to "step aside to allow for a peaceful and democratic transition".

In a new round of sanctions, the EU's 13th to date in less than a year, the ministers slapped a travel ban and assets freeze on Assad's glamorous British-born wife Asma, his mother Anisa Ma-

khloof, his sister and sister-in-law.

The four were among 12 people and two oil companies added to an existing EU blacklist now totalling 126 people and 41 firms or utilities.

The names of those targeted will be listed in the EU Official Journal today, when the sanctions take effect.

"The repression has reached totally unacceptable levels of violence and must stop immediately," said EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton. "Today's decisions aim to weaken the regime's resources and its ability to conduct its brutal campaign."

The US called the sanctions "a very good step".

Assad himself was targeted by the EU in May last year, along with his younger brother Maher.

"It's a sign of the determination of all

the nations of the European Union and of the European Union as a whole to intensify the pressure, the diplomatic and economic stranglehold on this regime," said British Foreign Secretary William Hague.

"Everybody has to know, the regime, the entourage of the regime, the clan of the regime, that we are being serious," said German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle. "The clan of the regime of Assad has to be included."

The measures aimed to send "a very powerful signal to everyone in the regime that the killing has to stop, the violence has to stop, there has to be dialogue, there has to be a political process," said Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt.

"That is the only way to prevent the country from descending into sectarian

civil war that would have devastating consequences."

A Sunni Muslim who originally hails from Homs, Syria's British-born first lady is the daughter of a heart specialist and a diplomat.

The stylish Western-educated former investment banker not so long ago was described by Vogue as a "rose in the desert". She has since been likened to a modern-day Marie-Antoinette.

It was widely believed her grounding in Western values would give the regime a more human face and shatter the isolation of the secretive Assad family.

But she became the focus of sharp criticism this month when Britain's Guardian newspaper released e-mails showing the ruling couple shopping for luxury goods as the country slid into bloody chaos. Pages 6, 7



Asma al-Assad: sanctions

Qatar makes surprise bid for Asian Cup hockey

By ND Prashant Doha

Hockey fans in Qatar, keep your fingers crossed today - if all goes well, Qatar will be playing hosts to two of Asia's biggest tournaments, the 2012 Asian Champions Cup and the 2013 Asia Cup.

The bids were kept under wraps all these days, but yesterday the Qatar Hockey Federation (QHF) revealed that Qatar was targeting both these major tournaments where top Asian countries

will be taking part. The outcome of the bids will be declared in Malaysia today.

"Yes, we are bidding for both these major tournaments and are hoping that we will get the good news by tomorrow evening. The Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) working committee will be meeting on Saturday and deciding on the host nation for these two tournaments as per information we have received," QHF secretary general Nazer Mohamed Abdul told Gulf Times.

Qatar Hockey Federation was given the go ahead by the Qatar Olympic Committee for the bid soon after the

Asian Hockey Federation had sent a bid circular last month.

"Qatar has fulfilled all the criteria required by the AHF and we have full support from the Qatar Olympic Committee"

"Qatar has fulfilled all the criteria required by the AHF and we have full support from the Qatar Olympic Committee. We have no doubt in our organising capabilities and AHF must have certainly taken notice how well we

organised the Asian Games. They have accepted our bid after thorough evaluation and we are hoping for the best," said a confident Abdul.

At the Asian Champions Cup, the top six hockey-playing countries - India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Korea, China and Japan - will be taking part, while eight countries will be vying for title in the Asia Cup.

Meanwhile, the International Hockey Federation has already awarded Qatar a World Hockey League level 1 tournament to be held for the first time this year.

The league is somewhat similar to

Davis Cup tennis, were countries get an opportunity to graduate by playing against each other. The dates and the teams for the tournament are yet to be decided by the IHF.

"World Hockey League level 1 in itself is a huge boost for Qatar. Fans and our players will be getting an opportunity to see several teams from Asia taking part in the event. This event is to develop the sport all through the region and we thank the IHF for providing us with the opportunity," said Abdul.

Apart from this, IHF has also decided to give official status to two Test series

that Qatar will be playing against Oman and Brazil. Oman, who are ranked seventh in Asia, will be playing Qatar on March 27 and 29 and Brazil will be playing a five-match Test series in April.

"The Test series will give our boys a great deal of experience. It is not just about hosting events, we also want our team to develop. We have lot of talent here in Qatar and we have to give them more opportunity. Playing against top teams will do a world of good to their confidence. We hope our boys can put up a good show against Oman," added Abdul.



Pakistanis celebrate national day

By Ashraf Siddiqui
Doha

A large participation of families with children in traditional dresses was the highlight of Pakistan's 72nd National Day celebrated yesterday at the embassy.

Pakistan ambassador Mohamed Sarfraz Khanzada hoisted the national flag at a ceremony in the morning. He congratulated the community and read messages from President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani.

Embassy's consular section head Ashar Shahzad conducted the ceremony. Official Mohamed Afzal recited prayers for the prosperity, strength and unity of the Pakistani nation and community members living in Qatar.

Guests were served a traditional breakfast with freshly prepared puri and chana, topped off with halwa.

Ambassador Khanzada also interacted with the community members.

The day commemorates the passage of the Lahore Resolution, later called, the Pakistan Resolution, which eventually led to the creation of Pakistan.

In Pakistan, the day dawned with special prayers for the progress and prosperity of the country and with a 31-gun salute in the federal capital and 21-gun salutes in provincial capitals.

President Zardari, in his message on the occasion, said: "On this day, let us resolve that we will not permit any dictator to usurp the basic fundamental rights of our people, nor allow them to trample on our democratic aspirations."

He said: "This requires that we work in the spirit of tolerance, mutual accommodation and respect for dissent."

Prime Minister Gilani said Pakistan Day is not only an occasion of celebration but also an opportunity to reiterate pledge to keep working hard for the attainment of objectives contained in Pakistan Resolution.

"On this auspicious occasion, we pledge to uphold the supremacy of democracy and rule of law at every cost," he added.

Cables of congratulations

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and HH the Heir Apparent Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani have sent cables of congratulations to the Pakistani president on the occasion of his country's national day. HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani has also sent a cable of congratulations to the president on the occasion.



Ambassador Khanzada addressing community members.



The ambassador hoisting the national flag.



A section of women and children at the event.

Fun and games at Spring Fair

By Fran Gillespie
Doha

The parents and teachers of Dutch-speaking students attending Ghassra International School in Ghassra

held their annual "Lentefest" Spring Fair yesterday morning in the grounds of the school.

As well as the usual fun and games on offer - bouncy castles, face painting and the like - there were various water games involving getting wet, such as water

bowling, to the enjoyment of participants and spectators alike.

In the talent show the youngest children offered lively displays of disco and break dancing, gymnastics and performances on recorder and keyboard, received with enthusias-

tic applause from their friends and parents.

Silk paintings, jewellery and books were on offer at a small craft fair. The Lentefest was attended by the ambassadors of Holland and Belgium, John Groffen and Luuk de Volder.



Audience watching the talent show at the fair. PICTURE: Bianca Toet

Fascinating Zubarah

Young visitors to the Al Zubarah archaeological site are fascinated by a heavy, teardrop-shaped pearl diver's weight found during the excavations, right. The site is hopefully going to be Qatar's first on the Unesco World Heritage List. The Qatar Museums Authority and the University of Copenhagen have launched an outreach programme at the site to teach students about the archaeological heritage of Qatar. The project's outreach officer, Nasreen Mohamed, explained that pearl divers in the 18th and 19th century hung these weights around their ankles, to help them descend quickly to the pearl banks on the sea bed. A corner tower of the palace in Al Zubarah is now conserved and partially restored after five months of intensive work, below. Since January, more than 600 students from different schools in Qatar have visited the site.

