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Bid to tap solar energy for power



Lockerbie bomber Megrahi dies



DOW JONES		QE		NYMEX	
12,369.38	-73.11	8,402.93	-52.36	91.48	-1.08
-0.59%		-0.62%		-1.17%	

Latest Figures

GULF TIMES

MONDAY Vol. XXXIII No. 8634

May 21, 2012
Jumada-II 30, 1433 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

Published in QATAR since 1978

In brief

QATAR | Education
21 students graduate from US universities

Twenty-one Qatari students on scholarships from the Ministry of Interior (MoI) have graduated in various engineering disciplines with distinction from different universities in the US. The Qatari students took courses in engineering disciplines like fire engineering, electrical engineering, communications, electronic engineering and computer science, the ministry said in a statement.

REGION | Unrest
Bahrain slams Iran's 'flagrant meddling'

The government of Bahrain condemned yesterday Iran's continued "flagrant meddling" in Gulf affairs after the Islamic republic slammed plans for union between the kingdom and Saudi Arabia. The cabinet "stresses that Iran's continued flagrant meddling in the internal affairs of the Gulf Co-operation Council is categorically rejected at official and public levels," a statement carried by BNA state news agency said. Iran's interference represents a "disregard to the GCC's ongoing efforts to achieve integration," it added.

PAKISTAN | Internet
Twitter blocked over 'blasphemous content'

Pakistan yesterday blocked access to Twitter in response to "blasphemous" material posted by users on the microblogging and social networking website, a senior government official said. "This has been done under the directions of the Ministry of Information Technology. It's because of blasphemous content," said Mohamed Yaseen, chairman of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA).

BUSINESS | Credit
'Aa3' and 'A1' ratings for Nakilat gas firm

Nakilat (Qatar Gas Transport Company) yesterday said global credit rating agency Standard and Poor's has reaffirmed "Aa3" and "A1" ratings to its senior secured and subordinated debts respectively. The rating have a "stable" outlook, said a spokesman of Nakilat.

Emir calls for 'a spring for just peace in the Middle East'

HH the Emir says Palestine is the last Arab homeland that has not been given its freedom till this day and "it is time to earn it"

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

Qatar yesterday cautioned Israel that it risks isolation; if it did not withdraw from Syrian and Lebanese occupations and recognise the legitimate rights of Palestine.

"Israel must adhere to the rules of international law, recognise the legitimate Arab rights of the Palestinian people, withdraw from the Syrian Golan and Lebanese Shebaa farms," HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani told the 12th Doha Forum on Middle East Economic Future.

The Emir inaugurated the conclave in the presence of Prime Minister and Foreign Minister HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse and other dignitaries.

He also asked Israel to refrain from practices that prevent the achievement of a just peace in the future such as building settlements and the Judaisation of Jerusalem, otherwise "it will miss the chance for peace because the rising generation of Arab people will not accept injustice or occupation."

Believing that it was a mistake to leave the Palestinian issue pending on the international agenda, he said the will of the Arab people would not allow that anymore and therefore Israel should "take a positive step for peace and coexistence."

Palestine is the last Arab homeland that has not been given its freedom till this day and "it is time to earn it", he said.

"The Arab Spring must be accompanied by a spring for a just peace in the Middle East," HH Sheikh Hamad said, observing that the Arab people would not forget Palestine or thousands of Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli jails or the besieged people in Gaza.

Reviewing the political development in Israel in the last few days during which Israeli Prime Minister was able to form the largest and most powerful government coalition in that country's history; he said by doing so, the Israeli premier himself dropped the Israeli argument that fragility of the coalition government did not allow flexibility.

"The Israeli Prime Minister is now required to make a long-awaited step towards achieving peace that is based



HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani speaking at the opening of the 12th Doha Forum on Middle East Economic Future yesterday.

on cessation of settlement, the 1967 borders and the two-state solution," the Emir said.

He said Israel cannot rely anymore on its friendship with rulers who were overthrown by the Arab Spring and it should not be banking on others against its own people and the overall opinion because "Israel will

find itself with no friends at all."

The Arab Spring, according to HH Sheikh Hamad, was preceded by a complete rigidity and ineffective policies and public anger. "Some people had ignored these indicators to be then surprised by revolutions that exploded to announce a historic and unprecedented transformation," he added. **Page 2**

Concern over falling aid to poorest countries

Qatar, which has extended \$730mn in foreign aid last year, yesterday expressed concern over falling aid to poorest countries and said political freedom does not necessarily lead to economic justice.

"The political freedom, which is the foundation of democracy, does not necessarily lead to economic justice if not accompanied by social and humanitarian development and fair social policies," HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani told the 12th Doha Forum on Middle East Economic Future, which began yesterday.

Stressing that Arab Spring sought to restore the people's economic and social rights, not only political ones; he said it would soon be clear that transition to democracy could not be separated from development policies, bridge the gap between the rich and the poor and create a favourable economic conditions to expand the middle class.

Highlighting that transition to democracy has several challenges, HH Sheikh Hamad said there were a lot of complex economic problems that might be hard

to solve such as low economic growth, high rates of unemployment and low productivity.

Unemployment and re-evaluation of education systems must be given the utmost importance, he said, adding unemployment is one of the most important factors that could undermine social stability.

He specifically mentioned that the food and economic crises have played a major role in increasing the food shortage and deepened poverty in the poorest countries. The economic crisis led to a decline in direct investments and declining exports of these countries.

Finding that the official aid to these countries had fallen in 2011, he said "this phenomenon is a cause of concern, especially if the downward trend continued."

In this regard, HH the Emir said Qatar had doubled its government aid to \$730mn in 2011 and the government and non-governmental aid this year is estimated to be about \$900mn (which does not include the aid provided by some government agencies).

Qatar national strategy to attract investment

QNA
New York

The State of Qatar confirmed that it worked to create legislative and institutional environment necessary to attract investment and laid foundations for co-operation in various fields with all countries.

In a statement delivered before the UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on the Economic and Financial Situation for 2012, HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah said Qatar prepared its National Vision 2030 and its national strategy for the period 2011-2016, which included all key elements for achieving sustainable development.

Dr al-Attiyah explained that Qatar managed to face the global economic crisis through the adoption of effective policies and taking swift measures

that enabled it to contain its effects and continued the implementation of the development strategy which based on human, social, environmental and economic development, and paying a special attention to economic diversification in order to achieve sustainable development.

He said international and regional specialised reports showed that Qatar had achieved the highest growth rate in the region, adding that due to this rapid growth the rate of inflation at the end of 2011 did not exceed 1.9%. In addition, the state is expected to achieve the Millennium's Development Goals before 2015, Dr al-Attiyah said.

In the high-level meeting called by the General Assembly and attended by a number of heads of state and foreign ministers as well as economic affairs ministers and experts, Dr al-Attiyah reviewed the global economic situation since the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2008.

Landmark 6,000-unit Barwa City complex opens

By Ramesh Mathew
Staff Reporter

In what is considered as a major development in the country's residential real estate sector, Barwa Real Estate Company yesterday formally opened its ambitious Barwa City project in Mesaimeer.

The fully-furnished 6,000-unit city is expected to house about 25,000 people when tenants' occupation is complete.

President of the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) Nasser al-Mawlawi, Chairman of the Central Municipal Council Saoud bin Abdullah al-Hanzab and chairman of the Barwa Real Estate Company Hitmi bin Ali

al-Hitmi jointly cut a ribbon to mark the opening of the complex in the presence of many senior government officials.

The guests went on an inspection tour of some of the buildings inside the complex after its formal inauguration. The complex, spread over a vast area in Mesaimeer, runs parallel to Doha-Abu Hamour road.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Ali al-Hitmi said Qatar's remarkable economic growth had created a large number of opportunities for investors at different levels and this is more evident at a time when the world is passing through a critical time.

Barwa Estate, he said, has showed great commitment to completing the projects on schedule and it generated

good returns for its shareholders.

Group CEO of Barwa Real Estate Abdulla Abdulaziz al-Subaie said: "Barwa City is a landmark project that presents the company's contribution to the architectural development in Qatar, which is in line with the objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030. In Barwa, we aspire to be the leaders in the field

through our local projects which revolve around developing the Qatari community."

Deputy CEO and chairman of Barwa City Ahmed Abdulla al-Abdulla said: "Barwa City has a total constructed area of 2.7mn sq m. The project provides 200,000sq m of green spaces, 128 residential buildings for tenants, and investors." **Page 9**



A general view of the lighted Barwa City Complex yesterday. The complex in Mesaimeer would house 25,000 residents in the next few months. **PICTURES:** Jayaram



Chairman of Barwa Real Estate Company Hitmi Bin Ali al-Hitmi cutting the ribbon as Central Municipal Council chairman Saoud bin Abdullah al-Hanzab, Ashghal president Nasser al-Mawlawi and others look on at the inauguration of Barwa City complex in Mesaimeer yesterday.



HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani with dignitaries at the opening of the 12th Doha Forum and Enriching the Middle East Economic Future Conference yesterday.



HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani yesterday met Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse, who is in Qatar to participate in the 12th Doha Forum and Enriching the Middle East Economic Future Conference. During the meeting HH the Emir and the Sri Lankan president discussed bilateral relations and topics on the forum's agenda.

ictQATAR orders Qtel to resolve tariff row

The telecommunication's regulator ictQATAR has directed Qtel to start notifying its BlackBerry customers when they reach their data usage limit and charges that apply for exceeding it.

ictQATAR yesterday issued a statement following an investigation into complaints from consumers against Qtel's BlackBerry service.

The statement said, "The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology has investigated complaints from consumers about confusion caused by Qtel and incorrect information being passed to consumers about its Hala BlackBerry service."

ictQATAR said "it has established that Qtel has communicated confusing and/or incorrect information to its customers about data usage limits and charges that may apply when those limits are exceeded."

The telecommunication's regulator urged consumers to note that there are no recent tariff changes to the Qtel's Hala BlackBerry service offering, which was approved by ictQATAR in September 2011.

"It remains that customers who buy the pre-paid Hala BlackBerry service are debited in increments according to data usage. As the included data usage is 250MB a week, Qtel is required to notify these customers when they are reaching that limit so that they may be aware of charges that may apply after the limit is exceeded."

ictQATAR has directed Qtel to provide clear and accurate clarification to its customers on usage limits and charges that apply for the Qtel's Hala BlackBerry service offering by doing the following:

- Refrain from sending any confusing or inaccurate messages

es to the public and its customers about the Hala BlackBerry service

- Issue a clear statement to the public that includes all relevant information about the Hala BlackBerry service including charges and data usage limits that apply

- Inform its call centre staff of the correct information to be communicated to all callers inquiring or complaining about the service

- Report to ictQATAR by May 24 on how Qtel has resolved complaints and cleared up the

confusion it has caused in the market place about this service.

According to ictQATAR, Qtel has provided a dedicated hotline for Hala BlackBerry service inquiries and complaints on 44249033.

"If Qtel does not resolve a consumer's complaint about Hala BlackBerry services, the consumer may contact ictQATAR at 103 or by e-mail consumerservice@ictqatar.gov.qa to lodge a formal complaint with the regulatory authority for telecommunications," ictQATAR said.

Excess BlackBerry usage charges to be refunded

Qtel has clarified there has been no changes to the pricing or data allowance of its BlackBerry service even as the service provider introduced an SMS service to alert customers about their usage level.

Qtel said it is providing 250MB of data allowance to its Hala BlackBerry customers for QR15 a week.

"Excess usage beyond the allowance is charged at Dh55 per MB," Qtel said.

Qtel said it has implemented a network upgrade to enhance customer experience through a new SMS alert service that lets customers know when they have used 80% of their allowance, and informs them again at 100% to ensure BlackBerry customers are fully aware of their data consumption. This update service is offered across Qtel product lines.

"In the course of implement-

ing this upgrade, a number of customers were identified who were using more than the 250MBs allocation and were not being charged for the additional data consumed. This system error was rectified, resulting in some customers receiving an unexpected charge over the last few days.

"Although pricing and data allowance have remained consistent since the BlackBerry service was revamped in 2011 - and these have been communicated to customers on a weekly basis via SMS - Qtel acknowledges that the application of data limits took some customers by surprise, and is taking immediate steps to rectify this issue."

In line with the company's Customer Charter, those BlackBerry customers who were charged for excess data consumption over the past week will

eShop launches free delivery offer

Qtel is offering free delivery within Qatar for all its products and services, for a limited time only, as part of its eShop services. Since launching in December last year, web-savvy Qtel customers have been able to log on to www.qtel.qa/eshop to access everything from Hala pre-paid SIMS and Shahry plans, to a choice of personal numbers and the latest handsets from smartphone giants like BlackBerry, Apple, Samsung and Nokia. Customers can also purchase special easy-to-remember (ETR) numbers via the special number selector facility, which enables Qtel customers to pick the mobile number that best suits their personality. A full range of Qtel's popular Shahry value packs are also newly available for online purchase. Also just a click away is a selection of tablets, as well as much sought-after Internet enablers such as USB modems and WiFi adapters and Qtel's pioneering my-fi hotspot and wireless home gateways. Customers can order via credit card and expect free delivery across Qatar via Qpost within one to three days or they can claim their products at Qtel stores in Al Sadd, City Centre, Landmark and the Airport kiosk at arrivals hall. eShop forms an integral component of a cutting-edge, customer-centric online strategy that has seen www.qtel.qa become one of Qatar's most popular web destinations, racking up thousands of unique visits every day.



HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani meeting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Doha yesterday. During the meeting they discussed the latest developments of the Palestinian issue.

Mideast facing hard challenges, says PM

QNA
Doha

HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani delivered a speech at the outset of the 12th Doha Forum in which he stressed the importance of issues on its agenda, pointing out that they are focused on issues of vital interest to the humanitarian relations at national, regional and international levels and are tabled for free, responsible and constructive dialogue from which we can come out with rules of action that achieve the gains sought by everyone.

He said there was no doubt that the most important elements that represent the characteristics of the political stage the region is passing through, was the strength and effectiveness of the broad popular demands for reform, which were the main motive for Arab revolutions. For this reason we have seen the strong popular move towards demand of the rule of law, respect for freedoms, uprooting of corruption and consolidation of economic and social development, HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim said.

The Prime Minister explained that these aspects were interrelated and had reciprocal influences on each other, expressing the hope that the discussions would be comprehensive in na-

ture and focus on accurate analysis and objective criticism.

The Middle East region is facing today hard challenges, starting with the identification of means of movement toward reform and ending with the provision of means of peace, stability and new construction of community life at the national level, he added.

He said: "If we added to this the apparent failure so far to eliminate known conflicts on the scene on the basis of a peaceful settlement under the international law, particularly the Palestinian problem, appears the magnitude of the challenges we face. For this reason, we have to acknowledge the fact that the achievement of reform, development, peace, security and stability, requires co-operation and solidarity."

Concluding, HE the Prime Minister believed that the world was now facing serious chal-

lenges, whether economic or political which leave "for us options that need accurate and effective decisions and mechanisms".

Guest of honour, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse said that the world now was facing many challenges notably the economic crisis and the food sufficiency issue.

Addressing the forum's opening session Rajapakse said Sri Lanka had been emphasising over the last 30 years on being an economic hub in the region, a point deemed important amid the economic crisis. It's also focusing on being an economic hub in ex-trade and commerce in the region.

He further stressed in the same vein that Sri Lanka was putting efforts in the production in rural areas, railways industry as well as building a hub to shipment to be expanded in South Sri Lanka and facilities in maritime.

PM in talks with leaders

HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani met in Doha yesterday with a number of leaders and officials on the sidelines of the 12th Doha Forum and Enriching the Middle East Economic Future Conference. They included Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Sri Lankan

President Mahinda Rajapakse, Sudanese Vice President al-Haj Adam Youssuf, leader of Sudanese Ummah Party Sadiq al-Mahdi, Speaker of the Jordanian Senate Tahir al-Masri and former Spanish prime minister Jose Luis. Talks during the meetings dealt with bilateral relations and topics on the forum's agenda.

GCC insurance sector growth 'to outperform' GDP

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

The \$15bn Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) insurance industry is expected to see its premium outgrow the region's economy in a "low but stable" pricing environment, according to the Qatar Financial Centre Authority's (QFCA) survey.

The GCC Insurance Barometer, which was launched yesterday at the 29th Global Arab Insurance Federation Conference in Morocco, found the GCC region's insurance sector will continue to grow faster than the region's gross domestic product (GDP) over the next two years.

It also found that over the next

12-24 months, medical and health insurance is expected to be the fastest growing line of business, fuelled by compulsory insurance requirements that are reshaping some of the region's non-life markets, in particular Saudi Arabia. Other markets, like Qatar, are expected to follow suit.

The survey found that over the next 12-24 months, engineering was the most profitable line of business, followed by liability, marine cargo and personal accident; while medical business is considered the least profitable area, followed by motor, primarily because of escalating cost of treatment and insurers' limited scope for risk selection in these compulsory lines, respectively.

"The GCC insurance sector is a \$15bn market and set to play

an essential role in the region's future economic development," says Shashank Srivastava, acting CEO of the QFCA.

Finding that 60% of surveyed executives expect insurance premiums to continue outgrowing GDP, it said, besides the region's robust economic dynamics and continued government spending on infrastructure projects, the low insurance penetration is considered a key driver behind the out-performance of the insurance sector.

Observing regulatory deficit in the region, the survey said 60% of respondents view the sector's regulatory environment as still "inadequate". In addition, low levels of risk retention, political uncertainties in the region and challenging global economic

prospects cloud the outlook for the insurance sector in the GCC.

"Regulatory deficits are the most relevant perceived weakness of the GCC insurance marketplace - including the contradiction between onshore and offshore regulation," it added.

"The GCC insurance sector is a \$15bn market and set to play an essential role in the region's future economic development"

The survey said 90% of participating executives consider commercial insurance rates to be low and 58% share this view for personal lines of business.

A clear majority of 70% and 75% of respondents, respectively, believe that prices will remain

"stable or even rise" in the next 12 to 24 months, it said, adding profitability prospects are perceived slightly more positively.

"Seventy percent and 53% of interviewees, respectively, judge the current level of profitability in commercial and personal lines as low. Ninety percent and 79%, respectively, expect a stable or improving development," it said.

It also found that some 60% of interviewees expect that foreign insurers will gain market share over the next two years, on the back of superior customer focus, distribution know-how and technical skills.

Insurance markets in the GCC mirror the macroeconomic dynamics of the region. For 2012, total non-life and life premium volume in the GCC is projected

to reach \$16.4bn. Life business grows somewhat faster than the non-life segment but continues to be of less significance with a 13% share of the market, slightly up from 12% in 2006.

Observing that infrastructure and construction spending on a massive scale continues to be the single biggest driver of insurance demand in the region, it said in Qatar alone, projects worth \$63bn are currently underway, with another \$108bn earmarked for planned projects. The respective investment volumes for the GCC region as a whole amount to \$570bn and \$815bn.

The respondents perceive the region's strong economic and associated direct insurance market growth as the most relevant strength of the region. Growth is

considered robust as global demand for oil and gas is likely to continue to grow disproportionately under any global economic scenario.

The abundance of underwriting capacity, provided both by global re-insurers and well-capitalised domestic insurers, ranks second, it said.

The other strengths include a relatively moderate natural catastrophe exposure translating into comparatively low and stable loss ratios, the presence of high value insurable assets driving commercial lines of business, the financial strength of local insurers and a young and growing population underpinning growth in personal lines such as motor, homeowner's property, life and pensions, it added.