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Qatargas to supply eight LNG cargoes to Kuwait

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Jordan strikes as England thrash Sri Lanka



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Latest Figures

GULF TIMES

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In brief

REGION | Health

Three die from H1N1 flu virus in Oman

Omani health authorities yesterday announced three deaths this month from the H1N1 flu virus, the official ONA news agency reported. The health ministry said "82 new cases of H1N1 virus have been registered in May, three of them fatal". The World Health Organisation declared the H1N1 flu pandemic over in August 2010, more than a year after the virus that emerged from Mexico sparked panic and killed thousands of people around the world. But this past February, health authorities in Washington said the H1N1 flu strain had re-emerged. In January, two men died of it in northern Spain, where an outbreak of the H1N1 virus left more than 40 people in hospital.

LIBYA | Standoff

Acting premier refuses to yield power

Libya's acting prime minister, Abdullah al-Thani, yesterday refused to hand power to newly-elected premier Ahmed Mitig because of questions over his appointment, and demanded lawmakers resolve the political dispute. The North African state, struggling with growing unrest, now has two prime ministers and a parliament deeply split among Islamist, anti-Islamist and regional factions that will complicate any swift resolution. Thani said he had received conflicting orders from Libya's divided parliament over the legitimacy of Mitig's election and would continue in his caretaker post until the situation was clarified by the General National Congress or GNC. **Page 19**

NIGERIA | Unrest

Four girls escape Boko Haram

Four more girls kidnapped by Boko Haram militants last month have escaped their captors, the education commissioner for Nigeria's Borno state said yesterday, leaving 219 still missing. The girls were taking exams at a secondary school in the remote northeastern village of Chibok on April 14 when the militant group's gunmen surrounded it, loaded 276 of them onto trucks and carted them off. Fifty-three escaped shortly afterwards. **Pages 20, 36**

AMERICA | Technology

Google unveils self-driving cars

Google has unveiled plans to build its own self-driving car - minus the steering wheel - that it hopes to begin testing in the coming months. "They won't have a steering wheel, accelerator pedal, or brake pedal... because they don't need them. Our software and sensors do all the work," Google's Chris Urmson said in a blog post. **Page 21**

Supplement

Today's *Gulf Times* includes a special four page broadsheet on "Leading Global Brands in Qatar"

Call for mid-day break



Workers at a construction site in Doha around 1pm yesterday when temperature touched 48C. The peak temperature so far this year, 49C, has been forecast today in Doha. The rise in temperature levels has triggered calls for an immediate implementation of summer hours for labourers working outdoors. Summer working hours, fixed by the Labour Department, are usually applied between June 15 and August 31. Under the mid-day work ban, all companies are bound to reschedule their hours, giving a noon break for outdoor labourers from 11:30am to 3:30pm. **PICTURE: Jayan Orma Page 40**

Accident at Texas A&M laboratory kills staff member

A man died in an accident at one of the laboratories of Texas A&M University at Qatar (TAMUQ) yesterday afternoon. Details of the man, a staff member, were not released.

A press statement, distributed on behalf of Dr Mark H Weichold, dean and CEO of TAMUQ, stated: "It is with great regret that I announce that a member of the Aggie (the term refers to current and former students of Texas A&M) family passed away today while working in a laboratory in the Texas A&M Engineering Building. This is an unspeakable tragedy, and words cannot convey my condolences and compassion for his family, friends and colleagues. All of us share their grief."

TAMUQ notified that classes would be suspended for today and would resume on Sunday. The statement said: "Although classes are cancelled, students are welcome on campus tomorrow (Thursday). The TAMUQ Engineering Building will be open tomorrow (Thursday) and employees should re-

port to work as usual." The statement further said: "The staff member's family has been notified, and Texas A&M at Qatar is working closely with Qatar Foundation and Qatar government officials to determine the cause of (the) incident. As our community copes with this loss, Texas A&M at Qatar is co-ordinating counselling for employees and students. There will be no further comment as Texas A&M at Qatar works closely with Qatar Foundation and government to determine the cause of today's incident."

Around 1pm yesterday TAMUQ had issued a statement confirming the accident. It said: "An accident with an injury has occurred. Emergency services have responded. Classes are suspended for the rest of the day. Although there is no ongoing danger or threat, the building remains closed."

The emergency board in the university stated at 2.20pm "Texas A&M at Qatar is closed. Classes are cancelled for the remainder of today, Wednesday, 28 May."

chief Ismail Haniya will make an address from Gaza and then President Mahmoud Abbas will declare from Ramallah the formation of the interim unity government," said Musa Abu Marzooq. Abu Marzooq told Hamas news agency al-Ra'i that the two sides were consulting to decide on the names of the new government's members. He denied there were obstacles fac-

ing the formation of the new government, adding that Rami Hamdallah, the current prime minister under Abbas in the West Bank, would also be minister of interior. "We are working on setting up the needed arrangements and preparations as well as deciding the dates in both Gaza and Ramallah to declare the new unity government tomorrow," said Abu Marzooq.

ICT programme to benefit migrant workers in Qatar

The programme will be available in languages like English, Arabic, Hindi, Bengali and Nepali



Officials at the launch of the "Better Connections Programme" at Qitcom 2014 yesterday.

Qatar's almost half a million migrant workers, who are mostly housed in labour accommodations, are to get access to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) tools, it was announced yesterday.

The initiative is an outcome of the "Better Connections Programme" launched by the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQatar) within the framework of its digital inclusion programmes.

The programme, which "provides content that is relevant to the needs of migrant workers", will be available in languages such as English, Arabic, Hindi, Bengali and Nepali.

Under the "Better Connections Programme", ictQatar will help employers provide ICT access within workers' accommodation and integrate them into a new country and culture.

The launch took place at the third edition of the Qatar ICT Conference and Exhibition, Qitcom 2014, which concluded yesterday at the Qatar National Convention Centre.

"The lack of facilities and unfamiliarity with the Internet are some of the barriers for Qatar's migrant workers. The Better Connections Programme has been established to create a framework towards realisation of digital inclusion

across our transient labour force," said Reem al-Mansoori, the ministry's executive director for ICT and Society.

"In order to ensure that we provide a holistic programme, we worked in partnership with stakeholders so that we could support workers at their accommodations, ensuring that they have access to the Internet, computers and digital content," she explained.

The programme will provide a room or designated area for computer access and ICT training at labour accommodations; source low-cost computers through a recycling scheme to keep any outgoings to a minimum; fixed or wireless Internet connection; and appropriate content and training to help deliver ICT-based training to meet the needs of the transient labour force.

Most of the learning resources will be provided in five different languages: Arabic, English, Hindi,

Nepali and Bengali. This is to include a range of interactive learning modules to support digital inclusion of migrant workers and enabling implementation of the Better Connections Programme, to include introduction to Qatar, workers' rights, financial literacy, health and safety and ICT skills.

Content, supported by the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), offers important information on the rights of Qatar workers. NHRC legal consultant Hala al-Ali described the programme as an "excellent idea" for workers and employers.

"NHRC provided important information about access to legal system in the State of Qatar, including international standards relating to the responsibility of states and companies. In addition, NHRC is committed in providing updated information as the law changes," al-Ali said. **Page 44**

Abbas 'to declare unity government today'

DPA Gaza City

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will declare the formation of an interim unity government from Ramallah today, a senior official from the Hamas movement said yesterday.

"On Thursday, (Hamas deputy

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ICT ministry brings iParks to Shahaniya, Umm Salal

Free wireless Internet is being introduced at two new parks in Qatar as part of the iParks initiative of the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology.

The communities in Shahaniya and Umm Salal are now able to take advantage of free, high-speed connectivity while enjoying the beautiful parks.

With both parks being officially launched on the sidelines of the third edition of Qatar ICT Conference and Exhibition (Qitcom 2014), there will now be nine iParks across Qatar.

The iParks initiative, launched in 2007 in collaboration with the Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning (MMUP), has seen a steady increase in users in the current seven iParks. The number of users benefiting from free Wi-Fi access in public parks tripled over the past three years. Now, iParks have more than 14,000 unique users per month, exceeding 60,000 sessions and 450 unique users each day.



Mohamed El-Khoori and Reem al-Mansoori announce the iParks initiative.

The ICT ministry has worked in collaboration with the Public Parks Department of the MMUP on the iParks project as part of its commitment to connect the people of Qatar to the technologies that can enrich their lives.

"Residents of Al Rayan Municipality and Umm Salal Municipality will now enjoy free, high-speed Internet connection," said Reem al-Mansoori, executive director, ICT & Society, Ministry of Information and Communications Technology.

Mohamed El-Khoori, director of the MMUP's Public Parks Department, said: "We have been working closely with the Ministry of Information Communications Technology to provide free Wi-Fi in our public parks. Today, we are proud of the iParks, an initiative launched by the Public Parks Department in collaboration with the ICT ministry."

The bilateral work is to continue towards further expansion

of the initiative to include new iParks in the coming years. Qatar aims to have a majority of its public parks and public places connected to wireless Internet by 2015.

Besides the two new ones, there are iParks in Doha at Rumaila, Sheraton and Dahl Al-Haman as well as in Dukhan, Simaisma, Al Wakrah and Corniche Al Khor.

Visitors to the iParks follow a simple registration and authentication process to access the Wi-Fi in each park, with access information available in both Arabic and English.

The service has been made easier as smartphones can now access the free Wi-Fi with an SMS log-on system.

The iParks' wireless connection is completely secure with an authentication process providing users with a secure PIN code sent by text once they register for the service. Users can get technical support if needed through the government call centre on 44069955.



Delegates, exhibitors and representatives from different companies and organisations listen to the discussion sessions at Qitcom 2014. PICTURE: Nasar TK

Call for 'Arabisation' of websites in Qatar

There is a need to focus on "Arabisation" of websites in Qatar as part of promoting the spread of Arabic digital content, ICT experts said on the last day of the ICT Conference and Exhibition (Qitcom) 2014 yesterday.

Highlighting the competitive advantage of the country as a regional leader in this field, experts explained how to transform ICT into a means for innovation and entrepreneurship - that in return will promote new ideas and tech-

niques in Qatar.

During the sessions, they also discussed how technology can play a role in re-shaping the public and private sector companies, government agencies and academic institutions.

Companies, governments and individuals should also give "encouragement grants" to promote Arabic digital content.

"Qatar has made great strides in the ICT sector, which has played a very crucial role in building a strong economy and

enriching the lives of all sections of the society," said Qitcom Project Lead Rinal Chaaban.

As organiser, she noted that they worked tirelessly over the past months to organise the event in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology. They hope to organise the same event next year focusing on innovation from the ICT sector to boost the country's economy.

ictQATAR launches 'Digital Inclusion Strategy'

In an effort to bridge Qatar's digital divide, the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR) has announced the release and roll out of its "Digital Inclusion Strategy" (DIS).

The report identifies key areas that require improvement and also details a number of initiatives aimed at improving technology usage and accessibility that will ensure that everyone advances together in the technology race.

The DIS was developed in support of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Plan and the recently-launched Qatar National Broadband Plan.

"Technology is a key factor in transforming Qatar into a knowledge-based economy therefore, it is essential that all members of our society are given access to new technologies and have an understanding of how to use ICT effectively," said Reem al-Mansoori, executive director of the minis-

try's ICT and Society.

Despite being a global leader in mobile and Internet penetration, a gap in understanding and accessibility to technology among a number of segments of Qatar's population have been identified as a priority.

Those identified at risk of exclusion were the elderly, persons with special needs or disability, low-skilled migrant workers with limited Internet access, those who live in remote areas, non-working Qatari women, and young people

that did not pursue higher education.

"In order to facilitate this shift, it is important to provide both technology skills and access to all segments of our population. At the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology, we seek to identify and create opportunities for those at risk of digital exclusion," she continued.

The strategy outlines a number of initiatives that have been and will be implemented to enhance the adoption of technology in

each sub-group. Among the younger users that are seen as digitally savvy, the Ministry has identified a need for further guidance to ensure that they get the most from the ICT tools available to them.

In addition, "Safety and Media Literacy" workshops are being offered to overcome the growing concern on online safety for the youth.

To ensure non-working Qatari women are kept abreast with technology, the ministry is work-

ing to provide a range of ICT skills training, including raising awareness on social media channels to promote small businesses, awareness of e-government services such as Hukoomi, and improving access to these services from their homes.

These initiatives are a key to empowering Qatari women by creating flexibility that will enable them to work from their homes and providing them with an understanding of technologies that will help support the development of their

children's use of technology.

The strategy also identifies the need for better access for people living in remote communities, particularly in labour accommodations.

The DIS outlines that the ministry will work with employers to develop computer rooms in labour accommodations and improve training opportunities using community languages for better understanding, which is part of the "Better Connections Programme"



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