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QFCA, USQBC look to boost Qatar-US business ties

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Lekhwiya twin blunders gift Al Fateh 2-2 draw



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TUESDAY Vol. XXXVIII No. 10378

February 28, 2017

Jumada II 1, 1438 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

published in
QATAR
since 1978

GULF TIMES



In brief

QATAR | Ties

Emir holds talks with Azerbaijan president



HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani yesterday held official talks at the Emiri Diwan with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev. They reviewed bilateral relations and the means to enhance them in all fields. They also discussed a number of regional and international issues of joint interest, particularly the latest development in the region. The talks were attended by HH the Deputy Emir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani. [Page 2](#)

Qatar praised for fight against terror funding

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

Qatar's prominent role in strengthening the international efforts to combat money laundering and terrorism financing has come in for praise from a united global body of some 152 Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs).

The Egmont Group of FIUs placed on record its acknowledgement to the support of HE Ali Sherif al-Emadi, Qatar's Minister of Finance, and Sheikh Fahad Faisal al-Thani, deputy governor of Qatar Central Bank and chairman of the National Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Committee.

The counterpart FIUs also praised the valuable contributions that the Qatar FIU has provided to the Egmont Group since its admission as a member in 2005.

The Egmont Group said the working groups meetings and the plenary

held recently in Doha discussed the challenges faced by FIUs in combating money laundering, associated predicate offences and terrorist financing; especially in the areas of international co-operation, information sharing and the improved development of financial intelligence.

In his opening address, al-Emadi had highlighted Qatar's unwavering commitment to the Egmont Group in combating money laundering, associated predicate offences and terrorist financing.

Methods and techniques used in money laundering and terrorism financing crimes are constantly changing, especially with the increasing capacity to utilise the rapid technological developments in carrying out these crimes, he said.

Despite the application of international standards to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, "perpetrators" are familiar with the systems through which they can pass

the "illicit" funds, al-Emadi said, highlighting the need for enhancing the financial institutions' capacity to strengthen co-operation and co-ordination among them to monitor, track and prevent these crimes.

"The success in the fight against these crimes is not easy but it is also not impossible if there is will, capacity and international co-ordination to combat them," he said, stressing that Qatar has supported all international efforts to combat different types of crimes.

At the Doha meeting, the FIUs approved a white paper on the utility of cross-border wire transfer reporting; flexible, information exchange standards for FIUs; report on business e-mail compromise and FIU Information System Maturity Model training materials, among others.

"Qatar has succeeded in strengthening its legislative, regulatory and technical framework to combat money laundering and terrorism funding," according to Sheikh Fahad.

The Egmont Group specially thanked Sheikh Ahmed al-Thani, head of the Qatar FIU (QFIU) and his team for the plenary meeting in Doha.

The Middle East and North Africa region currently comprises 11 FIUs representing besides Qatar, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

According to the QFIU website, the number of suspicious transaction reports (STRs) increased by more than 36% year-on-year to 702 in 2015, with exchange houses constituting 77% and banks 16%.

Regarding individuals identified as being involved in suspicious financial activities during 2015, QFIU found exchange houses have the highest rate of STRs (89%), followed by banks (10%), finance and investment companies (1%) and insurance companies (1%).

The number of "suspects" grew more than 58% to 1,241 in 2015. [Page 28](#)

"The fuel subsidy reform in Qatar will not increase revenues for the Qatari government, but allow spending to decrease and thus reducing the budget deficit"

The monthly revision in local fuel prices followed the government's decision on fuel subsidy reforms in Qatar.

What impact the fuel price hike has on consumer items remains to be seen as most of the goods are transported to Qatar from abroad.

According to BMI Research, a Fitch Group company, the fuel subsidy reform would help Qatar reduce its budget deficit by allowing spending to decrease.

"The fuel subsidy reform in Qatar will not increase revenues for the Qatari government, but allow spending to decrease and thus reducing the budget deficit," a BMI researcher told *Gulf Times* recently.

Meanwhile, Brent oil prices edged yesterday and were set to rise for five out of seven sessions as global supply glut appears to ease, but rising US production limited gains, a Reuters' dispatch showed.

Brent crude was up 0.04% to \$56.01 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate was unchanged at \$53.99 a barrel.

Oil prices tumbled on Friday after the US Energy Information Administration data showed US crude inventories rose for a seventh straight week.

But the market has been supported within a tight \$4 to \$5 range since November, when the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and other producers agreed to cut production.

"EIA data showed stocks rose 564,000 barrels to 518.7mn last week," ANZ said in a note.

Pentagon prepares new plan to defeat IS

AFP
Washington

The Pentagon yesterday presented the White House with possible new battle plans to defeat the Islamic State group, after President Donald Trump demanded top brass find additional ways to destroy the militants.

A pillar of Trump's campaign was to quicken the fight against IS, which despite losing thousands of fighters still controls parts of northern Syria and Iraq, and he berated the Barack Obama administration for taking too long to do so.

Trump had claimed to have a secret plan to defeat IS, but never disclosed what this might be.

He repeatedly pledged to "bomb

the hell" out of the militants and even threatened to kill family members of suspected IS fighters.

Shortly after taking office, the new president gave the Pentagon 30 days to come up with a comprehensive review of the fight against IS, which a US-led coalition has been bombing in Iraq and Syria since late summer 2014, while also using commandos to train and ad-

vise local forces. The initial version of that review is now complete, and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis presented the findings to Trump's top national security advisers yesterday.

Though broad in scope, the options outlined in the classified review are preliminary and need to be further refined, Pentagon spokesman Navy Captain Jeff Davis said.

and Environment Mohamed bin Abdulrahman and Ashghal president Dr Saad bin Ahmed al-Mohannadi, along with a number of senior officials of relevant authorities and institutions.

The attendees were given presentation and they also paid a field visit to a number of worksites of the New Orbital Highway project to learn about the progress attained so far and the timetable for implementing its various phases.

The Minister of Transport and Communications appreciated the efforts made by Ashghal to open the road, expressing confidence that the authority would complete the next phases of the project with the same quality and in accordance with the specified deadline.

He stressed that the partial opening of the New Orbital Highway project, scheduled to take place in April and July, reflected the magnitude of the achievement made on the project.

On his part, the Minister of Munici-

pality and Environment praised the rapid execution of the road's construction, pointing out that Ashghal delivered its work by the agreed deadline. He highlighted the importance of the road, especially in terms of providing a "free-flowing traffic" route for heavy vehicles to and from Hamad Port.

The Minister added that the upcoming launch of new roads within the New Orbital Highway project would provide distinct transport services, particularly with respect to traffic safety due to the separation of truck lanes from those dedicated for light vehicles.

Highlighting the importance of the project, Ashghal tweeted that the Orbital Highway would cover 195km from Mesaieed in the south to the west of Al Khor in the north and include 21 interchanges.

"The Orbital Highway cuts travel time by around 50% and enhances the new Hamad Port's status as a central regional trading hub," it added.



HE the Minister of Transport and Communications and HE the Minister of Municipality and Environment attend the opening of the new road along with a number of dignitaries and officials. Picture courtesy of Ashghal (Twitter)

Ashghal opens road linking Hamad Port and Truck Route

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) yesterday opened a key road linking the new Hamad Port with the Truck Route, which falls within the scope of works of the New Orbital Highway project.

The newly opened road, which is approximately 5km in length and has multilevel interchanges with Mesaieed Road, consists of four lanes in each direction. It will facilitate free-flowing traffic to the Truck Route, helping alleviate congestion and better manage heavy vehicle movement, the Qatar News Agency (QNA) reported.

The road provides new access to Hamad Port, Mesaieed, Al Wakrah and the temporary Truck Route. Also, Ashghal informed through a tweet that the road could accommodate 2,500 trucks daily to and from the new port.

The opening was attended by HE the Minister of Transport and Communications Jassim bin Seif Ahmed al-Sulaiti, HE the Minister of Municipality



HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani receiving Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev at the Emiri Diwan yesterday.



HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev reviewing a guard of honour at the Emiri Diwan yesterday.

Qatar, Azerbaijan sign pacts to boost bilateral relations

QNA
Doha

Qatar and Azerbaijan signed several agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) following a round of official talks chaired by HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev at the Emiri Diwan yesterday.

During the talks, bilateral relations between the two countries and the means to enhance them in all fields were reviewed. A number of regional and international issues of joint interest, particularly the latest developments in the region were also discussed.

Following the talks, HH the Emir and the president of Azerbaijan witnessed the signing of a number of agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoU). The two sides signed MoUs in the fields of culture, youth and sports, and between the ports department of Qatar and its Azerbaijani counterpart.

Qatar's Civil Aviation Authority signed a Memorandum



HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev witness the signing of agreements between Qatar and Azerbaijan at the Emiri Diwan yesterday.



of Understanding with the Civil Aviation Administration of Azerbaijan. The two sides signed a protocol amending the cargo agreement. They also signed a co-operation agreement on the protection of endangered species in their natural habitat.

HH the Deputy Emir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani attended the talks and the signing ceremony.

HE the Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani and a number of ministers also attended.

On the Azerbaijani side, members of the official delegation accompanying the president attended.

Earlier on arrival at the Emiri Diwan, the president of Azerbaijan was accorded an official reception ceremony.

Following the talks, the Emir hosted a luncheon banquet in honour of President Ilham Aliyev and the accompanying delegation at the Emiri Diwan.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani attended the function along with a number of ministers.

Later in the evening, President Aliyev left Doha after a two-day official visit to Qatar.

The Azeri president and the accompanying delegation were

seen off at Hamad International Airport by HE the Minister of Economy and Commerce Sheikh Ahmed bin Jassim bin Mohamed al-Thani, Qatar's ambassador to Azerbaijan Yousef bin Hasan al-Sae and Azerbaijan's ambassador to Qatar Dr Tofiq Abdullaev.

Emir condoles with Saudi king

HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, HH the Deputy Emir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani have sent cables to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia condoling the death of princess Al-Bandari bint Nasser bin Abdulaziz al-Saud.

Emir sends cables of condolences

HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, HH the Deputy Emir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani have sent cables of condolences to acting Governor General of Papua New Guinea Theo Zurenuoc on the death of Papua New Guinea's governor-general Michael Ogi.

Advisory Council holds meeting

The Advisory Council held its regular weekly session yesterday under the chairmanship of HE the Speaker Mohammed bin Mubarak al-Khulaifi. The council reviewed a draft law on public cleanliness and hygiene and referred it to the Services and Public Utilities Committee. Meanwhile, the Services and Public Utilities Committee examined the draft law on regulating the provision of electricity and water.

Sidra's research to focus on precision medicine

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Three core research laboratories, equipped with some of the most advanced equipment, are operational at Sidra Medical and Research Center (Sidra), an official said yesterday.

"The Omics Core, Genomics Core and Deep Phenotyping Core labs are state-of-the-art facilities staffed by high-calibre scientific teams from all over the world," Dr Ena Wang, acting chief research officer of Sidra, said.

"One more core lab, Clinical Research Centre, will be opened later this year. Sidra's research core capabilities and capacity are well advanced so as to meet both national and international needs and the advancement of healthcare delivery in Qatar," she said.

The research facilities at Sidra are world class and most of them are unique not only in the country but in the entire region.

Max Renault, director of research operations, indicated that Sidra will get some more labs in the coming months for various experiments.

"We are in the process of assessing the implementation of Zebra fish capacity at Sidra, providing researchers access to sophisticated equipment and facilities for studying vertebrate development biology and developing zebra fish models of diseases," said Renault.

"As a biological system, the zebra fish model offers distinct

advantages for researchers. It has stable, easily observable and testable development behaviours; it is cost-effective; its genome is fully sequenced and its embryonic development is very rapid. It will be a key facility for identifying genes in disorders like cancers and cardio-vascular disease in humans, and help identify potential new treatments," Renault said.

Sidra's research branch aims to advance the understanding of the pathophysiological mechanisms of diseases, develop early prevention, accurate diagnostic and advance therapeutics and improve the health outcomes for women and children of Qatar"

According to Dr Wang, Sidra has built a state-of-the-art translational research infrastructure that enables the implementation of precision medicine.

"Sidra's research branch aims to advance the understanding of the pathophysiological mechanisms of diseases, develop early prevention, accurate diagnostic and advance therapeutics and improve the health outcomes for women and children of Qatar," said Dr Wang.

"Our research teams are currently working on several research programmes that align with national priorities and healthcare needs to help facilitate prevention, early and targeted intervention for cer-



PICTURES: Shemeer Rasheed



Dr Ena Wang