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PM lays stone for QR11bn power plant

When completed, the Umm Al Haul project will produce 2,520MW of electricity and 136 million gallons of water a day.

By **Mohammed Iqbal**
The Peninsula

DOHA: Prime Minister and Interior Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani yesterday laid the foundation stone for the QR11bn Umm Al Haul Power Plant of Qatar Electricity and Water Company (QEWC), which will give a major boost to water and electricity production. The ceremony at Umm Al Haul,

south of the country, was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs H E Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmood, Minister of Energy and Industry H E Dr Mohammed bin Saleh Al Sada, former energy and industry minister and ex-president of Qatar Administrative Control and Transparency Authority H E Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah, government officials and dignitaries.

When completed, the plant will produce 2,520MW of electricity and 136 million gallons of water a day — a 22 percent increase in the current electricity output and a 25 percent increase in water production — making the project one of the biggest of its kind in the region, Dr Al Sada said at the ceremony.

The project is expected to be completed in two phases. The first will be completed by the second quarter of 2017, with the production 40 million gallons of water a day. The plant will reach full capacity in the third quarter of 2018, Qatar News Agency reports.

The project will be implemented



Prime Minister and Interior Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani lays the foundation stone for the plant, along with other officials.

by Kahramaa, Qatar Petroleum and Japanese firms Mitsubishi and TEPCO. National companies will have access to at least 30 percent of the project works.

Dr Al Sada said the project is part of Qatar's strategic goals of creating infrastructure to support economic development. It aims to develop the electricity and water utility sectors and increase foreign and local investments in both.

The project site was chosen based

on the availability of infrastructure, particularly water and gas pipelines and the salinity of the water near it, Dr Al Sada said.

It is also a water management project to desalinate water to meet future demand.

Dr Al Sada said the project is part of Qatar National Vision 2030 which continues to overcome challenges, as evident by four percent growth in GDP despite the decline in oil prices and its impact on many economies.

QEWC Managing Director and General Manager Fahad bin Hamad Al Mohammadi, also Chairman of Umm Al Haul Power Company, said the plant reflects the government's keenness to involve the private sector in major projects.

He said Qatar has always invested in the electricity sector domestically or internationally, adding that Nebras Power was established with 60 percent ownership by QEWC, while Qatar Petroleum has a 20 percent share.

Emir sends written message to Tunisian President

QNA

DOHA: Emir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani yesterday sent a written message to Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi on relations between the two countries and means of boosting and developing them.

Qatari Ambassador to Tunisia Abdullah bin Nasser Al Humaidi presented the message to the President during a meeting.

40% cut in GCC roaming charges from April 1

RIYADH: The GCC General Secretariat yesterday announced the first phase of new regulation to reduce by 40 percent all cellphone roaming service charges from April 1.

"The reduction includes voice service charges for incoming and outgoing calls, SMS, and data," GCC Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs Abdullah bin Juma Al Shibli said in a statement yesterday.

"Receiving text messages remain free while roaming as it is currently," Al Shibli added.

Cellphone users in the GCC states could save up to \$1.13bn, boosting social welfare by \$404m, he said.

"A GCC technical team will monitor prices regularly and submit recommendations to the GCC Ministerial Committee for Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology."

"A mechanism has been set up to gather data on a regular basis to update decisionmakers on changes taking place in the roaming services market and ensure efficient control," Al Shibli said.

The decision to firm roaming charges follows directives of the Supreme Council of the Ministerial Committee of Posts and Telecommunications to push GCC joint action.

UN official hails Qatar's steps to protect workers' rights

by **Sanaullah Ataullah**
The Peninsula

DOHA: A senior UN human rights official has appreciated the steps being taken by Qatar to protect the rights of foreign workers and its efforts to provide them with easier access to authorities to raise complaints and concerns.

Dr Al Obaid Ahmad Al Obaid, Director, UN Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and Arab region, said it is a unique thing that expatriate communities in Qatar can approach the Ministry of Interior directly to raise complaints.

He was speaking at an event organised by the ministry yesterday at Police College associated with Arab Human Rights Day marked on March 16. The event was held under the theme "Human

Dignity for All." There is a very heavy commitment from Qatar to human rights in general. We have worked directly with the ministry, especially the Department of Human Rights.

"We have seen there is commitment, openness and transparency. We were able to visit everywhere. This indicates that there is very strong political will to ensure human rights are integrated," said Al Obaid.

He said it is also important that

there is possibility for the expatriate communities here to have direct relationship with the ministry and interact among themselves through cultural activities held for them. "I think this is an amazing opportunity for us. It is very good news that there is commitment to improve human rights. I hope the strong political will and openness would be utilised for further improvement of human rights," he added.

Police College aims to prepare

qualified cadres to implement justice and equality to protect people's dignity and freedom in Qatar, said Brigadier Mohammed Abdullah Al Muhana Al Marri, Director-General of the college.

Peace is not possible without human rights, Qatar's Constitution and the wise leadership respect human rights of everyone (citizens and expatriates) in the country, he added.

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Hydroponics expo opens

By **Mohammed Osman**
The Peninsula

DOHA: An exhibition to introduce hydroponics was opened yesterday at the winter vegetable market (Al Mazroua yard) in Umm Salal.

Hydroponics is a method of growing plants using mineral nutrient solutions in water without soil. The three-day event is organised by the Agricultural Affairs Department at the Ministry of Municipality and Environment, with the participation of eight farms.

It aims to give a chance to visitors to know about local hydroponic products and their quality, said Yusuf Khalid Al Khulaifi, Director of the department.

Its agricultural techniques are used in non-organic or organic environment and not in traditional soil and help control irrigation and the use of fertilisers, said Al Khulaifi.

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Qatar maintain winning streak



Qatar's Ahmed Yaser Mohammedi (left) fights for the ball against Hong Kong's Alexander Oluwatayo Akande during their 2018 World Cup football Asian Zone qualifying match played at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium yesterday. Group C leaders Qatar defeated Hong Kong two goals to nil to maintain their winning streak. → See also page 23

Qatari mission rejects former French minister's comments

The Peninsula & Reuters

DOHA: Qatar's embassy in France has expressed astonishment over recent calls by former French minister Bruno Le Maire for a reassessment of France's diplomatic relations with Qatar.

"Qatar's political positions remain clear with no ambiguities. The statement is surprising because a prominent public figure such as Mr Bruno Le Maire should be aware of the friendly relationship between France and Qatar which is based on mutual respect and common interest. He should also recognise that both countries are following the same paths to address common challenges," the embassy said in a statement yesterday.

It said ties between France and Qatar are strong and go beyond attempts by some to harm these relations, which are based on common interests and close cooperation in all fields. "The obsession that some public figures have with attacking Qatar for personal and political motives is also both surprising and regrettable," the statement added.

UAE to attend Opec meet in Doha

DUBAI: The UAE will take part in a meeting between Opec and non-Opec oil producers in Doha in Doha on April 17, the Emirates' energy minister said yesterday. "We received an invitation to participate in the meeting and we confirmed our participation," Suhail bin Mohammed Al Mazrouei wrote on his Twitter account. The meeting will discuss a pact to freeze output to support prices. Iran and Libya are the only Opec members that haven't pledged to attend talks.