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Qatar LNG exports to Argentina top \$1bn

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Barshim leaps to new high at Asian Indoors

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In brief

QATAR | Sport
Emir's Cup football draw on April 8
 The Qatar Football Association has set April 8 for the draw of the 42nd HH the Emir's Cup with the competition played over six knock-out rounds at four grounds. The six rounds will be played on April 21, April 28, April 31, May 5, May 11, with the final on May 17. The four host stadia are Suhaim bin Hamad at Qatar Sports Club, Abdullah bin Khalifa at Lekhwiya Club, Jassim bin Hamad at Al Sadd Club and Khalifa International Stadium. Al Sadd top the winners' list with 11 titles followed by Al Arabi with eight and Al Gharafa with seven.

REGION | Visit
Sheikh Tamim in Kuwait talks
 HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani returned to Doha yesterday evening after a short visit to Kuwait. He held talks with Kuwait Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah. They reviewed relations between Qatar and Kuwait and ways to strengthen them to serve the interests of the people of the two countries. They also exchanged viewpoints on a set of regional and international issues of mutual concern. Kuwaiti Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah attended the talks. **Page 4**

IRAN | Negotiations
Khamenei pessimistic on nuclear agreement
 Iran's top decision-maker Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said yesterday that nuclear talks with world powers would "lead nowhere" but that he was not opposed to them. Iran is due to resume talks today in Vienna with the P5+1 group - Britain, France, the US, Russia and China plus Germany - aimed at reaching a comprehensive accord on its controversial nuclear programme. After a decade of failure and rising tensions, US President Barack Obama has put the chances of an agreement at "50-50". **Page 11**

ASIA | Tremor
Earthquake shakes northern Philippines
 A 5.3 magnitude quake shook the northern Philippines yesterday but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties. A government seismologist said the quake was tectonic in origin with its epicentre off the north coast of the country's main island of Luzon. There was no sign of the quake causing a tsunami but aftershocks were expected, he said.

Emir meets Burkina Faso leader



HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani with Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore during an official reception ceremony at the Emiri Diwan yesterday. They held a round of official talks, attended by a number of ministers and members of the official delegation accompanying the president. The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and ways to develop them. HH the Emir held a dinner banquet in honour of the president and his accompanying delegation. President Compaore arrived in Doha earlier yesterday on a one-day visit to Qatar. **Page 5**

Co-pilot hijacks Ethiopian plane to seek Swiss asylum

AFP
 Geneva
 The co-pilot of an Ethiopian Airlines plane hijacked his own aircraft yesterday by threatening to crash it and forced it to land in Geneva so he could seek asylum, sparking what one passenger described as "pure fear".



A police vehicle guarding in front of the hijacked Ethiopian Airlines flight ET-702 after passengers disembarked at Cointrin Airport in Geneva yesterday.

The Ethiopian locked himself in the cockpit when the captain went to the bathroom during flight ET-702 from Addis Ababa, which had been due to fly to Rome. The man was swiftly arrested after scaling down a rope out of the cockpit window in Geneva and prosecutors said the chances of his demands being met were slim. "We thought the co-pilot had gone mad," Francesco Cuomo, a 25-year-old development economist who was on board, was quoted by Italian media as saying. "The captain was threatening to open the cockpit door and tried to break it down without success. That's when we understood that something serious was going on. "When we started circling over Geneva, there were moments of pure fear," he said. Addis Ababa identified the hijacker as 31-year-old Hailemedehin Abera Tagegn, who had been working for the airline for five years. He told police "he felt threatened

in his country and wants to seek asylum in Switzerland", a Swiss police spokesman said. A total of 202 passengers and crew were on board the Boeing 767 as the drama unfolded. "The co-pilot told air transport authorities he had a problem with his plane and needed to fill up with jet-fuel. He then set off a distress signal indicating the plane was hijacked, before saying he had engine trouble," the police spokesman said. Head of operations at Geneva airport, Xavier Wohlschlag, told the ATS news agency the hijacker's request to land was initially denied. The green light was not given until around 5:30am (0430 GMT), as the passenger jet, which was first escorted by Italian fighter jets and later reportedly by French ones, circled the region. It emerged later that no Swiss fight-

er jets were scrambled as the hijack happened outside the business hours of the country's air force, which operate between 8am and 5pm. The plane finally landed in Geneva at 6:02am, about an hour and a half after it was due in Rome. "He parked the plane on the taxiway, he cut the engines then opened the cockpit window, threw out a rope and used it to descend to the tarmac," the police spokesman said. "He ran towards the police and immediately identified himself as the co-pilot and hijacker." Tagegn said he acted alone, but as a precaution all those on board were frisked as they left the plane. The runway was crowded with police and other emergency vehicles as passengers filed out with their arms up in the air or on their heads before boarding waiting buses. Geneva's chief prosecutor Olivier Joriot said Tagegn's reasons for feeling in danger in Ethiopia were unclear as he had not expressed any "political or other motives" and an asylum claim seemed unlikely to succeed. "His chances are not very high," he told reporters. The man risks a 20-year prison sentence. Flights to and from Geneva were either diverted or cancelled during the drama, but operations later resumed. Up to 30 flights and 4,000 passengers flying during the busy ski season were estimated to be affected.

A 'green wave' for emergency vehicles

The new equipment will allow traffic lights at intersections to recognise Civil Defence vehicles and ambulances as they approach the signals

By Ramesh Mathew
 Staff Reporter

The newly-installed Emergency Vehicle Pre-emption Systems (EVPS) at 30 major intersections across Doha and its immediate neighbourhoods are expected to ensure smooth movement of ambulances and Civil Defence vehicles through the traffic signals in the event of emergency operations.

Senior officials of Ashghal and Ministry of Interior's Department of Transport yesterday said more of such equipment are to be installed across the country in the coming months as part of the government's commitment to improve the country's traffic infrastructure.

The new equipment will allow traffic lights at intersections to recognise Civil Defence vehicles and ambulances as they approach the signals and ensure their uninterrupted movement by switching on the green signal automatically if the red light is on. The whole programme of installation and maintenance for 24 months cost roughly QR3mn.

The EVPS equipment are installed mainly on some of the main roads in Doha and neighbouring areas, including Rayyan and the Industrial Area. The equipment consist of devices installed on emergency vehicles and at the intersections besides a master software at Ashghal's traffic control room in West Bay.

While explaining the features of the EVPS, Ashghal's senior engineer and director of asset affairs, Hamad al-Tamimi, said the advance system in-

cluded GPS devices, supported by sensors which detect the signals from the Civil Defence vehicles and ambulances.

Until now, 15 ambulances and 10 Civil Defence cars are equipped with remote controls capable of sending signals to the traffic lights located more than 100m away.

Ashghal's manager of road operations and maintenance Yousef al-Emadi hoped the EVPS would cut down significantly the response time of emergency and Civil Defence vehicles and reduce risks of accidents.

"This is because the ambulances or Civil Defence vehicle drivers press a button on the remote control in their vehicles to open the traffic light and ease the traffic flow in front of them," he said.

Abdul Azeez al-Sada, the head of safety and traffic control at Ashghal, said the new devices would help streamline traffic on busy roads while ambulances and Civil Defence vehicles are involved in emergency operations.

"The safety of traffic flow is taken into account as other traffic signals at the intersections turn red before sensors mounted on the Civil Defence cars and ambulances and traffic lights open their path."

The Ashghal official said the vehicles installed with the new equipment would soon be distributed to several locations taking into consideration the impact on the response time to the emergencies.

The drivers of ambulances and Civil Defence cars are trained to use the new system which will not be used except in critical situations.

A committee consisting of the officials of Ashghal, the General Directorate of Civil Defence and Hamad Medical Corporation has been constituted to monitor and assess the new system and provide recommendations and suggestions for improving its performance in the coming months.



Senior engineer Hamad al-Tamimi explaining a point as Yousef al-Emadi, Abdul Azeez al-Sada, Col Rasheed Salem al-Malki of the Traffic Department and other officials look on. **PICTURE:** Jayan Orma

HMC air ambulance service gets new helicopters

By Noimot Olayiwola
 Staff Reporter

The air ambulance service at the Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) yesterday received a boost with three new helicopters joining its LifeFlight operations. A ceremony to mark the occasion was held in the presence of HE the Minister of Public Health Abdullah bin Khalid al-Qahtani, Army Headquarters chief of staff Major General Ghanim bin Shaheen al-Ghanim and HMC managing director Dr Hanan al-Kuwari. The introduction of the new Agusta Westland AW139 LifeFlight helicopters will increase access to safe and effective emergency healthcare while ensuring

air ambulance coverage even in the remotest areas of the country. Two of the new helicopters, which will be in operation round-the-clock, replace smaller ones previously in use. The third helicopter will be on standby as a back-up for the two in service. The new helicopters are being primarily used to transport seriously injured persons as quickly as possible from the scene of an emergency to hospital. The helicopters are fitted with the most up-to-date medical equipment such as the LUCAS II chest compression device to enable chest compressions to continue for a patient while in transit. According to Ambulance Service chief executive officer Dr Robert Owen, the new helicopters are larger and roomier than the old ones.

"These are pretty larger than the previous helicopters and can take two patients, treat them simultaneously and both patients have equipment as same as in the intensive care unit." The official said that during flight, patients could be monitored while defibrillator and infusion could also be done. "The aircraft themselves are an excellent platform for air ambulance as they are very powerful and extremely fast. They have vibration dampening system in place, as helicopters make lot of vibrations while flying but the aircraft are largely soundproof," the official said. "Two pilots control each helicopter. On board the helicopter is a critical care flight paramedic and flight ambulance paramedic at all times to administer

emergency medical care both at the scene of the incident and on flight to hospital. These are the most advanced air ambulances that you can find anywhere in the world," the official said. The pilots of the helicopters are from the Qatar Emiri Air Force (QEAF) and the launch of the air ambulances signified a new working relationship between HMC and QEAF. "Because the ambulance are really sophisticated and fitted with advanced technology they will be based in Al Udeid Air Force base in order to get access to engineering maintenance that they will need," Dr Owen said. The air ambulance service is mainly for the Sealine area, Al Khor and other rural areas as well as abroad including Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The helicopters complement a diverse fleet that has been planned and put together with Qatar's specific needs in mind. "These helicopters are an essential element of the fleet and they are most appropriate in cases where speed is of the essence. Of course this isn't always the case, and the helicopter is not always the most appropriate transport to the hospital, but they are extremely necessary to the overall fleet and play an integral part in the HMC Ambulance Service, providing access to the safest and most effective care for the people of Qatar," Dr Owen added. Ambulance Service deputy medical director Dr Ibrahim M Fawzy Hassan pointed out that the helicopters could get emergency medical teams to the

scene of a serious incident quickly. "At the ambulance service, we are always looking for ways to get the best clinical care to patients as quickly as possible. This is how we can improve mortality rates and provide the people of Qatar with a top quality service. The launch of these LifeFlight helicopters marks a very important addition to the service and one that will greatly benefit our patients." Other vehicles include the fully equipped Mercedes Benz Sprinter ambulances, with a streamlined shape designed to cut through the Qatar traffic and the Toyota Landcruiser GX's that enable paramedics to access patients in the desert. There are presently now some 48 spokes and six hubs for easy ambulance distribution across Qatar. **Page 9**