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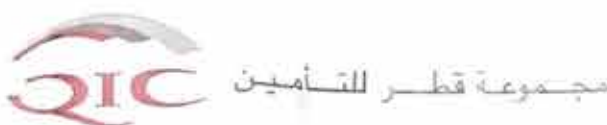
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BUSINESS | Page 1

Economic prospects look positive for the second half of 2019

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QATAR | Page 7

QBG and Indian embassy plant trees at Oxygen Park



GULF TIMES

TUESDAY Vol. XXXIX No. 1085

December 3, 2019

Rabla II 6, 1441 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

We are all Qatar - Ooredoo 5G

Afif brace in victory as Qatar storm into semis

By Sahar Bidappa

Fresh from being named as the Asian Player of the Year, Akram Afif inspired Qatar to the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup semi-finals with a 4-2 win over the United Arab Emirates yesterday.

Qatar needed just a draw in their last Group A match at the Khalifa International Stadium, but victory was never in doubt after Afif put the hosts 2-0 up inside thirty minutes.

All Mabkhout converted a penalty to revive UAE's hopes at half-time, but a 53rd minute strike from captain Hassan al-Haydos restored Qatar's two-goal advantage. Mabkhout kept UAE in the contest with a goal in the 77th minute, but the visitors could not find an equaliser even as Boualem Khoukh headed in for Qatar's fourth goal in injury time.

Qatar finished Group A with six points, having lost to Iraq in the opening match. Iraq, meanwhile, emerged as the group toppers with seven points after a goalless draw against Yemen at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium yesterday.

Qatar will play Saudi Arabia, who beat defending champions Oman 3-1 yesterday, in the semi-finals on Thursday.

Afif, who had missed his coronation as Asia's best player at yesterday's AFC Annual Awards ceremony in Hong Kong, had a spring in his step every time he touched the ball. The Al Sadd forward has been a revelation since he burst onto the scene at the Asian Cup earlier this year, where his 10 assists and one goal helped Qatar win their maiden continental title.

Last night, a crowd of more than 40,000 got a closer look at Afif's talent as the 23-year-old put on a show. Afif was not just a constant threat every time he went forward, but also acted the provider for most of Qatar chances.

"It's a great day for him and Qatar," head coach Felix Sanchez said after the game. "We are very happy for him. I have known him since 2006, football is his life. He always works hard and is a thorough professional. He deserves every accolade that will come his way. He showed his quality again today," the Spaniard added.

To Page 24 Sport Pages 1,2,3



(From left) Qatar's Akram Afif, Abdulkarim Hassan and Tarek Salman celebrate former's goal in the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup match against the UAE at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha yesterday. **PICTURE** Ram Chand **Page 10**

24th Arabian Gulf Cup

Yesterday's results

Qatar	4-2	UAE	Yemen	0-0	Iraq
Oman	1-3	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	2-4	Bahrain

Amir meets Lower Saxony PM



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with the visiting Prime Minister of the Federal State of Lower Saxony in Germany, Stephan Weil, and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting at the Amiri Diwan, they reviewed co-operation relations between Qatar and Germany and ways to develop them, especially in energy, trade, industry and investments. **Page 2**

Amir meets US Congress team



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with the visiting US Congress delegation which included representative Sean Patrick Maloney from New York, Rick Larsen from Washington and representative Nanette Barragan from California, who are all members of the Democratic Party. The meeting at the Amiri Diwan reviewed strategic relations of friendship and co-operation between Qatar and the United States and ways to support and strengthen them in various fields, especially in politics, economy, defence, health and education. They also exchanged views on regional and international developments. **Page 2**

PM inaugurates 2022 building



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani, unveils the plaque of the 2022 building in Aspire Zone.



The 2022 building in Aspire Zone. It is the world's first building designed in the form of 2022. **PICTURE**: Noushad Thekkayil

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani, yesterday inaugurated the 2022 building in Aspire Zone.

After a short film was screened about the development of sports and sports facilities in Qatar, HE the prime minister was briefed on the connotations of the design of the building and its sections. It is world's the first building designed in the form of 2022.

The inauguration coincides with the ninth anniversary of Qatar winning the right to host the FIFA World Cup for the first time in the Middle East region.

The inauguration was attended by a number of Sheikhs and sports officials.

The mixed-use building is spread over some 60,000sqm and includes administrative offices, an integrated health club, restaurants and cafes, meeting rooms and a lecture hall. The building, which consists of four wings of five floors each, also includes about 600 parking spaces in addition to being directly connected to Khalifa International Stadium.

The building is the brainchild of Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad bin Nasser al-Thani, who developed the design under the supervision of prominent Qatari architect Ibrahim Mohamed Jaidah, in partnership with Antonio Capone, founder of P&C Associates (Milan). **(QNA) Page 3**

Afif named AFC Asian Player of the Year

QNA Hong Kong

Akram Afif's sterling year was made even more exceptional when the Qatar international was named the AFC Player of the Year 2019 at the AFC Annual Awards yesterday.

Afif was tipped as a future star since his early years that saw him play for Spanish youth teams Sevilla and Villarreal, before being called up for Qatar's team for the 2012 AFC U-10 Championship Qualifiers and the 2014 AFC U-19 Championship.

Not yet 20, Afif was part of Qatar's 2016 AFC U-23 Championship campaign that was led by head coach Felix Sanchez and the forward was again part of the squad in the following edition, where Qatar finished third.

A permanent member of the senior national team since 2015, Afif was instrumental in Qatar's AFC Asian Cup



Akram Afif, Qatar's star

2019 triumph, with one goal and 10 assists.

Japan international captain Saki Kumagai was named the AFC Women's Player of the Year Award ahead of Li Ying of China PR and India women's national team star Ashalata Devi.

Tottenham Hotspur and Korea Republic star Song Heung-min was named the AFC International Player of the Year ahead of Eintracht Frankfurt's Makoto Hasebe and Zenit St Petersburg's Sardar Azmoun.

Meanwhile, Korea Republic's Chung Jung-yong was named the AFC Men's Coach of the Year.

Chung, a former professional player, first got involved with Korea Republic's age-group national teams in 2009, where he was the assistant coach to Kim Eun-chul for the AFC U-10 Championship 2010 Qualifiers.

Anako Takakura won AFC Women's Coach of the Year for a record 7th time. Takakura, who also won the award in

2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2018, led Japan to the FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019 Round of 16.

Japan Football Association (JFA) was awarded the AFC Member Association of the Year 2019 for the fifth time. **Sport Page 2**

Messi wins Ballon d'Or for the sixth time

Lionel Messi won a record sixth men's Ballon d'Or award at a ceremony in Paris yesterday, beating Liverpool duo Virgil van Dijk and Sadio Mane to take the honours. Now aged 32, it is Messi's first Ballon d'Or since 2015 and his sixth overall as he moves one ahead of his old rival Cristiano Ronaldo. Messi succeeds Luka Modric, the Real Madrid and Croatia midfielder who won the prize last year.



PM opens 2022 building in Aspire Zone



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani, yesterday inaugurated the 2022 building in Aspire Zone. The prime minister was briefed on the design of the 2022 building.



The 2022 building in Aspire Zone. It is world's the first building designed in the form of 2022.

PICTURE: Noushad Thekkayil

2022 building ... a historic year set in stone for posterity

The new 2022 building in Aspire Zone, the latest architectural marvel in Qatar, is an iconic structure thanks to its unique and aesthetically appealing design.

Inaugurated yesterday by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani, it is the first such building of its kind in the world as it is in the shape of a year's numerals - 2022 - when Qatar hosts the FIFA World Cup.

The mixed-use building is spread over some 60,000sq m and includes administrative offices, an integrated health club, restaurants and cafes, meeting rooms and a lecture theatre. The building, which consists of four wings of five floors each, also includes about 600 parking spaces in addition to being directly connected to Khalifa International Stadium.

The inauguration coincided with the anniversary of Qatar winning the bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, on December 2, 2010.

The building is the brainchild of Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad bin Nasser al-Thani, who developed the design under the supervision of prominent Qatari architect Ibrahim Mobamed Jaïdah, in partnership with Antonio Capone, founder of P&C Associates (Milan).

Al Bandary Engineering was the main contractor for the project while Lauro International was the developer. The design of the building was completed in 2013 and work on it started in mid-2018.

Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Nasser said: "December 2 marks a great day in Qatar's history as it was the day our beloved country won the hosting rights of the World Cup. Qatar was able to dazzle the whole world by winning the bid and proving its worth through this historic victory. During my studies abroad, I was following Sepp Blatter (the then FIFA chief) as he pulled out Qatar's name from the envelope in 2010. I then began to think



The 2022 building in Aspire Zone...an iconic structure.

PICTURE: Noushad Thekkayil

about establishing a project that will be a legacy for the State and future generations. The idea was thus born and today, thanks to God, we can see it on the ground."

He stressed that the unique project would not have been possible without the support of the state for Qatari investors and "our confidence in the

Qatari economy". "In this regard, I would like to thank His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and our wise government for supporting the private sector, which motivates us to come up with ideas that make Qatar an oasis of creativity." He also thanked His Highness Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, Personal

Representative of His Highness the Amir, who was the first to be presented with the concept back in 2013 and was highly impressed with and supportive of the idea.

The 2022 building is part of the Aspire Zone "masterplan", he noted, thanking all those who contributed to completing the distinguished project.

Mohamed Khalifa al-Suwaidi, CEO of Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF), said AZF always supports investors and presents them with investment opportunities. "So, when we presented such an opportunity, we came across the idea of the 2022 building project. It is a unique project as it complements the general plan of Aspire Zone. We congratulate Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad bin Nasser al-Thani on this project and wish him all the best."

Jaïdah said the building is yet another addition to the list of prominent projects in Qatar, and also helps entrench in people's minds the most important event in the history of sports in

Qatar. He expressed pleasure at being involved in the project.

Ahmed al-Rayyan, general manager of Al Bandary Engineering, said the building is an inspiring project to work on as it represents a historic and unforgettable year. "The facilities provided have helped complete the project on time and we are very proud of this historic building, whose legacy will remain for generations."

Luigi Lauro from Lauro International business development company highlighted the strength of the Qatari economy. "We were briefed on the adequacy of the Qatari economy and the provision of investment opportunities for foreign investors. This gives a strong push forward and makes Qatar a gateway for businessmen and investors."

Engineer Antonio said he believed in the idea put forward by Sheikh Nasser due to its importance and the embodiment of an important piece of history, besides being the first such project in the world.