

Universities, schools join safety awareness quiz

Some 76 academic institutions, comprising high schools and universities, have participated in a traffic safety awareness contest organised by Qatar University's Qatar Road Safety Studies Centre (QRSSC).

The competition was part of an awareness campaign on pedestrian safety launched by QRSSC in line with UN Week for Safety on Roads commemorated on May 6-12 earlier this year.

The competition included three categories: best video (universities), best article (secondary and preparatory schools) and best poster (primary schools).

A total of 90 students participated and 76 entries were submitted which included 16 from universities, 20 from secondary, 30 from primary and 10 from preparatory schools.

At the awards ceremony held last week, QU students Merna Ammar and Alaa Shehada were named winners of the best video, followed by Irfan Mansoor and Rahan Rihiz Pinto of Stenden University; and Ibrahim Anar and Ihab Moeqdad of QU.

An award decided by the centre was presented to the winner, Mukhtar and Khalifa al-Merri also of QU.

Best article (secondary) win-



Brigadier al-Kharji, flanked by Dr al-Khalifa, left, and Dr al-Ammari, shows off an award plaque.

ners were Jassim Bin Hamad Secondary Independent School for Boys and Ahmed Bin Hanbal Secondary Independent School for Boys while Hamza Bin Abdullmalik Preparatory School for Boys, and Osama Bin Zaid Preparatory School for Boys won in the category for preparatory schools.

Al Thayyan Primary Independent School for Girls

and Umm Al Amman Primary School for Girls won Best Poster (primary).

The winners were celebrated at the ceremony, which was attended by QRSSC director Dr Khalifa al-Khalifa, QU vice president for research Dr Hassan al-Derham, and vice president for academic affairs Dr Mazen Hasna, Traffic Department director Brigadier Mo-

ammed Saad al-Kharji, National Centre for Traffic Safety general secretary Mohamed al-Malik, QU College of Engineering dean Dr Rashid al-Ammari, a number of CENG members and representatives from Maersk Oil.

In his speech, Dr al-Khalifa stressed the importance of road safety in terms of driver and pedestrian welfare and the role of the centre to continue to raise

awareness throughout the community, especially among young drivers.

"Maersk Oil's role in this competition is highly appreciated and we are looking forward to further co-operation," he added.

Maersk Oil deputy managing director Sheikh Faisal Bin Fahad al-Thani said: "I am pleased to see yet another meaningful collaboration between Maersk Oil and Qatar University. Road safety is paramount to all of us and engaging and instilling the youth with a sense of responsibility and involving them in the solution is necessary. I am grateful to the National Traffic Safety Committee and the Ministry of Interior who supported this initiative under its highly successful 'one-second national road safety communication platform'."

Brigadier al-Kharji said: "I highly appreciate the efforts of QU and Maersk Oil to organise this event which raises the awareness of traffic safety for students and youth. Such events cement relations between QU and the Traffic Department towards more joint activities and initiatives."

Al-Malik stressed the committee's strong relations with QU and called for more projects in line with the National Strategy for Road Traffic Safety.

QU faculty member attends Equinox summit

Qatar University's Al Baitraq World programme head Dr Noora al-Thani has participated in the Equinox Summit Learning 2013 held on the invitation of the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, University of Waterloo.

The University of Waterloo hosted the Waterloo Global Science Initiative (WGSII).

Dr al-Thani joined educators and innovators in education-related fields and next generation leaders from around the world who gathered at the event "to explore best practices and promising initiatives in education aimed at empowering high school students in their creativity and potential. They also attended in order to contribute to an Equinox Blueprint that provides clear recommendations on building a school for the 21st century that fosters skills in critical thinking, problem solving and innovation."

Presenting on "Education outside the classroom in Qatar" in one of the summit sessions, Dr al-Thani gave details of the high school science initiative as a model for an innovative educational outreach.

She also presented a film about Al Baitraq, its role in contributing to the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030, and the support it enjoys from QU, leading partners in Qatar, schools, principals, teachers, parents and school boards.

Two Al Baitraq team members also attended the summit and presented on their experience with the programme.

They also attended a number of other workshops.

Dr al-Thani sees her participation as critical for attracting global interest in Al Baitraq in particular and Qatar University in general, in taking the lead in advancing youth enthusiasm in science and engineering and a research culture in Qatar, and bringing up the next generation of scientists and engineers to contribute to the country's fast-moving development.

"It was also very important for the Al Baitraq members who attended the event to meet their peers from around the world and to get feedback on their views and ideas about the programme from leaders in education," she said.

Al Baitraq World is the only programme of its kind in the Middle East and was designed by QU Centre of Advanced Materials (CAM) to open up the world of science to young people in Qatar, making it interesting, accessible and relevant to their lives.

Cut intake of red meat, artificial sweeteners to avoid gout: doctor

Dr Izzat Ali Muhammad Khanjar, consultant rheumatologist at FMC, has urged residents to reduce the consumption of red meat and to completely refrain from alcohol to avoid painful gout attacks.

According to the expert, gout is a form of inflammatory arthritis, in which uric acid crystallises in the joints but can be managed or even avoided by taking control of one's health.

"Gout is characterised by recurring attacks of acute inflammatory arthritis that are caused by elevated levels of uric acid deposits in the joints," Dr Khanjar said, adding: "It commonly affects men more than women but it is also common in menopausal women."



Dr Izzat Ali Muhammad Khanjar

"Gout is also associated with obesity and it also affects people with metabolic syndrome. It can be attributed to excessive intake of red meat, artificial sweeteners and artificial sugar substitutes, as well as alcohol. In addition, use of some drugs, including diuretics and aspirin,

may increase the chance of developing gout," he added. Dr Khanjar said that gout usually has two stages. Symptoms of the first stage include the occurrence of acute attack with severe pain that may keep the patient awake at night as well as red and swollen joints, especially at the base of the big toe.

He mentioned that the second stage is characterised by recurrent attacks of inflammatory arthritis, where several joints become affected such as the knee, ankle, hand and arms. "Gout can be diagnosed by physical examination. To confirm the diagnosis, synovial fluid samples (taken from the fluid in the joints) are taken to be tested for the existence of uric acid crystals.

The formation of uric acid

deposits under the skin or in the joints is a clear sign of gout," Dr Khanjar said.

He recommended treatments including patient education about reducing red meat consumption and ensuring intake of fluids, especially during the summer months.

He also said anti-inflammatory topical ointments, pain relievers, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications can help reduce discomfort.

However, Dr Khanjar insisted that prevention and awareness is the best way forward for dealing with the painful effects of gout.

"Losing weight is essential in this regard, as obesity is a main factor in the increasing uric acid levels in blood," he added.

'Family physicians vital for success of healthcare'

Establishing doctors' clinics led by family physicians is vital to the continued success of healthcare in Qatar, a new study by researchers at Well Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q) has said.

An increase in the population from the current 2.2m to 2.5m by 2020, as predicted by Qatar Statistics Authority, means family medicine will be of paramount importance in the future and that given the pace of expansion, there is likely to be a "significant evolution" in the primary healthcare system.

"The Qatari authorities have previously demonstrated sound leadership in forward planning," it is pointed out in the report published in the *Journal of Healthcare Leadership*.

The authors are Dr Mohamed Verjee, assistant professor of family medicine at WCMC-Q; Dr Mariam Ali Abdulmalik, of the Primary Health Care Corporation; and Dr Michael D Batters, of the University of Michigan.

The report stated: "Qatar is among the leaders in family



Dr Mohamed Verjee

medicine in the Arabian Gulf, Middle East and North Africa region.

"The challenges of building a new family physician workforce and overcoming specialty care misperceptions are much the same as any other emerging country from the 1990s.

"Qatar is unique due to its dedication in developing a full and modern healthcare system from the outset,

grounded in family medicine, and its active planning for a comparatively small but growing population."

Qatar recognised family medicine as a specialty in 1995 and as of 2011 there were 147 family physicians working in the country - 18% of its total physician workforce.

A four-year family medicine residency programme was established in the mid-90s with the inaugural class graduating in 1999 and with the establishment of WCMC-Q in 2001, the government signalled their continued commitment to medicine and healthcare.

Since then, in contrast to a trend of fluctuating interest in family medicine training in many developed countries, the demand for family medicine residency slots in Qatar has been consistently high.

"Despite this there is still a shortage of family physicians and a lack of academic capacity for future family doctors to be trained. These are both issues the government will need to address to provide quality health care for all in the future," the study concluded.

QU college launches research centres

Qatar University's College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) has launched three research centres of excellence that reflect several important themes contained in the human and social development pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the objectives and values outlined in the national development strategies.

The Centres for Sustainable Development, Humanities and Social Science Research, and Gulf Studies Research are the first in Qatar. They are designed to harness QU's role as a leader in research in the region, and to expand CAS' research capacity, capitalising on its interdisciplinary strengths.

Their establishment is in keeping with QU's new five-year research agenda which will see interdisciplinary research projects centred on four areas of excellence: Energy, Environment and Resource Sustainability; Social Change and Identity; Population, Health and Wellbeing; and Information, Communication and Technologies (ICT).

In establishing the Centre for Sustainable Development, CAS leaders built on the research focus of its MSc and PhD degree programmes in Environmental Sciences which include water and food security, environmental preservation, and waste management; and on its dedicated professional Chair in Sustainable Development.

The Centre for Humanities and Social Science Research will highlight four key themes - multi-disciplinary, collaboration, research excellence, and knowledge-sharing. It will bring together research conducted in CAS' MA in Arabic Language and MA in Gulf Studies, and its planned MA in Mass Communication, focusing in particular on Qatar, the Gulf, and the Arab world.

Research areas will include culture, heritage and identity; family and gender issues; social security and social justice; politics, identity and reform; literature; language, communication, and social media; governance, planning and so-

cial policy; migration and labour policy; and international crises.

The Centre for Gulf Studies Research will undertake interdisciplinary Gulf-focused research in three main areas - energy and economics; social issues; and politics. It will support CAS' MA programme in Gulf Studies, currently the only such programme in the world. Since its inception in 2012, the programme has grown in popularity and has seen a number of high-level lectures and discussions featuring regional and international experts and observers on current and emerging issues in the Gulf and the Arab world.

The new centres will have a complementary relationship with existing QU research centres, other QU colleges and departments, and will engender synergistic collaborations with academic institutions in Qatar and beyond, national, regional and international organisations, and the wider Qatar community.

CAS dean Dr Eiman Mustafa-awi sees the centres as each providing a forum to address the research goals enshrined in the national vision and strategies; engage faculty, students, researchers and collaborators in targeted research in line with society's needs; and advance CAS branding as a college of academic and research quality and excellence.

CAS associate dean of Research and Graduate Studies Dr Mohamed Ahmedna said: "CAS has the competitive advantage in these three critical areas and it is a timely moment for us to advance our research capacity and focus to another level. These centres state our commitment to addressing new developments and changes in Qatar and the region, and finding solutions that will contribute to their progress."

The establishment of the three new centres brings to six the number of research centres launched in two years at QU which include KINDI, Qatar Road Safety Studies Centre, and Entrepreneurship Centre.



Ahmad al-Abdulla and Imad Barrakad signing the agreement.

QPM signs agreement with Morocco's SMIT

QPM has signed an agreement with Morocco's Agency for Tourism Development (SMIT) to provide a turnkey solution for investors in tourism-based projects in Morocco.

QPM is one of the region's premier project management companies and the first Qatari firm in the field. The agreement was signed by QPM chairman Ahmad al-Abdulla and SMIT chairman Imad Barrakad during Ghybscape Global 2013, held recently at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

Under the terms of the agreement, both companies will provide development management, tourist investment advisory, project management, construction management and consultancy services on tourism-related projects.

"Since inception of the company, QPM had its sights set on becoming a major regional player in the field of project management and development," al-Abdulla said, adding: "Having successfully established an excellent track record and reputation in the industry, QPM has already become the most sought after provider of a wide range of expertise related to project management in our home country of Qatar."

He mentioned that in recent years, after having established offices in Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Egypt, QPM's services have also been engaged in several key projects in Yemen, Jordan, Iraq and Libya.

"With the construction boom currently back on full swing in the UAE, across the GCC and in near-

by countries, QPM is more than capable and prepared to offer its services to investors and developers - both in the public and private sectors - who aim to play a greater role in the rapid economic and infrastructure development in this part of globe," he noted.

Barrakad said: "SMIT is committed to developing and implementing innovative concepts to produce the best results and to meet the expectations of its partners. Today, Morocco is striving to make tourism one of its main engines for the country's economic development and SMIT has risen as an initiator of innovative projects and a major player in the engineering and tourism development fields that is able to ensure investors support throughout projects life cycles."