



Regional gathering of Russian expatriates held in Doha

The 10th regional conference of Russian "compatriots" in the Middle East and Africa was held in Doha recently.

The two-day event saw a large gathering of Russians living in the region.

Speaking at the opening of the event, Russian ambassador to Qatar Nurmakhammad Kholov stressed the importance of the activities of Russian citizens abroad, acting as the country's unofficial representatives. He also quoted Russian President Vladimir Putin, who said work with compatriots abroad was an important aspect of their foreign policy.

"I am happy to see such a large representation of Russian compatriots from the region gathered here in Qatar, especially given the contributions that Russians abroad have made

to furthering bilateral relations in the countries in which they live. As you know, Russia always works to support its citizens abroad and we hope that, by working together, we can solve any concerns that you might have," the ambassador said.

Special guest Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah al-Thani welcomed the participants to "their second country, Qatar" and wished the gathering every success, outlining the developing relations between Russia and Qatar.

"Relations between Qatar and Russia are strong and they continue to develop, especially with the recent visit of HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Russia in January this year, during which he met with President Putin. We hope that bilateral relations between our two countries can go from strength to strength in the future

as well, not least due to this conference and its discussions and outcomes," he said.

Russian citizens from more than 20 countries in the Arab region and the African continent gathered to discuss the most pressing issues of their lives as well as the latest developments in Russia. Distinguished guests from Russia, Lithuania and Qatar attended the event.

During the event, representatives of the Russian compatriots' movement talked about the ways of consolidation among them, working with the young generation to keep them in touch with Russian culture and traditions, and discussing the possibilities of spreading the Russian language and culture in co-ordination with local authorities.

Representative of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also came to Doha for the conference.



The gathering in progress.

Chances of thundershowers until Friday

Rain, thunder and strong winds are expected in the country today, with the unstable weather conditions likely to continue until Friday.

Informing this yesterday, the Qatar Met department said in its forecast that offshore areas, too, would see strong winds and high seas due to thundery conditions today.

In view of the expected conditions, the weather office has urged people to remain cautious and avoid sea activities.

The unstable weather, expected to affect the country until midday on Friday, is the result of an extension of a low-pressure system, according to the Met department.

Cloud bands started appearing over Qatar since yesterday morning, triggering chances of

scattered rain. Thundershowers were likely between early today and midday on Friday, with the rainy spell peaking today, the weather office said in a statement yesterday.

The prevailing winds during this period will be easterly to southeasterly, moderate to fresh, becoming strong at times - especially during thundershowers.

This may be accompanied by strong sudden winds reaching 30 knots (about 55km/hour), leading to dusty conditions and a temporary drop in visibility to 1km or less in some areas, the weather office noted.

Scattered light rain was reported from some parts of the country yesterday evening, according to information available on the Met department's social

media channels.

The detailed forecast for inshore areas today says cloudy conditions and scattered rain, which may be accompanied by thunder in some places at times.

Unusually high rainfall

There is no specific reason for the unusually high rainfall experienced in different parts of the country in recent weeks, according to a senior official of the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA).

Answering a query from *Gulf Times* yesterday, Meteorology department director Abdulla al-Mannai said such sudden and unexpected changes in the weather take place is what is locally known as the Sarayat season.

He said the prevailing conditions were the result of sudden changes, of varying degree, in the weather. While noting that these were difficult to forecast, he said: "However, our department has been quite

Doha is among the places where rain is expected today.

The wind speed in these areas may go up to 25 knots during thundershowers.

Offshore areas, too, are likely

to see partly cloudy to cloudy conditions along with scattered rain, which may be thundery at times. The wind speed may reach 30 knots in these areas today, with the sea level rising to

10ft during rain and thunder.

The forecast also shows that a drop in the maximum temperature is likely at a number of places today due to the thundery conditions. The mercury level had crept up to the mid-30C mark over the past few days.

Today, the temperature is likely to range between 24C and 30C in most places, with the forecast for Doha being 24C and 29C. In Abu Samra, the maximum temperature may touch 35C today, according to the forecast.

The Met department has advised people to follow latest weather updates and warnings through its different official social media accounts.

More is available at <http://www.qweather.gov.qa/News-Detail.aspx#sthash.F190008y.dpuf>

Seminar discusses use of stem cells in diabetes therapy

Qatar University Bio-medical Research Centre (QU-BRC) has hosted a seminar on the use of stem cells for disease modelling and cell therapy in diabetes.

Titled "Pluripotent stem cells as tools for disease modelling and cell therapy in diabetes", the seminar was delivered by Dr Essam M Abdelalim, a scientist at QU-BRC, and assistant professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

Dr Abdelalim said that with diabetes as the most prevailing disease with progressive incidence worldwide and no permanent treatment available yet, cell therapy might prove to be the best approach to treat type 1 diabetes and severe cases of type 2 diabetes.

According to him, transplantation of pancreatic



Dr Essam Abdelalim at the seminar

islets is used to restore the functional β cells in diabetic patients, but the shortage of human donors and the occurrence of immune rejection lead to search for other sources of pancreatic β cells.

Dr Abdelalim said that

recent studies indicate that stem cells are likely to be accepted as a therapeutic tool for diabetes.

"Pluripotent stem cells (PSCs), including embryonic stem cells (ESCs) and induced pluripotent cells

(iPSCs) are considered promising approaches to study diabetes. ESCs/iPSCs have a high capability to differentiate into insulin-producing β cells, which are closer in nature to the in vivo β cells than those differentiated from other types of stem cells," he said.

He added that iPSCs could provide personalised treatment to the particular characteristics of each patient, but before PSCs could be considered as a tool for regenerative medicine to treat diabetes, additional in vitro and in vivo studies are needed, as the patient safety is the most important issue to be considered.

Dr Abdelalim also discussed advances, challenges, and future perspectives of using iPSCs as a promising tool for disease modelling and cell therapy in diabetes.

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