

Education ministry team visits Doha College's new building

A delegation from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) made their first official visit to the new campus of Doha College, located in Al Wajba close to Education City Golf Club.

The MoEHE delegation comprised Omar al-Naama, Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education Affairs to the Office of the Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education; Hamad Alghali, Director of Private Schools Licensing Department; and Rashid Alamri, Acting Director for the Private Schools Affairs Department to the Office of the Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education.

They were received by Dr Steffen Sommer, principal of Doha College, who along with his colleagues took the officials on a tour of the campus, according to a statement from the institution. "They were very impressed with the new facilities and with the students at this period of time of the pandemic," Dr Sommer said. "Our guests were able to view a number of classrooms, specialist areas such as Design and Technology, the Sciences and also some of Humanities, as well as Primary classes. We also



The MoEHE officials listen to a briefing from Doha College officials as they visit the new campus.

spent some time viewing the sports halls and various other facilities like the libraries. "I would like to think that our guests from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education had a very good impression of the school, but what it certainly symbolised is not only the long-standing friendship between

Doha College and the ministry, but also with Qatar as a country. "Doha College has been in Qatar for 40 years, and this has been a close partnership from the beginning, being one of the first foreign schools founded in the country. With this fantastic new campus, we have opened a new chapter of the next 40 years of

co-operation which will continue to grow with the facilities we now have.

"We have many plans to support our local community here in Al Wajba, making facilities accessible and I am very much looking forward to the next few decades of partnership and friendship with Qatar".



The MoEHE officials tour the new campus of Doha College.

MoEHE's Omar al-Naama, said: "It was our pleasure to visit the new Doha College school campus at Al Wajba, which was a fruitful visit. The new campus is definitely a great achievement added to the many other achievements in the field of education in Qatar, in line with our National Vision

2030. It is a valuable addition and a helpful contribution to the national efforts to achieve quality education in the country and we will always provide support to all private schools in Qatar, to sustain the best educational environment for school students". The new campus of Doha

College, which heralded a new era of British international education in Qatar, was opened in September. The campus features impressive sporting, music and theatrical facilities, as well as modern classrooms, inspiring learning environments, fully-equipped science labs and more.

WCM-Q researchers stress effectiveness of face masks in preventing Covid-19

Researchers from Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q) have demonstrated the effectiveness of medical face masks in helping to prevent respiratory infections like Covid-19 and strongly recommend their use by the public along with other preventive measures to help mitigate the spread of the disease.

The research, published in the International Journal of Infectious Diseases, was conducted by faculty from the college's Institute for Population Health (IPH). They carried out a meta-analysis of previous studies on the efficacy of medical face mask use in community settings for preventing flu, flu-like illnesses and other respiratory infections such as SARS and the novel coronavirus.

The research is authored by Dr Karima Chaabna, population health and communications specialist in IPH and instructor in population health sciences, Dr Sathyanarayanan Doraiswamy, assistant director of IPH and instructor in population health sciences, Dr Ravinder Mamtani, vice dean for student affairs-admissions, population health, and lifestyle medicine and professor of population health sciences and Dr Sohaila Cheema, assistant dean of IPH and assistant professor of population health sciences.

Although transmission of Covid-19 through close contact with an infected person or contact with a contaminated surface is recognised, the efficacy of face masks in reducing transmission in household situations and public settings like supermarkets has been contested, and recommendations have been inconsistent.

Dr Cheema said: "Globally, there has been a lack of consensus from the leadership and health organisations to offer unified recommendations about face mask use to prevent Covid-19 transmission. In countries such as the US, face masks have proved divisive and have even been politicised, so we wanted to ascertain - with as much confidence as



Dr Karima Chaabna, Dr Sathyanarayanan Doraiswamy, Dr Ravinder Mamtani, and Dr Sohaila Cheema.

possible - whether there was hard evidence to support the use of face masks in preventing respiratory disease transmission."

The research group evaluated 12 primary studies which had previously examined medical face mask use and found that the incidence of transmission of respiratory infections was lower if medical face masks were used early and used in conjunction with stringent hand hygiene. One study conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic found that medical face masks were of particular use in infection control if worn before an individual displayed symptoms of infection.

But the WCM-Q study - which is entitled 'Face mask use in community settings to prevent respiratory infection transmission: A rapid review and meta-analysis' - was unable to find any evidence that cloth face masks were effective in reducing transmission in community settings. It should also be mentioned here that there was one study - performed in a healthcare setting - which demonstrated that healthcare workers who wore a two-layer cloth face mask were 13 times more likely to be infected with respiratory illnesses than those who wore medical face masks.

However, this does not mean that cloth face masks are not of use, rather that medical-grade masks are more effective.

The authors suggest that the efficacy of cloth face masks is likely to depend on the number of layers they contain, and the material used.

Dr Mamtani said: "The evidence is quite clear that medical face masks should be worn by both healthy and sick individuals in order to reduce virus transmission. The effectiveness of medical face masks obviously depends on them being used correctly and we cannot overstate enough that face masks alone should not be relied upon; we must all continue to practice all preventive measures including physical distancing and rigorous hand hygiene to minimise the risk of both spreading Covid-19 and contracting it.

"The evidence for the use of cloth face masks is inconclusive. Because of this, we would recommend the use of medical face masks, but if there is no alternative it would appear to be prudent to wear a cloth face mask in community settings."

The full study and its findings can be read at [https://www.ijidonline.com/article/S1201-9712\(20\)32150-0/fulltext](https://www.ijidonline.com/article/S1201-9712(20)32150-0/fulltext)

Qur'anic Botanic Garden welcomes Swiss embassy team

The Qur'anic Botanic Garden (QBG), a member of Qatar Foundation and the first garden in the world to exhibit all 60 plant species mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, Hadith, and Sunnah, recently welcomed a delegation from the Switzerland embassy in Qatar to its premises.

QBG staff walked the delegation through the garden, its facilities, and history, as well as its mock-up garden in Education City.

The Swiss delegation of 15 members visited the garden as part of a team-building activity and learned more about the rich variety of plants and trees in Islamic culture, their relevance in the Holy Qur'an, Hadith, and Sunnah.

In addition, the guests were shown around QBG's Botanical Museum, which exhibits plant modules and traditional tools made from plants, that illustrates botanical terms in the Holy Qur'an and immerses visitors in authentic Arab and Islamic heritage and traditions.

The visit took place with strict adherence to social distancing and Covid-19 preventive and precautionary safety measures.

Switzerland's ambassador Edgar Doerig said: "The Swiss embassy team and myself were delighted to start our yearly excursion at QBG. We were surprised and happy to discover such a beautiful hidden treasure in Education City with plenty of exotic plants as described in the Holy Qur'an."

QBG director Fatima al-Khulafai said: "We are delighted that the Swiss embassy in Doha selected QBG as a venue for its team-building activity. Switzerland and Qatar have enjoyed excellent bilateral relations for



Swiss ambassador Edgar Doerig and others during the visit.

over 40 years and QBG is humbled to make its contribution to these already strong ties.

"We look forward to renewed visits from the Swiss embassy, as well as other embassies in Qatar and the general public to our beautiful garden."

A number of embassies around the country have also recognised the important role that QBG plays in environmental conservation and restoration, taking an active part in QBG's Ghars tree-planting campaign and other tree-planting activities. The embassies of UK, Russia, Turkey, India, as well as Mali, Djibouti, South Africa, and Senegal are among the countries that, earlier this year, helped launch QBG's African Women's Diplomatic Garden - a first in the country, in celebration of Qatar Environment Day.

A key initiative of QBG is the Ghars campaign with a goal of planting and cultivating 2,022 trees in the lead-up to the FIFA

World Cup Qatar 2022.

Close to 2,000 trees have already been planted, with the assistance of embassies, as well as the greater community.

Additionally, in a bid to support the Environmental Development pillar of Qatar National Vision 2030, protect ecosystems, and empower community members to be active contributors to these efforts, QBG recently launched its free-of-charge 'Home Garden Phone Helpline'.

The initiative enables the public to pose any home gardening questions directly to QBG experts by calling +974 3091 8519 every Monday from 9am - 12.30pm, and every Wednesday from 12.30pm - 2.30pm.

More information on its upcoming events, competitions, and activities can be found on QBG's social media channels - Instagram: QuranicBotanicGarden; Facebook: Qur'anic Botanic Garden; and Twitter: @QuranicGarden.

DFI's Drive-In Cinema at Lusail extends screenings throughout winter

Following an overwhelmingly positive public response, the Doha Film Institute's (DFI) first-ever Drive-In Cinema experience in Lusail, presented in partnership with Qatar National Tourism Council (QNTC), will extend its public screenings into the month of April 2021.

Featuring a selection of films from Disney classics to contemporary family favourites, audiences of all ages are invited to the open-air cinema experience, which brings the community together at safe social distances in line with government guidelines and with the health of all guests as top priority.

In a press statement, DFI CEO and festival director Fatma Hassan Alremiahi said: "We are delighted that the Drive-In Cinema has met with an incredibly positive public reception following its debut at Ajyal Film Festival last month. It is a truly unique community experience, and we look forward to seeing audiences

of all ages come together this winter to share in the magic of cinema in a safe space.

"I would like to thank our partners at QNTC for their continued support."

QNTC COO Berthe Trengel said: "We are very pleased with the response to the Drive-in Cinema in Lusail. The Covid-19 pandemic has prompted us all to innovate and adapt our offerings. At QNTC, we work closely with partners such as DFI, traversing the public and private sectors, to develop products that cater not only to visitors but also to residents.

"We look forward to bringing back our vibrant calendar of events, while continuing to maintain the strictest safety and hygiene standards. This drive-in cinema delivers family friendly entertainment, while showcasing Qatar's culture through film, all within the smart city of Lusail."

A three-day programme of family-friendly, enthralling shorts will

mark Qatar National Day 2020.

On December 17 at 6.30pm, the Drive-In features: *Gub Gub* (Qatar/2018) by Nouf al-Sulati; *Hope* (Qatar, Indonesia/2020) by Abdulla Mohammed al-Janahi; *Under the Lemon Tree* (Qatar, Palestine/2020) by Noor al-Asswad; *Kashta* (Qatar/2016) by AJ al-Thani; *Unlucky Hamster* (Qatar, Indonesia / 2019) by Abdulaziz Khashabi; *Maha'mel* (Qatar/2018) by Dhabya al-Muhammadi; *Dana's Kite* (Qatar/2016) by Noor al-Nasr; *Treasures of the Past* (Qatar/2017) by Nada Bedair and Rawan al-Nassiri; and *Ya Hoota* (Qatar/2019) by Abdulaziz Yousif and Latifa al-Darwish.

Screening on December 18 at 6.30pm is a special short film programme, rated PG-13, featuring works by local talents and Qatar-based filmmakers including winners of the 2020 Made in Qatar and jury competition from the recently concluded Ajyal Film Festival.

The programme includes: *Daz*



Drive-In Cinema at Lusail has extended its public screenings until April 2021.

(Qatar/2016) by Shouq Shaheen; *Fragile* (Qatar/2019) by Khuloud al-Ali; *Stranger* (Qatar, France/2020) by Yasser Mustafa and Christophe Buffet - winner of the Special Jury Award at the 2020 MIQ Competition; *Al-Sit* (Sudan, Qatar/2020) by Suzannah Mirghani; 2020 MIQ Competition Best Documentary Award winner *Ander* (Qatar, Kazakhstan/2020) by Alina Mustafina; *Under Her*

Skin (Qatar, Algeria, France/2020) by Meriem Mesraoua winner of the Best Narrative Award 2020 MIQ Competition; *Embodiment* (Qatar/2017) by Khalifa al-Marri; *Beyond Broken Walls* (Qatar/2020) by Hissa G. al-Mannai; *Woman of Steel* (Jordan, Qatar/2020) by Obada Yousef Jarbi, Best Short Film -Bader Category; and *End of the Road* (Qatar/2019) by Ahmed al-Sharif.

On December 19, a programme of shorts for the whole family will screen at 6.30pm, including: *Unlucky Hamster* (Qatar, Indonesia/2019) by Abdulaziz Khashabi; *Samha* (Qatar/2018) by Noor Fawzi al-Asswad; *Sh'hab* (Qatar/2018) by Amal al-Muftah; *Where Are You Right Meow?* (Qatar/2018) by Maysam al-Ani; *Al Gawasa* (Qatar/2018) by Sheikha Bah-

zad and Maryam al-Thani; *Al Tabtab* (Qatar/2017) by Khalifa al-Mana; *Khurshid* (Qatar/2017) by Mazen Shafea and Mohamed Elamin; and *Emsahar* (Qatar/2020) by Hassan al-Jahni.

Capturing the holiday spirit on the big screen, Lusail's Drive-In Cinema will present Disney's live-action adaptation of the ETA Hoffmann's 1816 holiday classic, *The Nutcracker and the Four Realms* (US/2018) by Lasse Hallström and Joe Johnston on December 24 at 6.30pm.

Screening on December 25 at the same time, *Dr Seuss' The Grinch* (US/2018) will take the viewers to the town of Whoville, where the Grinch threatens Christmas in this captivating animation film.

Rounding off the series on December 26 at 6.30pm is Chris Columbus' beloved classic *Home Alone* (US/1990) about a young boy who is accidentally left behind when his family travels for the holidays.