



MEI MEDIA WATCH

(A Survey of Editorials)

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Qatar wins the World Cup Bid

[On 2 December the Emirate of Qatar sprang a surprise by winning the bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. This the first time the Middle East is hosting the world's most popular sporting event and hence is widely commented upon. Editorial commentaries from the Middle Eastern media are reproduced here. **Editor, MEI Media Watch**]

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TheNational

Abu Dhabi, Editorial, 3 December 2010, Friday

1. The Gulf is also a winner in Qatar's triumph

The tension was unbearable but amid shouts of both joy and surprise, FIFA chose Qatar as the host of the 2022 World Cup yesterday (2 December) evening. That Qatar now stands to host the most popular sporting event on Earth is an indication of how far that country, and indeed the entire region, has come in the past decade. Such a scenario would have been unthinkable just a few years ago.

Doha showed what it was capable of in successfully hosting the Asian Games in 2006 despite a few teething problems and unseasonable rains. FIFA also had a taste of what the Gulf had to offer when the UAE hosted the 2003 World Youth Championship, a tournament that starred local hero Ismail Matar and a future World Cup winner, the Spanish midfielder Andres Iniesta.

The World Cup is on another level to those events, but they did prove that in terms of organisation, Gulf nations can deliver. There are always logistical concerns to be allayed, but Qatar, like other countries in the GCC, is increasing its push to attract tourists; in the next 12 years it will ensure that the thousands of visiting fans will experience facilities and services of the highest calibre.

One aspect that is unlikely to change in the next 12 years is Qatar's stifling summer heat. The World Cup is held in June and July, a time of year in which the temperature and humidity in this part of the world reach heights that can negatively affect players' performances, and reduce the overall quality of the spectacle.

It is heartening that the heat was not used to deny Qatar its day in the sun. For a start, previous World Cup matches have been held in similarly scorching conditions. In 1994 the Irish team were visibly wilting in their World Cup match against Mexico, played in Florida's sweltering heat. But retractable-roof stadiums are becoming increasingly common and Qatar will have many of them in place by 2022.

Qatar's stunning triumph will not only raise its prestige but will also provide a boost to its economy and tourism throughout the region. It will hopefully open the door for similar events to be held elsewhere in the Gulf. But then again, there is no event quite like the World Cup.

Source: <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/editorial/the-gulf-is-also-a-winner-in-qatars-triumph>

gulfnews.com

Dubai, Editorial, 4 December 2010, Saturday

2. Qatar's focus on planning pays dividends

The 2022 World Cup is sure to create a positive ripple effect across the Arab world.

Naked ambition and an unbridled audacity to realise a dream saw Qatar shrugging off strong challenges from some of the world's top foot-balling nations to win the bid to host the 2022 football World Cup.

By virtue of this triumph, which has made the sporting world sit up and rub their eyes, Qatar has ensured that it is the first Arab, Middle Eastern or Muslim country to be awarded the right to stage football's biggest showpiece event.

Qatar's success story and capacity for forward thinking, especially in the field of sport, is not new. Their foray into hosting world class sporting events received the ultimate certification when

they won the rights to host the 2006 Asian Games — Asia's biggest multi-discipline sporting event. Since then they have methodically worked on trying to realise future plans.

Qatar had evinced an interest in hosting the Olympic Games — they failed to make the IOC shortlist for the 2016 Games but learnt valuable lessons. By hosting a successful 2022 World Cup they will ensure that the apex bodies in world sport will, in future, view their credentials seriously.

The world is now looking forward to a glitzy, compact and carbon-neutral World Cup which will be staged in solar-powered stadiums where searing desert temperatures will be contained with the help of modern cooling technology. In this, FIFA has been granted a historic opportunity to expand the frontiers of the game.

More essentially, the 2022 World Cup is guaranteed to create a positive ripple effect across the Arab world in terms of delivering a boost to economies through tourism and commerce; opening up new markets; favourable viewing times for the fans and countries; a colossal impact on the game across the region; leaving a legacy for future generations and creating an understanding of the Middle East for the rest of the world.

Source:

<http://gulfnews.com/opinions/editorials/qatar-s-focus-on-planning-pays-dividends-1.722564>



New Delhi, 4 December 2010, Saturday

3. Building on sand

A Persian Gulf peninsula with about 8 lakh (800,000) people (many of whom are foreign workers); itsy-bitsy Qatar has fought and won a big deal: it will host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. As the Cup sets foot in the Middle East and Eastern Europe for the first time (Russia will host the 2018 edition), this is indeed a new kind of voyage for FIFA. It was a bitter contest, with top contenders like the UK and Australia decrying the process itself with accusations of vote-trading. Qatar itself is delirious with joy — its emir said, “thank you for believing in change.”

Qatar is not the little country that could; roll in oil-and-gas wealth; it is the fastest-growing economy in the world (according to the IMF) with the second-highest per capita income. Which is why, despite the fact that its fanciful infrastructure promises are mostly on paper, FIFA feels confident that it can follow through (apart from the virtuous glow of hosting a feel-good event in the middle of a conflict-wracked region). Qatar has vowed to splash on a rail network, an airport, a seaport, better roads — and what's more, unveiled some very fancy modular stadia which it says will be dismantled and gifted to less lucky nations with no football infrastructure. Given that summer temperatures can reach over 40 degrees Celsius, it has also decided that these stadiums will be air-conditioned.

Like other desert paradises such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Doha is refashioning itself as a destination not just for expat workers, but also luxury and tourism. These cities have performed gigantic feats of climate control, with expensively desalinated water and even ski slopes, showy pieces of architecture, universities and cultural institutions plucked and transplanted from the West. The World Cup promises to be one more giant triumph of personal branding.

Source: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/building-on-sand/720253/0>

THE TIMES OF INDIA

New Delhi, Editorial, 4 December 2010, Saturday

4. It's a good choice

Qatar winning the bid for the 2022 FIFA World Cup may have surprised many. The tiny Middle Eastern nation bested solid bids from the US and Australia and overcame compelling proposals from Asian soccer powerhouses South Korea and Japan. But a closer look at Qatar's bid provides enough reasons to conclude that FIFA's decision to entrust the biggest sporting tournament in the world to the emirate was indeed justifiable.

The fact that the Middle East has not hosted the World Cup till date was crucial to the FIFA executive committee's decision to pick Qatar. Taking football to uncharted territories is one of FIFA's primary goals. Qatar's candidature, therefore, had a huge amount of 'feel good' riding on it. True, Australia too has never hosted the World Cup. But it simply doesn't have the same ring as the Arab world's first World Cup. The argument that Qatar doesn't have much of a football tradition is irrelevant. If only top soccer nations are to host the tournament, we would never see the World Cup leave Western Europe or South America. The World Cup is meant to be a conduit to popularise football and develop the game where there is potential. This is precisely why South Africa got to host it this year (2010) and Qatar will in 2022.

Over the last few years, Qatar has proven itself capable of hosting mega sporting events it successfully hosted the 2006 Asian Games. And being one of the fastest growing economies in the world, there is little reason to doubt its promise to have world-class infrastructure including air-conditioned stadiums in place by 2022. Plus, Qatar is ideally located in terms of time zones to rake in massive TV revenues from audiences in the western and eastern hemispheres. Thus, Qatar definitely has the right ingredients for a historic World Cup.

Source:

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/opinion/edit-page/Its-a-good-choice/articleshow/7036473.cms>



Muscat, Editorial, 5 December 2010, Sunday

5. Qatar's cup of joy

Never before in its history has the International Football Federation (FIFA) voted for such a dramatic football development and bridge-building exercise as it has done by granting the 2022 World Cup to Qatar. The Gulf state will become the first Arab country to host football's premier competition after beating off challenges from five other nations including the United States whose bid had been backed up by President Barack Obama himself.

The US, which had been the apparent favourite, was beaten 14-8 in the final round of voting by FIFA's 22-member executive committee which obviously took into consideration further development of the game in the Arab region where football is the most popular sport, and fostering of greater friendship between East and West. For its landmark vote, which is a victory for the Arab world, we applaud FIFA and praise its farsightedness in the promotion of the 'beautiful game'. While there has been scathing criticism in some sections of the international Press over the FIFA's nod to Qatar, this is only to be expected after hot favourites, like the US, Japan, South Korea and Australia were left moaning their loss despite criticism of Qatar's bid in FIFA's technical report for its hot weather and 12 stadiums within a 30km radius that could pose logistic problems.

As FIFA President Sepp Blatter put it: "We go to new lands. Never has the World Cup been in Russia (it won the right to host the 2018 World Cup) and Eastern Europe, and the Middle East and Arab world have been waiting for a long time, so I'm a happy president when we talk about the development of football." Blatter's assessment of international football has been widely praised not only in the Arab and Middle East region but also in all other South Asian and Far

Eastern countries where the game is hugely popular. Blatter's words ring true, and so do the words of Hassan Al Thawadi, the Chief Executive of Qatar's bid, who is quoted in news reports as saying: "We can allow history to be made while opening up the gates of communication between East and West. The Middle East will be put on a platform for everyone to see it as it truly is. And, more importantly, it allows the Middle East to interact with the rest of the world, so any misconceptions that people here have about the West can be taken away."

The ability of Arab Gulf states to organise mega sporting events has been proven in the past; Formula One racing in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, Professional Golfers Association Tour championships in the UAE, International Athletics Federation Grand Prix meetings, international men's and women's tennis championships in Qatar and the UAE, and, now, the Asian Beach Games in Oman amid other regional and international sports events, are a testimony to the organisational skills of the Gulf states. And, Qatar is gearing to truly amaze the world with its zero-carbon air-cooled stadiums, training facilities, fan zones and other infrastructure for the 2022 World Cup. Over the next five years, Qatar will build a railway network, expected to cost \$25 billion, to link all 12 of its World Cup stadiums. Three existing stadiums are to be renovated while nine more will be constructed.

Source:

http://www.omantribune.com/archives/index.php?page=editorial_details&id=1805&heading=EDITORIALS&archdate=2010-12-05

The Boston Globe

Editorial, 6 December 2010, Monday

6. World Cup in Qatar: Bold or just baffling?

There's plenty of suspicion swirling about Qatar's successful bid to host the 2022 World Cup. How did the small Persian Gulf sheikhdom — where the majority of the population consists of migrant workers — land one of the most coveted sporting events in the world? The bid has some obvious flaws, not least the 120-degree temperatures that occur during the summers there, and critics of the decision have pointed to corruption in how the international soccer federation evaluated bids.

But regardless of how Qatar came to host the World Cup, some good may come of it. The nation will be building 12 new stadiums, and has committed to cooling them with "green air conditioning."

The term may sound oxymoronic, but in principle it could mark an important new step in renewable energy. The system consists of rooftop solar energy collectors capable of storing the energy they capture, and when the stadiums aren't in use that energy will be transmitted out to Qatar's power grid. Given how much of the earth's surface consists of fallow desert bombarded with the sun's rays, this could provide a model for building highly efficient, environmentally-friendly power plants on otherwise inhospitable land.

Still, it's strange to use advances in green technology to justify an otherwise baffling choice. So the onus will be on the Qatari government to show that it can act not only as an effective World Cup host, but as a renewable-energy innovator.

Source:

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2010/12/06/world_cup_in_qatar_bold_or_just_baffling/

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