

French official lauds Qatar for promoting dialogue

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Senate Council of France H E Abdulla Tarmugi commented on developing countries and congratulated the State of Qatar "for promoting the exchange of dialogue, political wisdom and experiences on democracy and free trade" and stressed that "terrorism is a war that is the enemy of non-Muslims and Muslims alike".

"Despite the entire civilised worlds efforts, Iran is determined to continue on its path towards attaining nuclear weapons and this is not promising, the international system faces terrible dilemmas in the months ahead. The questions we must now ask ourselves are how the balance of power in this region would change

with the Shi'ite bomb and what would be its effect on the Gulf, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and so forth, and how would Iranian nuclear capability affect longer term relations between Sunnis and Shi'ites in this part of the world in the years ahead".

"In my judgement without doubt, Iran's possession of nuclear weapons would fundamentally change the geopolitical and geo-economic face of the Middle East, an Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons is the worse possible outcome" Blackwill reiterated that an attack is "not imminent, the United States and its allies around the world are doing everything possible to rescue us from this terrible set of choices, and let us pray

that all this combined with diplomatic efforts succeeds - but for that to happen there would have to be a profound change of policy in Tehran - in order for us to successfully enhance democracy and combat terrorism in this region and beyond in the years ahead".

Gregory Meeks, stressed the importance of conversations to take place between America and the Middle East in order for common understanding to occur, "you can change situations, you can change governments without bloodshed, and we are all in this together, as the late Dr Martin Luther King said 'injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere'".

—THE PENINSULA



The Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani received many visiting officials on the sidelines of the 6th Doha Forum on Democracy Development and Free Trade in Doha yesterday.

Arab media lacks credibility: Expert

DOHA: A media expert yesterday blamed the Arab press for not putting into perspective, why a tolerant society like Denmark allowed cartoons blaspheming the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) to be published.

Ramez Maluf, Professor of Communication Arts at the Lebanese-American University, Beirut, in a speech at the roundtable on media and press, held as part of the 6th Doha Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade, said, the Arab media failed to convey to its audiences about the reasons that caused such cartoons to be published by the Danish daily. "Nobody went and asked why it happened," he added. He said that a lot of the controversy that occurred as a result of these caricatures could have been better explained had the Arab media or at least, some sections of it, taken time to put the issue in some perspective.

He lamented that most often, media in the Arab world focused on distant and large issues which had no solutions such as answering the question of whether there exists water on Mars. The media, he said, had some freedom of expression but this was severely

restricted when it came to dealing with local, sensitive issues. "Freedom of expression is significant only when they deal with such sensitive issues," he emphasised.

He said, the Arab media lacked credibility among its own viewers who rely upon a foreign channel to confirm any news, expecting it to be uncensored or unembellished. He cited the example of the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak who, in early 1990s, had endorsed a CNN commercial stating he depended upon the US-based network for accurate news coverage about Iraq, following the occupation of Kuwait. "Such an endorsement speaks much about the Egyptian intelligence, considering that Egypt had 30,000 troops on ground in Iraq," he noted.

The session was chaired by noted Qatari media expert and researcher, Dr Ahmed Abdul Malik and moderated by Riad Kahwaji, Chief Executive, Near East and Gulf Military Analysis. Panelists included Brian Hanrahan from the BBC, Robin Wright, Diplomatic Correspondent, Washington Post, Dan Rather, Anchor, CBS, Lee Smith, media expert from the US, among others.

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Noted Qatari media expert and researcher, Dr Ahmed Abdul Malik (third left) along with media personalities and experts, during the session.

Editor criticises silence on Israel nuclear capability

DOHA: So much has been said about the Iran nuclear issue at this conference (the 6th Doha Forum on Democracy Development and Free Trade) but not a word has been uttered by any speaker about Israel's nuclear capability, says a celebrated Arab journalist who is taking part in the key convention.

Abdul Bari Addwan, editor-in-chief of *Al Quds Al Arabi*, a prominent London-based Arabic daily, made the

above comment at the forum here yesterday during a question and answer session.

Israel, said Addwan, had some 3,000 nuclear heads but nobody at this conference mentioned this, while many referred to the Iran nuke issue.

Addwan said that Israel killed 3,000 innocent people in the Palestinian territories and 'terrorism' was defined as an act of killing and tor-

tering innocent civilians.

In self-defence, Palestinian killed 660 mostly Israeli soldiers and they included some settlers, he said.

Present at the session on 'enhancing democracy and combating terrorism' was the First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister, H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabor Al Thani. He said: "For the first time I agree with you".

—THE PENINSULA

CSOs compromising with regimes: Expert

DOHA: Three different trends affecting the Civil Society Organisations have caused impediments to the development of democracy in the Arab world, an expert in the field, said here yesterday.

At the session entitled Civil Society Organisations, Dr Hussain Shabaan, Director of Iraq's network of human rights organisations, said, one of these trends was that CSOs were compromising with non-democratic regimes in the Arab world, instead of engaging in a positive conflict aimed at fostering democracy. The other was CSOs being bargaining with the regimes which helped the governments to enforce their will, while the third, and the one that was required, was of civil society organizations and governments engaging in quality cooperation with respect for one another. CSOs, he said, can play a positive role in boosting democracy in the region provided they followed the third trend.

Chris Doyle, Director, Council for Arab-British Understanding pointed out that in many instances, there was a disconnect between the various Non Government Organizations. He cited the example

of Iraq where such NGOs, primarily engaged with providing relief to the Iraqi civilians, had to travel in convoys escorted by the coalition forces. This dented the belief that such NGOs were free from government support and hence, were shunned or targeted forcing them to flee the country. The disconnect between the various NGOs, he pointed out, was also apparent during the December 2004 Tsunami where various organisations were trying to provide relief to survivors without coordinating their efforts for better results.

The session, held as part of the ongoing 6th Doha Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade, was moderated by Dr Yousuf Mohammad Obaidan, Member, National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), Qatar with Akiko Yamanaka, Vice Minister Parliamentary Secretary of Japan, Dr Hasni Abidi, Director, Arab and Mediterranean Studies Centre, William Perry, William and Perry Associates, and Scott Bates, Vice President, National Security Centre for National Policy, US, as speakers.

—THE PENINSULA