

News

Qatar calls for EU-style security pact for Mideast

MUNICH: Middle Eastern states should put their differences behind them and forge a security pact modeled on the European Union in order to pull the region back from the brink, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani said on Friday. He asked the international community to keep up diplomatic pressure on the countries concerned to achieve that, but offered few other details.

"I believe that it is time for wider regional security in the Middle East. It is time for all nations of the region to forget the past, including us, and agree on basic security principles and rules of governance, and at least a minimum level of security to allow for peace and prosperity," Sheikh Tamim told a security conference in Munich. "This should not be a pipe dream. Too much is at risk. The Middle East is at the brink. It's time to bring it back."

Qatar, a tiny but rich Gulf Arab state, has been isolated over the past seven months by trade and travel sanctions imposed by the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt over accusations - denied by Doha - that it supports terrorism and regional rival Iran. Efforts by the United States and Kuwait to end the rift have failed to produce any results.

In addition to the Gulf row, Sheikh Tamim referenced violent conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya which have sparked humanitarian catastrophes and one of the largest refugee crises ever with millions of people washing up in Europe in recent years. "We can mirror efforts of the European Union, its ability to find common ground to rebuild and prosper," he added. "Shifting from feuds to cooperation will require that we each be held accountable."

Meanwhile, US National Security Adviser H R McMaster called yesterday for more forceful action to halt Iran's development of what he said was an increasingly powerful network of proxy armies in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq. McMaster accused Iran of escalating a campaign to increase its influence in the



MUNICH: Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani gives a speech during the 54th Munich Security Conference on Friday. — AFP

Middle East by building and arming "Hezbollah-style" proxy armies in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere as it has done in Lebanon.

The goal was to weaken Arab governments and turn the proxy forces against those states if they pursued policies that ran counter to Tehran's interests, he said. "So the time is now, we think, to act against Iran," he told the Munich Security Conference, calling on US allies to halt trade that was helping underwrite the expansion of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the most powerful military and economic force in the Islamic Republic. The United States deems Lebanon's Hezbollah a terrorist organization.

"What's particularly concerning is that this network of proxies is becoming more and more capable," he said. Iran has denied accusations that it meddles in the affairs of its Middle East neighbours and has dismissed suggestions it stop supporting groups such as Hezbollah. McMaster also railed against the 2015 nuclear accord signed by Iran and six other countries, saying investments made by German firms and others were helping fund Iran's missile program and its other activities in the Middle East. — Reuters

13 killed in minister's quake zone copter crash

MEXICO CITY: A 7.2-magnitude earthquake that rattled Mexico on Friday triggered a tragedy when a minister's helicopter killed 13 people during a crash-landing on the way to the epicenter. The UH-60 Black Hawk military helicopter landed on its side, crushing a van. There were no reported casualties from the quake itself, which damaged buildings. The chopper was carrying Interior Minister Alfonso Navarrete and Oaxaca state Governor Alejandro Murat, who were unharmed, President Enrique Pena Nieto said.

"Unfortunately, multiple people on the ground lost their lives and others were injured," he wrote on Twitter late Friday. Yesterday, the Oaxaca prosecutor's office said five women, four men, and three children were killed by the helicopter, while another victim died en route to hospital. Fifteen other people were injured, the office said in a statement. Rescuers quickly swarmed the accident site searching for survivors.

Navarrete told the Televisa TV network that the helicopter pilot lost control of the aircraft about 40 m above the ground as it was coming in to land. He added that some passengers were hurt. The helicopter went down in the southwestern town of Pinotepa de Don Luis - 37 km from the quake epicenter, according to the US

Geological Survey. About 50 homes in the nearby town of Santiago Jamiltepec were damaged, as well as the town hall and church, but no one was killed in the quake, the interior ministry said.

Oaxaca state authorities opened shelters for those affected, and nearly 6,000 soldiers and federal police were deployed to help with the emergency response. Both Mexico's National Seismological Service and the US Geological Survey put the quake's magnitude at 7.2. It struck at 5:39 pm (2339 GMT) at a relatively deep 24.7 kilometers, said the USGS.

Panic and flashbacks

The earthquake came less than six months after two quakes killed hundreds of people in the country. On Sept 7, an 8.2-magnitude earthquake shook the nation and killed 96 people, mostly in the states of Oaxaca and Chiapas. Then on September 19 - the 32nd anniversary of a 1985 quake that killed 10,000 - a 7.1-magnitude quake hit the country, leaving 369 people dead. Friday's quake triggered Mexico City's alarm system and caused buildings to sway in the capital. It was also felt in the states of Guerrero, Puebla and Michoacan.

Panicked residents flooded the streets, fearing a repeat of last September's deadly quakes.

"To be honest, we're all pretty upset. We start crying whenever the (earthquake) alarm goes off," 38-year-old publicist Kevin Valladolid told AFP through tears after fleeing his building in La Roma, in central Mexico City. "We're stressed out, we have flashbacks. So we run out into the street. It's all we can do."

Patients from a nearby hospital were forced outside, some in wheelchairs or carting their IV lines. Similar scenes played out in Veracruz. On the north side of Mexico City, Julia Hernandez said she felt like she was "in a boat" as the ground swayed beneath her feet. "Is it ever going to stop?" she said. Standing in the middle of the street, her eyes glued to her fifth-floor apartment, Graciela Escalante, 72, could hardly speak. "It was terribly strong. We barely managed to get down the stairs. It was the longest staircase in the world," she told AFP. "We thought everything was going to collapse again."

Seismic hotbed

Officials in affected states said they were inspecting buildings damaged by last year's quakes, which are especially vulnerable to collapse. "Obviously people are afraid," said the emergency response chief for the city of Puebla, Gustavo Ariza. Pena Nieto tweeted that the National Emergency Committee had been activated because of the magnitude of the quake. Mexico sits at a spot where five tectonic plates come together, making it particularly vulnerable to earthquakes. — AFP



JAMILTEPEC, Mexico: Soldiers of the Mexican army walk in front of a military helicopter that crashed into a van yesterday. —AFP

Calls for justice as Filipina maid's body...

Continued from Page 1

parents repair the house that was damaged by Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan)," in 2013, the aunt recalled. The slain maid also wanted to finance the college education of her youngest sister, Joyce, the aunt said.

Residents lined the highway as the funeral convoy escorted by police cars and motorcycles made its way to Demafelis' hometown, about a two hour's drive from the city. Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello said late Friday that "working groups" from both countries were discussing forging a memorandum for protecting the rights of Filipinos in Kuwait, many of whom are working as maids. Domestic workers in that country are not covered by ordinary labor legislation, and accounts of Filipinas being subjected to abuse and exploitation in the Middle East have long circulated.

On Friday, the victim's wailing sister threw herself at her sibling's coffin after it was unloaded at Manila airport, while her stunned brother Joejet Demafelis tried to comfort her. "This is a huge loss for us. Her dream,

she told my mother, is that she was leaving only because she wanted to help our parents and our youngest sibling," the brother told reporters at the cargo terminal. "My parents can't accept this. Every so often, they start weeping," he added. "I hope they can find those who killed my sister".

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Public Authority of Manpower's spokesman said yesterday PAM is properly playing its due role in protecting workers of various nationalities. PAM is using legal means and specific measures, according to its competence and powers, in order to safeguard the rights of the private sector's workers. Aseel Al-Mezaid said in a press statement. Mezeid, who doubles as head of the PAM's public relations and media department, dismissed as "incredible" recent reports about workers' rights, along with statements by some countries' officials on the conditions of their citizens in Kuwait.

The PAM is eager to protect the rights of workers, but it takes into account the necessity of avoiding possible negative effects on projects and governmental contracts, she added. In this context, several meetings were held between the PAM and representatives of the embassies of the Philippines and India in order to resolve problems regarding some companies' failure to pay the salaries of their workers, PAM's spokesman pointed out. — Agencies

Pak child killer handed four...

Continued from Page 1

The killing sparked calls for the public execution of Ali after officials said his DNA had been recovered from the scene of the crime and matched samples from similar cases. At least 12 cases of rape and murder have been

recorded in the Kasur area in the past two years. Ali confessed to eight cases, but it is not clear if the four others are linked. "It was a fair trial," said Mian Sultan Masood, the defense lawyer provided by the state. "The accused had confessed his crime. In this context he was correctly sentenced to death," he added.

According to the victim's father Ameen Ansari, Ali - who lived nearby - had taken part in the initial protests that erupted after Zainab's body was discovered. Prior to the recent flood of cases, Kasur was already infamous for sexual abuse, after authorities uncovered a huge pedophilia ring in the city in 2015. — AFP

India, Iran agree to support Kabul...

Continued from Page 1

However, local Indian media have reported frustrations over delays in awarding a contract to develop a major gas field known as Farzad B in the Gulf. India's foreign ministry said yesterday that "discussions continue" on Farzad B. The two leaders also signed agreements for avoidance of double taxation and the implementation of an extradition treaty from 2008. As part of a lease contract, India will help Iran run a multipurpose container terminal at Chabahar for 18 months. India,

Iran and Afghanistan signed a three-way transit agreement in 2016 to develop Chabahar port aiming to boost economic growth in the region.

The \$85 million project, just 90 km from the China-sponsored Gwadar port in Pakistan, creates a transit route between India, Iran and Afghanistan. India is trying to develop Chabahar as a way to gain access to the markets of central Asia as well as Afghanistan. But progress is slow because of concern that President Donald Trump's administration in Washington may eventually scrap the Iran nuclear deal. "We will support the construction of the Chabahar-Zahedan rail link so that Chabahar gateway's potential could be fully utilized," Modi said. "We want to expand connectivity, cooperation in the energy sector and the centuries-old bilateral relationship." — Agencies

To see your ad here, call: **+965 248 35 616 / 617**
 E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
 ads@kuwaittimes.net
 Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Hala Feb OFFERS

174 KD
199 KD
SAVE 25 KD

SHARP LC-60UA440X AQUOS SMART TV 60 inch

249 KD
299 KD
SAVE 50 KD

SHARP LC-65UE630X AQUOS SMART TV 65 inch

399 KD
449 KD
SAVE 50 KD

best 1809 809

• Kuwait 1 (The New str.) • Kuwait 2 (Panasonic Tower) • Hawalli 1 (Tunis str.) • Hawalli 2 (Bin Khalid str.) • Showakh (4th Ring road) • Al-Rai (4th Ring road) • Salmiya (Salem Al-Mubarak str.) • Farwanija (Behind police Station) • Fahsheel (Opp. General Parking) • Jahra (Opp. Main Co-op) • Airport (Departure Hall)