Forum on Democracy and Free Trade discusses role of education

Technology aiding terrorist tendencies among Arab youth

DOHA: Technology has become a source of terrorist tendencies and extremist tendencies among the youth in the Arab region, according to Sheikh Ahmed Al Fahad Al Sabah, Minister of Energy in Kuwait.

He was speaking at a session on education at the Forum on Democracy and Free Trade which began at the Ritz Carlton yesterday.

"Technology without a teacher will be dangerous. Now technology has become a source of many strange thoughts adopted by our youth and the cause of our extremist tendencies," Sheikh Ahmed said.

Calling for development of education and curricula, he said the process is not confined to educational materials but includes all educational operations including teachers without women getting their rights and playing a leading role in the society.

Dr. Jussina Al Issa from the Qatar University presided over the session. Mohammed bin Khalid Al Mana, Chairman of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI), in his welcome address said the Forum had become one of the most successful international conferences which aims to strengthen the democratic thought in a neutral and rational way.

He said the conference has changed the classic concept of democracy, which has now got broader concepts. Democracy is now considered as a general environment in which nations can co-exist and create a balancing relationship between political, economical, social, and cultural systems. The role of women between democracy, development, free trade and cultural heritage, he added.

Karren Kerrigan, advisor of women's issues in the United States Department, stressed the increasing need for transfer of knowledge and the significant role it plays in the development of educational institutions. Knowledge is power and it is highly important to attain a good educational system, she noted.

Kathleen O'Barney, commissioner of the US Federal Communications Commission, praised the initiative of the Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in promoting and spreading democracy in Qatar and the care he has given for education and its importance in building democratic societies.

She spoke on the importance of Internet as a means of developing a free media, free elections and independent judiciary as well as educational systems that can prepare youth and especially women to play a role in the democratic society.

DOHA: Issues related to the concept of the broader Middle East and democracy in the region came up for discussion at the fifth Doha Forum on Democracy and Free Trade in the earlier sessions of the day.

Abdul Kareem Al Iryami, former prime minister of Yemen, in his speech said the issue of a greater Middle East was a broader vision that had several aspects. This initiative of a greater Middle East, he said, was in response to a desire expressed by a country that was outside the region. The Middle East before 9-11, he said, is different than what it is today. He asked if the countries that were envisioning the broadening of democracy in the Middle East but Washington was not.

Hans Weschel, director of the US Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), in his speech noted that US President George W Bush was directly involved in formulating American policies that support democratic movement in the Middle East and the world.

The US, he said, would not force democracy in the Middle East but Washington will continue to seek ways and support democracy in the Middle East.

Broader Middle East, democracy discussed

Eric Raoul, Mayor of Raincy, France, spoke about the importance of spreading democracy through education.

The Peninsula