

Emir: Squeeze on Hamas undemocratic

DOHA: The Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani yesterday warned the international community against putting political pressure on the Palestinian people or halting their aid in view of the changes in leadership of that country.

In a speech at the opening of the 6th Doha Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade at the Sheraton Doha, the Emir said: "Challenging the choices of people will only result in fuelling feelings of despair and generate waves of wrath. Moreover, opposing the popular, contradicts the spirit of democratic option that calls for compliance with what the majority decides."

The opening ceremony was attended by the Emir's wife H H Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned, H E Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani, First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabor Al Thani, Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Industry H E Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah, Minister of Finance H E Yousuf Hus-sain Kamal, their excellencies, the ministers, members of the diplomatic corps and foreign delegates.

The Emir said that the challenges facing democracy in the region had not prevented the birth of a unique experience in practicing democracy, which deserved commendation and respect. "The Palestinian people, despite their sufferings under the grip of occupation, insisted in exercising their legitimate right to choose their government. Their National Authority was also keen on providing guarantees for exercising this funda-

Picture: QASSIM RAHMATULLAH



The Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and his wife H H Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned at the opening of the 6th Doha Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade at the Sheraton Doha yesterday.

FM to visit India

DOHA: The First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabor Al Thani will begin a two-day official visit of India on April 18, Chinmaya R Gharekhan, India's Special Envoy for West Asia, said yesterday.

mental right by its people," he said.

"The parliamentary elections were held and all those who had followed it, including those who could

not so far tolerate its results or accept the will of the Palestinian people, have acknowledged its transparency and fairness. The civilised way in which Palestinian political forces have dealt with the results of an election reflects a commitment to what is decided by the collective will and the acceptance of the citizen's free choices. This calls upon advocates of democracy all over the world to respect the decision of the Palestinian people."

The Emir said there was a press-

ing need for this region to finalise a major project it had already embarked upon and which it has to continue in its own and the world's interest. "At the forefront of this project is democracy, not only as a mechanism for decision-making but as a way of life that is directly involved with the essence of its peoples' aspirations for development, progress and building a better future."

—THE PENINSULA

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