

# Emir to open Doha Forum on Democracy today

MAYA MANSOUR

**DOHA** The Emir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani will open the 9th Doha Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade at the Sheraton Hotel here on Sunday in the presence of over 600 experts and dignitaries from around the world.

Addressing a press conference on Saturday, Assistant Foreign Minister for Follow-Up Affairs HE Mohammad al Rumaihi, said that the conference will deliberate upon issues like information freedom, international governance, role of governments in boosting their national economy in light of the current economic slowdown, among others.

Director of UCLA Centre for Middle East Development, Steven Spiegel, who was also present on the occasion, spoke about the third conference on 'Enriching the Middle East Economic Future' that will be held simultaneously with the Doha Forum.

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin



His Excellency Mohammad al Rumaihi.

Jabor al Thani, former French president Jacques Chirac and Finland Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen will address the opening session of the meet.

Underlining the significance of the conference, the minister said, "The Doha Forum will discuss ways to enhance democratic practices in the Middle East and how to benefit from the experiences of other democracies in the world. It will also focus

on supporting the mass media to ensure that it becomes more open and transparent in the region".

He said the forum will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of joining the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), its impact on Arab countries, and the future of FTA.

Speaking about the conference on 'Enriching the Middle East Economic Future',