

No Lebanon talks in Doha: PM
Hillary Clinton lauds Qatar's initiative to bring lasting peace to Darfur



DOHA: Qatar yesterday ruled out the possibility of inviting feuding political factions in Lebanon for talks in Doha to iron out their differences and said they (Lebanese) should try to enforce Taif and Doha pacts.

Lebanon's government col-lapsed yesterday after Hezbollah and its allies resigned from the cabinet over a UN probe into the assassination of former premier Rafiq Hariri.

Qatar's message to all Lebanese political factions is that they should try and thrash out their differences on their own through dialogue, keeping public interest above everything else. They shouldn't complicate the problem, Qatar said.

"I had made a private visit to Lebanon (earlier) when I felt there was tension there," said Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabor Al Thani, who also holds the foreign portfolio. "We hold all factions in Lebanon in esteem," the Prime Minister stressed.

Addressing a joint news briefing here last evening with his US counterpart, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Premier said that Qatar was supporting the Saudi-Syrian initiative to find a just solution to the political imbroglio in Lebanon.

"We don't want Lebanon to slip into further crisis," the PM pointed out, adding that he had also raised the Lebanese issue with his Turkish counterpart who was here on a visit.

The PM earlier chaired a meeting of GCC foreign ministers with Clinton, where bilateral issues (between GCC and Washington), the crisis brewing in Beirut and the Middle East peace process came up for threadbare discussion.

Clinton described Qatar as a friendly country which the "US trusted immensely" and lauded Doha's initiative to bring peace to Sudan's Darfur region.

"We are working on the issue together," she said of Washington and Doha's joint efforts to resolve the Darfur crisis.

The PM said Clinton earlier met the Emir, H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and both the leaders discussed the Lebanese crisis, regional peace process and issues related to bilateral (Doha-Washington) relations.

Clinton told reporters that Lebanon's coalition crisis was a transparent attempt to subvert justice, but vowed that the work of a UN-backed tribunal investigating the assassination of former (Lebanese) Premier, Rafiq Al Hariri, would go on.

She said that at her meeting with GCC foreign ministers the Iranian nuclear issue was also discussed and it was agreed that Tehran must abide by guidelines resulting from the upcoming Istanbul meet of UN Security Council's permanent members plus Germany.

The US Secretary of State was here to attend the '7th Forum for the Future of the G-8 and Broader Middle East and North Africa region' which concludes here today. THE PENINSULA



Prepare for serious talks, Hillary tells Iran

US Secretary of State wants practical steps from Tehran at the P5+1 meeting in Istanbul

DOHA: US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton yesterday urged Iran to be prepared for serious discussions at the upcoming meeting of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany (P5+1) later this month.

“When the members of the P5+1 meet in Istanbul the end of the month with Iran they will focus on practical steps that Iran must take to address the international community’s concerns. “We urge Iran to come to this meeting prepared for the serious discussions,” she told a joint news conference with Qatar’s Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jasssem bin Jabor Al Thani last evening. Clinton is on a visit to Qatar during which she will be attending the 7th Forum for the Future of the G8 and Broader Middle East and North Africa region which concludes its work here today.

She said that her discussions with the leaders in Qatar and other GCC countries covered Iran and the threats that its nuclear activities poses to the region and the world.

“The US will continue to work with the international community towards a settlement that will hold Iran to its responsibilities, to assure that its programme is indeed peaceful,” said the US Secretary of State. Other issues that have been discussed here in Qatar included the Gulf security and the situation in Lebanon. “In our meetings here with my friends here as well as with the Gulf countries in the GCC forums, we discussed a number of issues related to the Gulf security and stability,” said Clinton. “America’s commitment to the security of the Gulf region is unwavering. We will continue to support our partners including Qatar if they were to address threats and create the conditions for long term peace, prosperity and human progress.” With regard to Lebanon, she said the US and Qatar and all the other Gulf countries share a strong commitment to support the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon. “No country should be forced to choose between justice and stability. The Lebanese people deserve both,” she said. “We are consulting closely with concerned parties and nations as the best way forward to support the stability and sovereignty and independence of Lebanon and the needs of the Lebanese people,” she said in reference to the withdrawal of eleven members from the Lebanese cabinet. She also said she believes that the work of the special tribunal must go forward so that justice can be served and impunity ended. “We believe that the leaders of Lebanon have an ongoing responsibility to serve the interests of their own people, not outside forces trying to bring the government down as a way to undermine the Special Tribunal.”

“The Tribunal is a creation of the UN and the Security Council. It is supported by many governments, including the US. It is important that we work with the Lebanese government, the Lebanese people and our other partners who share our interests in pursuing both stability and justice in Lebanon.” THE PENINSULA