



MINISTER TAKES OATH: Minister of Labour and Social Affairs H E Dr Sultan bin Hassan Al Dhabet Al Dosari took the oath before the Deputy Emir and Heir Apparent H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani here yesterday.



OFFICIAL MEET: The Premier and Foreign Minister H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabor Al Thani met separately at his Emiri Diwan office ambassadors Dhary Ajran Al Ajran of Kuwait and Li Jian Ying of China, on the expiry of their tour of duty in Qatar.

Nato not involved in hunt for Bin Laden: Official

DOHA • Nato forces will stay in Afghanistan for the duration, General Ray Henault, chairman of Nato's military committee, told *The Peninsula* yesterday. In short, there is no time-frame set by which Nato troops aim to pull out of the war-ravaged country.

As chairman, Henault coordinates with chiefs of the various armed forces that constitute the organisation. He said Nato has been in Afghanistan for five years. "The crisis has been going for quite some time and we ensure we are working with our Gulf partners. The answers to challenges in Afghanistan are not purely military. There is also a significant non-military component," said the officer.

The non-military component includes the reconstruction process and government-level activities as well as areas like setting up a judiciary and others. Henault also said that Nato is not involved in the hunt for Osama bin Laden, although it works in association with Pakistan to help stop cross-border infiltrations. Pakistan has often been criticised

for not doing enough about Afghanistan, bringing its role as an ally in the 'war against terror' into question. However, Henault pointed out Nato was more than pleased with the scale of Pakistani involvement.

"We are very impressed. Pakistan is very anxious to maintain stability in the region. They have helped us in a number of ways. Their objective is to have a stable neighbour," said Henault. Pakistan is estimated to have around 80,000 military personnel deployed on its border with Afghanistan.

The British military has often been put under the scanner for not providing its personnel with properly-armoured vehicles and it has faced the brunt of attacks from the Taliban in the southern part of Afghanistan. Several Canadian troops have also perished in skirmishes.

Henault stated that while the north and west of the country are "relatively secure", provinces in the south of Afghanistan, like Kandahar and Helmand, are a different kettle of fish. Earlier, militants used to attack in hordes, hoping to overwhelm

Qatari officer attending course at Nato college

continued from page 1

Henault said Iran was raised as a concern in the meetings here but was certainly not the dominant issue. "Most around the world are worried of nuclear-capable countries. They would prefer a non-nuclear Middle East. Qatar is very anxious to maintain stability in the region. Their objective is to have a stable neighbour," said Henault.

As for Iraq being discussed, Henault said the matter had been raised but only in terms of the instability prevailing there. Henault said that there is a keen desire to maintain regional security among the GCC states and he was impressed with the level of their cooperation.

Nato is drawing closer to the region and as Henault frankly said, the organisation also can learn a great deal from here. Joint training exercises are on the anvil and observers from the Gulf are expected to be invited to Nato exercises. Training initiatives also entail meritorious officers from the Gulf region being sent to the Nato Defence College in Rome. At present, a Qatari officer is attending a modular short course there. Only officers of a certain rank or above can take part and there are criteria to be met, said Henault.

Nato hopes at some stage to establish a Mideast training faculty as well as for Mediterranean Dialogue countries.

Declining to comment on the preparedness of regional armed forces, stating it was a matter best raised with the respective military commanders, he, however, said: "All (armies) are trying to modernise, to transform their forces."

Henault will be retiring next year after 40 years in uniform. The Canadian soldier has made no concrete plans yet, but may conceivably join a think-tank or accept directorships with company boards. "I can say I will definitely be out of uniform," said Henault.

A book, too, is a possibility.

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forces through sheer numbers. However, nowadays the opposition forces are using Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), different types of mines and also resorting to sui-

cide bombings. "There is an increased use of such tactics. The threat has changed and we have to adapt," said Henault.

THE PENINSULA

Additional zero comes into effect from 2am on May 21

continuation from page 1

The migration to the new access code will be implemented at 2am on the morning of May 21 to minimise possible inconvenience to customers.

PABX and Key System customers – those who are using their own billing system and Call Details Recording (CDR) for international call charges – have been advised to update and re-programme terminals in line with this change and obtain the correct international call charges on their own billing systems after the two-digit access code ('00') implementation for international calls.

Qtel's strategy to apply universal customer service standards and to support its customer-focus thrust for 2007 are the reasons behind an extensive communications campaign to inform Qtel's customer base about this significant new change.

The campaign is designed to inform customers what they need to do in order to make the necessary changes in customer premises equipment (CPE), home and office telephone memories and mobile phones and PDA's contact lists.

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