



HIS Highness Sayyid Haitham bin Tareq al Said during his visit to Kyoto National Museum in Japan yesterday. — ONA



US Defence Secretary Dr Robert Gates and his delegation arrived in Oman yesterday. — ONA

### Nirma varsity team on visit

MUSCAT — A high-level delegation from India's Nirma University is arriving in Muscat tomorrow on a two-day visit.

The delegation will be available for consultation in Radisson SAS Hotel, Chandrakant V Chothani, Convener of the Gujarati wing of ISC, said.

Nirma University offers graduate, post-graduate and doctorate programmes in technology, management, pharmacy, science and law.

The courses are rated highly by accreditation agencies and industry. Innovation, quality and excellence are the key driving forces of the institution.

## Conference on primary healthcare begins today

MUSCAT — The 2nd national conference on primary healthcare begins today at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Abdulqadir al Ghassani, Under-Secretary of Health Affairs at the Ministry of Health.

Several working papers will be presented during the conference organised by the Ministry of Health in association with SQU.

The conference will discuss the progress of primary healthcare in the Sultanate, ways to develop services provided at health centres and approaches to treat chronic diseases as well as the role of family physician at health centres.

More than 100 doctors from the Ministry of Health and other health institutions in Oman will attend the two-day conference, along with participants from the GCC states. Local and international speakers will address the conference. — ONA

## Nato plans key meet

■ From page 1

They will meet with high government officials, opinion makers, and representatives of civil society. Preparations for the meeting are well under way, he added.

According to Ambassador Claudio Bisio Gniro, the forthcoming Bahrain meeting will be an important opportunity to discuss the concerns and aspirations of the GCC countries and further enhance understanding and contacts between Nato and GCC countries at various levels.

The Bucharest Summit Declaration issued on Thursday espouses stronger links with the Gulf region. The communiqué stated thus: "We welcome the response of four countries in the Gulf region to our offer of co-operation in the framework of the Istanbul Co-operation Initiative (ICI) and encourage other countries of the region to take up that offer. To that end, we plan to develop our liaison arrangements, on a voluntary basis, with this region. We are pleased to see their increased interest and participation in Nato training and education activities, and stand ready to enhance our co-operation in this and other fields. We welcome the progress made in the implementation activities of the Nato Training Co-operation Initiative, in the spirit of joint ownership and in the view of launching the Nato Regional Co-operation Course at the Nato Defense College, where two pilot courses were successfully conducted. We encourage our ICI partners to work with us to develop this Initiative further. We encourage our ICI partners to develop an ICP with a view to better structuring our co-operation. We very much appreciate the support provided by our ICI partners to Alliance operations and missions."

As Nato prepares to celebrate its 60th anniversary next year, it is faced with many challenges. One key concern for Nato is the ongoing war in Afghanistan where it is saddled with a shortage of troops amid a general reluctance by some allies to deploy additional forces.

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates characterised the crisis as a situation where some allies, on the one hand, showed willingness to fight and die in order to protect freedom and security. At present, the United States, Britain, Canada and the Netherlands are the countries to have deployed their forces in combat zones in Afghanistan. Along with Nato enlargement, securing more troops was high on the Bucharest agenda, an objective that the Summit managed to achieve.

Commenting on this achievement, Jean Francois Bureau, Nato Assistant Secretary-General for Public Diplomacy, said he was pleased by the outcome of the Bucharest Summit with regard to the pledges of military support for the Afghanistan campaign. He explained that Nato's role in Afghanistan is not limited to military operations alone, but that the Alliance is also committed to supporting social investment and reconstruction in order to create a secure and stable environment for the population.

At the Bucharest Summit, the United States secured Nato support to build a missile defence system in eastern Europe. Georgia and Ukraine however failed to gain membership into the Alliance as they have to address questions still outstanding pertaining to their membership action plan. Macedonia was also denied membership but the invitation will be extended as soon as a solution to the name issue has been reached.

## Algerian minister arrives

MUSCAT — Algeria's Minister of Religious Affairs, Bouabdellah Ghlamallah, arrived here yesterday on a visit to the Sultanate expected to last several days.

The Algerian minister will participate in a symposium on 'development of jurisprudential sciences' which opens here today.

The symposium will focus on renewal of the contemporary Islamic jurisprudence.

The Algerian guest was greeted on arrival by Shaikh Abdullah bin Mohammed al Salmi, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, and officials from the ministry.

## Intilaaqah hosts UAE delegation

MUSCAT — The Intilaaqah programme of Shell recently hosted a delegation from the Ministry of Social Affairs in the United Arab Emirates, aimed at exchanging experience in the field of small and medium enterprises and providing an overview of the Intilaaqah programme in Oman.

The visiting delegation reviewed some start-up projects, Salma Noor al Balushi, Counselling Manager of Intilaaqah, said. Intilaaqah is supported by a number of government and private sector institutions, including the Sanad programme, Knowledge Oasis Muscat, Sultan Qaboos University, BankMuscat, National Bank of Oman and Oman Air.

## Coral reef clean-up in Masirah

MUSCAT — An environmental campaign to clean up coral reefs on the Island of Masirah begins today.

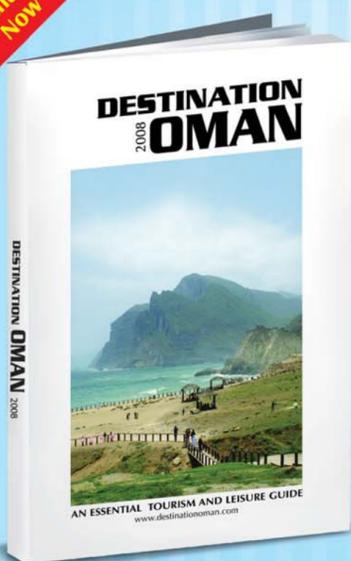
The campaign is organised by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs with the participation of 25 divers and workers in the field of marine environment.

During the campaign, a comprehensive survey of coral sites on the island will be conducted. Similar campaigns are carried out in the coastal areas of Oman. — ONA

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