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Agony of evicted dad...
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A WAKE-UP CALL TO EU

BERLIN: Bahrain yesterday called for a strategic partnership between the GCC and the EU.

“Europe and the Gulf region have long-standing historical, commercial and cultural relations,” Bahrain Centre for Strategic and International Studies and Energy chairman Dr Mohammed Abdul Ghaffar said.

Reforms success hailed – Page 8

“The GCC and the EU have built strong relations over years of co-operation involving politics, infrastructure and security in particular,” he told the ‘The EU-GCC Partnership: Strategic Security and Challenges’ forum in Berlin.

Europe has so many assets to become a key strategic partner, Dr Abdul Ghaffar said, citing the GCC’s economic clout. However he deplored the continuous foot-

dragging in the negotiations over a GCC-EU Free Trade Agreement.

“The project is still deadlocked despite 18 years of unrelenting negotiations,” he said, adding that the issue is not a priority in certain European capitals.

He warned that the EU might lose much of its leverage in the region as the nerve centre of power is shifting to Asia for commercial, strategic, economic and demographic consideration.

He called on the EU to adopt pre-emptive policies and bolster ties with key partners in the highly-strategic Gulf region, highlighting the emerging challenges facing both blocs.

“The European countries, with saturated development, face serious challenges resulting from the dwindling demography and the sky-rocketing costs of social and healthcare.”

“As for the GCC countries, they are already walking on the thin line, balancing the booming economies and the galloping demography.”

Dr Abdul Ghaffar cited the constraints facing the GCC, particularly the need to create jobs and develop skill-oriented education.



■ Sahil Saeed, left, who was freed on Tuesday after being kidnapped in Pakistan two weeks ago is seen with his mother Akila Naqqash after arriving back at his family home in Oldham near Manchester, England last night. Three people are due to appear in court in Spain in connection with the case. Two others were arrested in Paris. Full report – Page 2

Gaza rocket alert

JERUSALEM: - A flurry of Middle East diplomacy was marred yesterday after a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip killed a civilian in Israel as the EU foreign policy chief was visiting the Palestinian enclave.

A Thai agricultural worker was killed when the rocket slammed into a kibbutz just a few kilometres from the Gaza border. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon condemned the attack. The attack, claimed by the Al Qaeda-inspired Ansar Al Sunna Brigade, came as EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton was visiting the impoverished coastal strip.



operations in Bahrain and abroad was arrested yesterday following investigations by the Economic Crimes Directorate. Interior Ministry assistant under-secretary for legal affairs Brigadier Rashid Bu Humood said the ministry discovered the fact early last year and closely monitored in secret the official’s activities in Bahrain and abroad. His contacts and meetings with his aides and parties he was dealing with abroad were subjected to strict control after taking all required legal measures. He has been referred to Public Prosecution.

■ Official held for fraud
MANAMA: An official accused of running money laundering



■ His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander, hosted a dinner banquet last night in honour of Prince Andrew, the Duke of York, on the occasion of his visit to the kingdom. They discussed ways of boosting bilateral ties, regional developments, the global economic condition and steps to co-ordinate international efforts to surmount it. Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, British Ambassador to Bahrain Jamie Bowden and HRH the Crown Prince’s Personal Secretary Shaikh Abdulla bin Isa Al Khalifa attended.

Power plant to be tested

KUWAIT CITY: Bahrain will start initial testing of its 1,240 megawatts Al Dur power and water plant next month.

“The initial testing will include two gas turbines with a total capacity of up to 400 megawatts,” said Khalid Burashid, deputy chief of executive of planning and projects at the Electricity and Water Authority.

The first commercial operations are expected to start in June 2011, Mr

Burashid said, adding that Al Dur plant will contribute 30 per cent to Bahrain’s total electricity production capacity.

The \$2.1 billion project will have the capacity to generate 1,240 megawatts of power and desalinate 218,000 cubic metres of sea water per day.

France’s GDF Suez owns a 45pc stake in the project, while Kuwait-based Gulf Investment Corporation has a 5pc stake.

New bid to avert BA strike

LONDON: British Airways (BA) and the Unite union have resumed talks to try to avert a weekend strike by cabin crew that would embarrass the ruling Labour government weeks before an election.

“We’re currently talking. That’s the good news, but at the moment there’s only talks and certainly

no breakthrough and no acceptable way forward for us, but I’m still hopeful and optimistic and that’s why I’m going back for more talks,” Unite joint general-secretary Tony Woodley told *Sky News*.

Woodley said cabin crew would call off the planned seven-day strike if management reinstated an

offer which was withdrawn last week.

The dispute centres around cost-saving and specifically a reduction in the number of cabin crew staff on long-haul flights.

BA shares traded 1.25 per cent higher yesterday afternoon after the resumption of talks was confirmed.