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## Syria accepts UN-backed peace plan

Syrian troops enter Lebanon

**BEIRUT:** Syria has accepted a UN-sponsored peace plan, international envoy Kofi Annan said yesterday, as troops loyal to President Bashar Al Assad raided rebel forces who have taken refuge across the border in Lebanon.

Assad made a rare foray into the heartland of Syria's year-old uprising, visiting a rebel stronghold in the city of Homs that his forces had overrun after weeks of shelling and gunfire, apparently to make the point that he can now tour the streets of the once bitterly fought-over district.

Syrian state television showed video of Assad, wearing an open-necked shirt with a blue suit, walking casually in the devastated streets of the Baba Amr district and talking to groups of supporters and troops in combat gear.

Baba Amr was an emblem of opposition and rebel army defiance until it was reclaimed by government forces early this month after 26 days of heavy bombardment which opposition activists said was totally indiscriminate.

"Life will return to normal in Baba Amr, better than it was before," Assad said.

Activists say hundreds of civilians and opponents of Assad were killed in Baba Amr in February by shelling and snipers.

"He thinks he won and scored a great victory," said opposition activist Saif Hurria, speaking by

telephone from Homs. "He wants to show the world he defeated and put down a revolution. But ... it seems he can't even release the video until he has left Homs. That is not control."

Opposition supporter Abu Jaafar said Assad's appearance in Homs was "giving the green light to kill like this again".

Annan represents the United Nations and the Arab League. Through a spokesman he said Assad had accepted the basic terms of a peace plan which calls for national dialogue but does not hinge on him leaving office.

Western and Arab leaders are due to meet in Istanbul on April 1 to discuss a political transition, and the Arab League and Turkey were pressing various wings of the Syrian opposition to try to unite.

In a session on Monday, the People's Assembly of Syria called on Assad to postpone parliamentary elections set for May 7 to allow time for what it called the consolidation of comprehensive reforms and the outcome of a national dialogue.

Assad has used the army to crush protests against his 12-year rule but his Alawite Muslim minority and its allies still have substantial popular support in the country.

Annan had said on Monday that Assad's government could not resist the "winds of transformation."

**REUTERS**

### Emir, PM meet Saudi minister



The Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jasssem bin Jabor Al Thani with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal at the Emiri Diwan yesterday. Talks dealt with bilateral ties and regional developments.

### Met Department forecasts sharp rise in temperature

**DOHA:** The Meteorology Department has forecast a 4 to 6 degrees rise in temperature today, with the maximum possibly reaching 36 degrees Celsius.

The sudden rise has been attributed to a low pressure system over the region combined with strong southeasterly to southwesterly winds that are expected to lash the country from today.

The warm weather could prevail until Friday with the temperature becoming normal from Saturday, the department said in a statement yesterday. Scattered rains are also expected during this period. There is a high probability of thundershowers from tomorrow evening, said the department.

The maximum temperature today is expected to hover between 32 to 36 degrees Celsius and the minimum would be 21 to 24 degrees. The department has warned of strong winds and high sea.

**THE PENINSULA**

## Shoppers at Souq Najada miss huge discounts

**DOHA:** Many shoppers who went to Souq Najada yesterday to buy goods being offered at rock-bottom prices ahead of outlets moving out, returned disappointed as most traders stopped offering discounts after instructions from the Municipal Ministry.

The calls of salesmen hailing buyers and the din of hagglers trying to strike the best bargain at the market in the heart of the city died down after the order.

"Most of us have decided to stop discount sales because the Municipal Ministry has said that those traders who wish to

conduct a sale should seek necessary permit from the Ministry," a shopowner told *The Peninsula*.

The Municipal Ministry has extended by two months the deadline given to shops to vacate the market. The move has been welcomed by the traders.

"According to the notice from the Ministry, we are given until June 1 to vacate our shops," he said, adding that though they were happy with the decision to extend the deadline, most of them still found it difficult to look for possible places to relocate because of high rents.

For the last few weeks, traders

have been selling goods at scaled down prices in a bid to dispose of their stocks before the Ministry's former deadline of April 1. However, the new deadline has come as a relief.

Many of the limited-income shoppers however felt disappointed as they were planning to take advantage of the sale after receiving their salaries at the end of the month.

"I wanted to buy some perfumes and other items at reduced prices to gift my friends back in my hometown," a shopper said, while picking up things to take with him on his annual vacation

next month. The weeks-long sale had proved to be a big hit among shoppers as household items, perfumes, mobile and electronic accessories, watches, kitchen supplies and ready-to-wear clothes, among others were sold for only QR5 to QR10 each.

Built 18 years ago, Souq Najada has been a landmark in Doha establishing itself as a 'Mobile Souq' because of the dozens of mobile shops frequented and preferred by customers over other big malls because of a wide array of products and reasonable prices.

**THE PENINSULA**

### Pan-Arab body planned to fight corruption

**DOHA:** A meeting of senior Arab officials here yesterday agreed to form a regional team to support their countries' fight against corruption.

The team will work under the Arab Network for the Promotion of Integrity and Combating Corruption, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other regional and international partners.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the meeting at the Qatar University, Attorney General Dr Ali bin Futais Al Merri said that it was very important to develop the Arab experience to respond to the demands of the people in the context of the changes taking place in the region.

The meeting was part of a series of events jointly organised by the UNDP, the Arab Network for the Promotion of Integrity and Combating Corruption, Faculty of Law at the Qatar University, and the Public Prosecution.

The events are part of ground work being laid by the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Center in Doha inaugurated last September in partnership with the United Nations. The events began with a regional meeting of experts on Monday that dealt with ways to enhance Arab capabilities in prosecuting serious corruption offences.

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### Bahrain clashes



Dr Rula Al Saffar (second right) assists a protester injured during clashes with the police, inside a coffee shop in Abu Seba village, Bahrain, yesterday. Protesters were demanding the release of rights activist Abdulhadi Al Khawaja, sentenced to life imprisonment, who has been on hunger strike in jail since February 8.

### 29 CCTV cameras at junctions

**DOHA:** The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has launched the first phase of its Traffic Signals Control Room project by installing 29 CCTV cameras at as many intersections.

This is part of a pilot project that included the establishment of a traffic signals control room. This control room will help monitor traffic movement and could also report any accidents. The project has been implemented in collaboration with the Traffic Department.

The Minister of State for Interior Affairs HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani and the Minister of Municipality and Urban Planning HE Sheikh Abdul Rahman bin Khalifa bin Abdul Aziz Al Thani attended the launch ceremony, along with other senior officials.

Talking to mediapersons, Abdullah bin Nasser Al Thani said that the project was still in the experimental phase and is expected to ease traffic

flow. President of Ashghal, Eng Nasser Ali Al Mawlawi, said that the information available to Ashghal will, in turn, be available to the Ministry of Interior and the Public Security.

The cameras will be able to record data and live footage for up to 30 days. The next step will be to study the needs of the country's different authorities. The control room will help create a "smart" transport system in Qatar, he added.

Al Mawlawi and fellow engineer Youssef Al Emadi earlier explained how the traffic room would be operated, particularly in terms of controlling traffic lights and deciding priorities during jams, and how to move the cameras.

The new cameras will function using SCATS, which is an advanced computer system that monitors in real-time the traffic signals and traffic volume. The data will be used to coordinate adjacent traffic signals to ease traffic congestion and improve flow.

**THE PENINSULA**

## Aljazeera won't air French shooting spree video

**PARIS:** An angry France won a pledge yesterday from the Aljazeera news channel not to air a video shot by an Islamist extremist during a murderous shooting spree targeting soldiers and Jewish children.

President Nicolas Sarkozy demanded that the channel not broadcast the video sent to its Paris bureau, which includes graphic footage shot by Mohamed Merah during attacks this month

in southern France that left seven people dead.

French officials also reacted with fury to threats from Merah's Algerian father to sue Paris over the way in which he was slain in a gunbattle with police last Thursday at the end of a 32-hour siege of his Toulouse flat.

And police said they believed the Al Qaeda inspired gunman, branded a "monster", may have had one or more accomplices

who possibly sent the footage to Aljazeera and helped him steal the scooter used in the attacks.

"In accordance with Aljazeera's code of ethics, given the video does not add any information that is not already in the public domain, its news channels will not be broadcasting any of its contents," the Doha-based network said.

The pan-Arab channel, which once owed much of its fame

outside the Arab world to airing recordings of Al Qaeda's late chief, Osama bin Laden, said it had declined "numerous requests from media outlets for copies of the video."

Merah, a 23-year-old Frenchman of Algerian descent, had previously boasted of filming his killings and witnesses had told police that he appeared to be wearing a video camera in a chest harness during the shootings.

He was not wearing the device during his final fatal shootout, but police said they had found the Go-Pro style camera in bag he had given to a friend.

Aljazeera's Paris bureau chief, Zied Tarrouch, said the channel received the videos on a USB memory key, along with a letter in poorly written French that claimed the attacks in the name of Al Qaeda.

**AFP**