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★★ LATE EDITION

**LEADERS RECEIVE QABOOS**



**Omani Ruler begins state visit**

Sultan Qaboos Bin Saeed of Oman arrived in Abu Dhabi yesterday starting a state visit to the UAE. The visit came at the invitation of President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Sultan Qaboos, accompanied by a high-level delegation, was greeted at the airport by Sheikh Khalifa and His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. The Omani Ruler will later hold talks with Sheikh Khalifa on bilateral ties and ways to bolster them.

**Tension rises in Lebanon**

**HEZBOLLAH FACES NEW CHALLENGE AFTER GOVERNMENT SACKS BEIRUT AIRPORT CHIEF**

Gulf News Report

Dubai The Lebanese government raised the stakes in its struggle against the Hezbollah-led opposition yesterday, accusing the party of violating the country's sovereignty by operating its own communications network and installing "spy cameras" at Beirut airport.



**Fouad Siniora**  
Lebanese Prime Minister



**Sheikh Naeem Qasem**  
Hezbollah Deputy Leader

“We will prosecute anyone ... involved in [Hezbollah's] communication network.”

“The Cabinet cannot stop us from defending ourselves and defending the country.”

The challenge to Hezbollah is likely to increase tensions in Lebanon amid fears of potential violence that could mar a general strike over price rises today. The strike, called by the main federation of unions, is supported by Hezbollah and other opposition groups.

Hezbollah has been leading a campaign against the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora since November 2006. The standoff has left Lebanon without a president for five months.

Following a long Cabinet meeting that ended in the early hours yesterday, a statement by Siniora described Hezbollah's communications network as “an attack on the sovereignty of the state” and said the government would “prosecute anyone — individuals, groups and parties — involved in it.”

Hezbollah said the commu-

nications network was part of its military and security apparatus and played a key role in its war with Israel in 2006. “The Cabinet ... and no one can stop us from defending ourselves and defending the country,” Hezbollah's deputy leader Sheikh Naeem Qasem told the group's Al Manar television. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah “will hold a press conference” tomorrow to answer the government's charges, he said.

The Cabinet also removed the Shiite head of

Beirut airport security in another challenge to Hezbollah, after it accused the group of installing cameras to monitor a runway at the airport. The Cabinet decided to remove Brigadier General Wafiq Shkir from his post as airport security chief and described the cameras as “another violation of sovereignty.”

Hezbollah said the cameras were used to monitor goods stored by its construction arm, Jihad Bina'a.

Editorial comment — Page 10

**UAE rushes aid as Myanmar toll tops 22,000**

US offers \$3m for cyclone relief efforts as rescue workers race to deliver food and water to worst-hit delta

Yangon (AFP, Reuters & WAM) More than 22,000 people were killed in Myanmar's devastating cyclone and 41,000 are still missing four days after the storm slammed into the country's southern coast, the government said yesterday.

The toll update came as the UAE Red Crescent Authority rushed urgent relief aid to victims of Cyclone Nargis. The Red Cross Society of Myanmar was also involved in the delivery of the UAE aid, said Saleh Mohammad Al Mullah, RCA Deputy Secretary-General for relief projects.

In Myanmar, aid workers

were racing to deliver food and water to the worst-hit Irrawaddy delta region, which was submerged by floodwaters, leaving scenes of utter devastation with homeless survivors running low on food and water.

Witnesses described horrific images of rice fields littered with corpses, and there were fears the death toll could rise much further. Save the Children, one of the few relief agencies allowed to operate in the country, said it expected the toll to climb as high as 50,000. “If at this stage, only four days in, the government are telling us the num-

**CONTACT**

**EXPATS CLUELESS ON KIN**

The devastating cyclone that hit Myanmar has left Myanmarese expats in the UAE in the dark about the fate of their loved ones. Chris Moezaw and Nancy Ming-e, both with families in Yangon, told Gulf News they have not been able to get any news about their family. “I don't have any idea what's happened to them,” a tearful Nancy said about her cousins who live in Yangon. Chris said he hoped his relatives were safe: “I'm trying to remain calm.” Myanmar does not have an embassy or consulate in the UAE.

— By Nina Muslim/Staff Reporter; See also Page 3

bers are already reaching over 20,000 and there are 40,000 people missing. I think it could well go higher,” a spokesman said.

US President George W.

Bush urged Myanmar's military rulers to allow international help, saying he was prepared to send navy ships to help the recovery. The White House also announced it was offering \$3 million (Dh11 million) in aid to Myanmar through the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

The ruling junta in Myanmar, however, insisted foreign aid experts would have to negotiate before being allowed to operate in the country, and many agencies said they were still waiting for visas to allow their staff into Myanmar. The disaster is the most devastating cyclone to hit Asia since 1991, when 143,000 people died in Bangladesh.

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**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**UAE to give report to UN in December**

Abu Dhabi (WAM) The UAE human rights committee, tasked with issuing a comprehensive periodical report, was chaired by Dr Anwar Mohammad Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign affairs, yesterday.

The UAE committee included representatives from ministerial departments and civil society. It discussed the stages of preparing the report, which will be presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva in December. The council aims to contribute to global efforts to improve human rights around the world and evaluating the challenges that face countries in this respect.

The report will help exchange of expertise and encourage cooperation between countries and the UN's Human Rights Commission. Gargash and the committee members reviewed the contents of the UAE report, where the minister stressed the importance of explaining the data and information to be included in the report.

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**Emirates, Etihad warned of new A380 delay**

Airbus says production woes will not affect deliveries of first superjumbos this year

**SPECIAL REPORT**

Emirates has been announcing record profits year after year, at a time when major players have been reporting losses while some have filed for bankruptcy, raising eyebrows of industry stalwarts. Gulf News uncovers the truth.

Report on P55



Gulf News Report

Abu Dhabi The UAE's two leading national carriers Emirates and Etihad have received letters from European planemaker Airbus warning them of possible delays in deliveries of the A380, the world's largest passenger aircraft.

“Yes, Emirates can confirm that it has received the letter from Airbus. At present we have nothing more to add,” an official spokesperson for Emirates, the biggest A380 customer, told Gulf News yesterday.

Abu Dhabi-based Etihad also confirmed that it received a letter from Airbus on potential delays. “Etihad has received a letter from Airbus indicating that there may be a delay in the delivery of the A380,” a spokesman for the airline was quoted by Reuters.

**Critical phase**

Etihad has ordered four of the \$300 million, 525-seat planes. Airbus sent a letter to state-owned Emirates, which has ordered 58 of the aircraft, informing it of possible delays in its “wave 2” deliveries, airline

President Tim Clark told Reuters. This would apply to A380s being delivered to the carrier from April next year, Clark said.

Airbus Chief Executive Tom Enders has written to all A380 customers telling them that production of the world's largest aircraft has reached a critical phase and that a planned sharp hike in production is challenging. However, the latest development won't impact the planned deliveries of the first five A380s to Emirates, which is scheduled to receive the first superjumbo in August.

**AIDS FEARS**

**Saddam's washing line worries in jail**

Ousted Iraqi dictator was scared of picking up sexual diseases while in US custody

Baghdad (AFP) Saddam Hussain, the ousted Iraqi dictator hanged in 2006 for crimes against humanity, feared he would pick up sexual diseases while he was in US custody, according to extracts from prison writings published in an Arabic newspaper.

Saddam said he asked his prison guards not to put their washing on

the same clothes line as his, fearing he could contract “young people's diseases,” the London-based Al Hayat newspaper reported, citing his journal. “My main concern was to avoid contracting a sexual disease in a place like this, and Aids,” he said.

“What can the Americans and other invaders... bring to an [invaded] country apart from dangerous

diseases?” Al Hayat said quoting Saddam, without specifying how it obtained the documents.

Some of the writings were published in the daily in the form of dated letters, or poems written by Saddam, a prolific writer known to have penned several books and poems in his lifetime.

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