

## **Democracy in the region should respect peoples' free will: Qatari Amir**

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Qatari Amir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani said Monday that the western perspective on democracy to be implemented in the Mideast region should not be enforced, in a lack of consideration to the peoples free will.

Sheikh Hamad's remarks came during an inaugural speech he delivered in the opening of the 7th Doha Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade today.

The forum has passed through a period of time to review progress of the basic issues concerned with democracy and its development in the region has grown during that past few years, Sheikh Hamad said, adding that such matter would make up for the time it missed and make a shortcut to catch up with the global march toward freedom, as what was achieved so far was not at the aspired level.

The sort of lassitude and slackness in pushing forward the reform process with pretext of the conditions in the region was not allowed, he said, adding that the prevalent circumstances in the Middle East are still highly sensitive and complicated, but that is not a justification for evading democratic process.

Sheikh Hamad carried on by saying that any review of the democratic process probe into the causes that led to its slowness was true, yet any calls to attribute such matter to the teachings of Islam were refuted.

The region had paid an over-priced cost to achieve political and social reform, as a clear evidence to that was the Mauritanian elections and the success of Military Council for Justice and Democracy in transferring power in a democratic manner to a civilian government through free elections that respected the peoples' will, he added.

Religious and national values should be compatible with the spirit of time and its requirements, as education is the key aspect of it, where a sound social upbringing would lead to creative thinking, dialogue, team work and sharing responsibility, the Qatari Amir said.

The region is going through a slow transitional process toward democracy, yet another fast process is taking place of mounting threats and dangers that hinder a just an inclusive peace such as in Iraq, the Palestinian territories, Golan Heights and Sheba Farms, he added.

The Forum witnesses the participation of significant political figures including Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister of Commerce and Industry Falah Al-Hajri, Lebanese President Emile Lahud, Arab League's Secretary General Amr Moussa and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon