

Doha forum blasts Arab regimes

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Arab regimes were bitterly criticised at a global forum on democracy, development and free trade here yesterday for being incapable of dealing with the outside world on an equal footing.

“We have corrupt political and financial systems and weak and backward societies,” said a former Bahrain minister addressing a panel discussion on political reforms.

What the Arab world needs is civil societies to face the external world and this is not possible without having democracy in our midst, suggested an outspoken Dr Ali Fakhroo.

He and other experts taking part in the lively debate agreed that democracy held the key to resolving the woes the Arabs faced.

Tribal and ethnic bickering, lack of unity and social justice and near-absence of civil societies across the Arab nation were identified by Dr Fakhroo as some of the major malaise the region suffered from. “Democracy is a must to help secure the future of the region,” he stressed.

The Arab world is the most violent region in the world, said Dr Abdul Khalik Abdullah, from the University of UAE. This is impeding the onset of reforms, he added.

A former president of Romania was among the speakers and he emphasized that democracy and free trade had the miracle to deliver the goods by ensuring basic rights and freedoms. Talking of clash of civilisations, Dr Emil Constantinescu said one lifestyle should not push another into destruction.

Dr Clovis Maksoud, a professor from the US, on the other hand, warned Arabs of an Israeli ploy to create a wedge between them and Iran on the nuclear issue.

And Dr Shabbir Cheema, from the United Nations, said that while the Western media painted an image of Arabs being largely disappointed with their regimes, the ground reality was not that bad.

He said surveys have shown that Qatar tops the Arab world in terms of judicial independence and figures at number 20 in world rankings.

Generally speaking, people are losing trust in their governments worldwide and placing more faith in NGOs, media and businesses. The focus is on governance from government now, said Cheema.