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FLYING START FOR FEDERER

Swiss legend was not at his best as he began his quest for a seventh men's Wimbledon title but was still far too strong for Kazakhstan debutant Mikhail Kukushkin. >A13



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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, 2011

20 RAJAB 1432 AH

HM GIVES AUDIENCE TO US OFFICIAL

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said gives an audience to Jeffrey D. Feltman, the US assistant secretary of state for the Near Eastern Affairs, at Bait Al Barakah yesterday. The audience reviewed cooperation in several fields and discussed current developments at the regional and international levels. The audience was also attended by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, secretary-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Victor Hurtado, charge d'affaires of the US embassy in the Sultanate. — Photograph by Mohammed Mustafa



Palestine issue remains key to stability, peace

Top US official
hails the Sultanate
for meeting the
aspirations of
its citizens



“

Oman is an old and important ally in this part of the world, and we seek its values

Jeffrey D. Feltman
Assistant Secretary of State
for Near Eastern Affairs, United States

MEHRE ALAM
Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Palestine issue might have dropped off the front pages of late, but it remains fundamental to peace in the region, a top US official has said.

Talking to a select group of mediapersons here yesterday, Jeffrey D. Feltman, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs, said a two-state solution was not only in the interest of the Middle East, but for the United States as well.

“But we have to overcome a lot of mistrust, a lot of history for that,” he said, while adding that the solution has to be eked out through negotiations only. “The Israelis need to recognise the Palestinians’ concerns on territory and the Palestinians need to understand the Israelis’ concerns over security.”

In Oman for consultations with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said

and Omani government officials on issues of mutual interest, Feltman waxed eloquent on the constructive way in which the Sultanate had dealt with the aspirations of its people.

“We recognise that, in Oman, the prospects for continued development and advancement are bright as they are guided by a positive vision.

Against violence

“I had the opportunity to hear the Omani perspective on regional issues, and I look forward to conveying it to my government.

“Oman is an old and important ally in this part of the world, and we seek its values,” he said.

Picking the regional issues, especially in the context of the recent

developments, he made clear the US does not condone violence, neither from the protestors, nor from the governments.

While noting his country’s support for the universal principles of freedoms and human rights for people across the world, Feltman stressed Arab Spring was not about the US. “When people gathered at Tahrir Square, it was not because the US had told them to. They may have been angry with US policies, but that was not the reason why they had assembled there.

“People in this part of the world or elsewhere want to feel that they have a say in the decisions that affect them... their economic future, their political future.” >A2

UNREST

Seven killed in Syrian clashes

AMMAN: Syrian security forces shot dead seven people yesterday during clashes in two cities between President Bashar Al Assad’s loyalists and protestors demanding his removal, a leading activist said.

The violence followed rallies organised by authorities in several cities in support of Assad, whose 11-year rule has been challenged by a three-month popular uprising, prompting him to promise reforms on Monday, which were dismissed by protestors and world leaders as inadequate.

Activists said people were killed when army and security forces intervened on the side of Assad’s supporters in the city of Homs and the town of Mayadeen in the tribal Deir Al Zor province, 40km east of the provincial capital, near the border with Iraq.

Ammar Qurabi, head of the Syrian National Organisation for Human Rights, said Assad loyalists, known as shabbiha, shot at protestors in Homs, Hama and Mayadeen, killing at least seven civilians and wounding 10.

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross said Syria had agreed to give the humanitarian agency greater access to civilians and areas caught up in the conflict. - Reuters

44 killed
killed in
Russian
plane
crash

A10



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

REGION

7m go hungry every day in Yemen: Oxfam

1 Five months of unrest and anti-regime protests have exacerbated the humanitarian situation in impoverished Yemen, where at least seven million people go hungry each day, Oxfam aid agency warned yesterday. The current unrest has led to shortages in power, water, food and fuel. >A3

OMAN

Brisk voting in OCCI board election

2 A large number of voters came to the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) head office to elect its board members. >B1

BUSINESS

Expat remittances soar 7.3% in 2010

3 The total remittances of expatriate workers showed a 7.3 per cent growth at RO2,193 million last year, from RO2,044 million in the previous year. >C1

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