

Arab-GCC 'ties with China vital'

"China is the second largest trade partner of the GCC states after the European Union and will be ranked first in the coming couple of years," said Timothy Niblock, Emeritus Professor of Middle East Politics at the University of Exeter.

By Mohammed Osman
The Peninsula

DOHA: The Arab world has remained a "black hole" in the Chinese strategy for a long time, the Arab World and China Conference at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel was told yesterday.

"Observers' opinions over Chinese strategy are divided. Some deny that China has a grand strategy, while others believe China, like any other major power, has a global strategy. "Agreeing with this, a third group sees that China has a grand strategy but it is ambiguous and unclear," said Kadhimi Niama, Editor of *International Studies* journal and Director, Center for International Studies at Baghdad University.

The release of Chinese Arab Policy Paper in January this year stirred more debate over the content of the strategy which came ambiguous and general in many aspects, said Niama who presented a paper entitled 'The Arab world within China's global strategy', at the conference titled 'The Arab World and China: Future Prospects of Relations with a Rising Power'.

The strategy deals with Arab



FROM LEFT: Rabeh Zaghouni, Degang Sun, Marwan Kabanal, Kadhimi Niama and Wu Bingbing at Session One of 'The Arab World and China: Future Prospects of Relations with a Rising Power' conference at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Doha yesterday. Pic: Salim M / The Peninsula

governments, not peoples, addresses common economic interests and cooperation, undermining support for human rights and democracy, he added.

The two-day conference brought together more than 40 researchers from China, the Arab world and beyond to discuss 30 research papers focusing on the world's changing political and economic landscape and its effects on Arab-Sino relations.

The first session of the conference saw discussions on the Chinese strategy towards Arab, Arab's status with the strategy and China's approaches and policies towards the Arab Spring, and, more specifically, towards the Syrian crisis.

China's strategy towards Arab countries is based on principles that include respect of sovereignty, integrity of territories, non-intervention, pursuit of political and peaceful solutions of conflicts, and the Chinese Veto regarding the current Syrian crisis should be seen in this context, said Wu Bingbing, Senior Research Fellow at Institute for International

and Strategic Studies (IISS) at Peking University.

In his paper, Bingbing underlined that China's strategy and policies in Arab World are built on common interests — political and economic and security cooperation — to fight extremism and terrorism, in addition to cultural interests enhancing dialogue of civilisations.

China's view of the Arab World developed through stages from a region exporting ideology and revolutions to one promoting geo-economic and energy security, enhancing investment and guaranteeing markets for Chinese trade.

"With the booming economy of China, the Arab region has become more vital for China and its policy has changed to geopolitical one translated into soft military presence in the region to protect its economic interests," said Rabeh Zaghouni, Lecturer in International Relations at Guelma University, Algeria.

China uses its soft military presence in Somali waters and is likely to build logistic military base in

Djibouti, in addition to its participation in UN peacekeeping missions temporarily aiming at protecting its practical interests, but not to influence governments of the region, said Degang Sun, Professor at the Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai, China. So far China does not need hard military bases in the Middle East as China perceives the region as a "market", he added.

China is the second largest trade partner of the GCC states after the European Union and will be ranked first in the coming couple of years, said Timothy Niblock, Emeritus Professor of Middle East Politics at the University of Exeter.

He underlined the importance of placing GCC states into the wider network of cooperation and coordination which China is building across Central Asia and over the Indian Ocean. He said that this network includes roads, rail lines and oil pipelines aiming to link China and Europe in a vast Eurasian trading system with offshoots to other Asian countries and parts of Africa.

Circular explains when shops must return or exchange products

Continued from page 1

The ministry will then take action to ensure the compliance of shops.

The circular which defines the circumstances the law explicitly compels shops to return or exchange products:

First: If the consumer finds that the product is defective or fails to meet the value or purpose of its intended use.

Second: The non-conformity of a product with standard specifications. For instance, a consumer buys an electrical device (iron, for example), that fails to conform to the standards issued by the Qatar General Organization for Standards and Metrology.

Third: When the item fails to meet the purpose for which it was bought.

For instance, when a consumer purchases an electronic device on the basis that it has multiple functions (a TV, mobile phone...) and finds that some of these functions do not exist, or when the trader fails to secure a trial/ changing room although the nature of the product requires consumers to try it before purchasing it.

The ministry has also outlined three other cases in which consumers are entitled to request a partial or full refund though these cases do not fall under the exchange and return policy as defined by the Consumer Protection law.

First: When the supplier advertises that it is selling a product at the lowest market price and the consumer finds that the same product is being sold at a lower price at another shop.

In this case, the shop should compensate the consumer for the

price difference.

Second: When the dealer commits a violation such as selling consumers expired food or counterfeit car spare parts.

In this case, the consumer is entitled to exchange the defective product or request a full refund.

Third: If the consumer buys a product that doesn't comply with the terms of his agreement with the dealer.

For instance, if the delivered product is not the same as the item requested or is of a different colour than the colour mentioned on the package.

In this case, the consumer is entitled to exchange the product. If the product cannot be exchanged, the dealer has to refund the consumer.

The ministry has advised consumers to verify the return and exchange policy when making a purchase at a shop or online dealer and ask for an invoice to protect their right to exchange or return the product.

They have been advised to check the product is functional and that the size of the item is suitable before making a purchase and keep the product in its original condition to preserve their right to exchange or return the item.

They can also negotiate with shops any additional terms as part of the exchange and return policy and to document these terms on the invoice.

In case the consumer finds difficulty convincing the shop to comply with the terms of the return and exchange policy, he/ she can lodge a complaint with the competent authorities at the ministry through its various communication channels.

Bantayan Island, Cebu

COME HOME TO THE **Philippines**

Fly home to Manila via Abu Dhabi onboard Philippine Airlines.

Let us take you home to your loved ones with the care that comes only from The Heart of the Filipino. Enjoy a comfortable flight with delicious inflight meals, plus free baggage allowance so you can bring more pasalubong to your family. **We fly to Manila 5x weekly.**

Enjoy a heartwarming travel experience with the airline that celebrates the Heart of the Filipino.

PHILIPPINEAIRLINES.COM | 8741 442 27302 | 000 flyPAL | VISIT A PAL TICKET OFFICE OR YOUR NEAREST TRAVEL AGENT

Philippine Airlines 75
The Heart of the Filipino