

Experts to discuss ways of making disabled self-reliant

Web posted at: 4/19/2009 1:46:38
Source ::: The PENINSULA / BY JOYCE C ABAÑO

DOHA: Five first ladies, the wife of the Prime Minister of Lebanon, and the princess of Morocco will be attending the Shafallah Centre's three-day fourth Annual International Forum. The event, which will start on April 20, will be co-chaired by Cherie Blair, wife of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

This was announced by spokespersons at the Shafallah Centre yesterday during the inauguration of its media centre. The media centre for the forum will later be used as a computer laboratory by the students at the centre. Shafallah, which is named after the flower of the Caper plant, which is native to the Mediterranean region, provides comprehensive services and care to individuals with developmental learning challenges.

"This media centre is one of the many programmes at Shafallah... The centre is looking forward to the fourth annual forum, which will gather experts on disability from all over the world... We have many programmes here, we are working on the genetics centre, we have a continuous agreement with Autism Speaks, among others... this forum will gather scientists and experts to discuss the development of individual skills and how we can go further," said Hassan Ali Bin Ali, chairman of the Shafallah Centre and co-chair of the fourth Annual International Forum.

The forum, with the theme, "Achieving Independence," will be held under the patronage of H H Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned, who will be present during the event.

The forum will be attended by Maria Kaczyńska, first lady of Poland; Teuta Topi, first lady of Albania; Xiomara Castro de Zelaya, first lady of Honduras; Vivian Fernández de Torrijos, first lady of Panama; Dorrit Moussaieff, first lady of Iceland; Hoda Siniora, wife of the Prime Minister of Lebanon; Princess Lalla Amina of Morocco; and Sir Phillip Craven, President of the International Paralympic Committee; all dignitaries who are dedicated to advocating the cause of people with special needs.

Five papers will be presented during the forum, of which the main one will be on Independence and Vocation. The others will be presentations on music, art, speech and language, and a new programme that focuses on community service.

Finding jobs for disabled students and creating hotlines for employers who have hired the students, in case they have questions or difficulties with the students, will also be discussed. Panel sessions and presenters will tackle the issues of promoting inclusion, the family perspective on independence for the disabled, improving employment opportunities, self-advocacy, rights, language and micro-enterprise for achieving independence for the disabled.

"Achieving independence for people with disabilities is a revolutionary process. It means changing laws in some countries, but more importantly, changing hearts and minds. We must remove all the barriers to independence in order to find jobs and create new opportunities to live and learn. Over the course of three days, this forum will ask some tough questions and hopefully shed some new light on how we can work together to achieve these goals," said Ali Bin Ali.



(Seated from left) Dr Khalid bin Jabor Al Thani, board member at the Shafallah Centre and chairman of the Qatar Cancer Society; Hassan Ali Bin Ali, chairman of Shafallah Centre and co-chairman of the fourth Annual International Forum; and Samira Al Qassimi at a press conference yesterday. JOYCE C ABAÑO