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The Last Thing to Read this Week

by

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Kingdom of Bahrain

Tuesday, 26 March—Prince Andrew, the Duke of York, travelled to Bahrain for the Pitch@Palace Bahrain 2.0, a competition launched by Prince Andrew in 2014 to help entrepreneurs with finding an investor and starting their business worldwide, which this year focused on technology. During the visit, Prince Andrew visited the UK Naval Support Facility (NSF) in Mina Salman and discussed exports with Bahrain's Minister of Industry, Commerce and Tourism, Zayed bin Rashid Al-Zayani, during the visit at the Export Bahrain.

Wednesday, 27 March—Dr Rana bint Isa Al-Khalifa, Undersecretary of Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chair of the National Committee on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Development, Production, Use and Stockpiling and on their Destruction, held meetings with French offi-

cials, including the Director of Strategic, Security and Disarmament Affairs at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Nicolas Roche, the Director of North Africa and Middle East Department at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerome Bonnafont, in Paris. The meetings focused on the efforts to prohibit the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and bilateral cooperation in the field.

Wednesday, 27 March—Bahrain's Foreign Affairs Minister, Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa, received former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair. Mr Blair praised Bahrain's efforts to enhance security and restore peace in the region, while Bahrain's Foreign Minister hailed the longstanding coordination between the UK and Bahrain in various fields and Mr Blair's eagerness to stay in touch and continue exchanging views on regional and international issues.



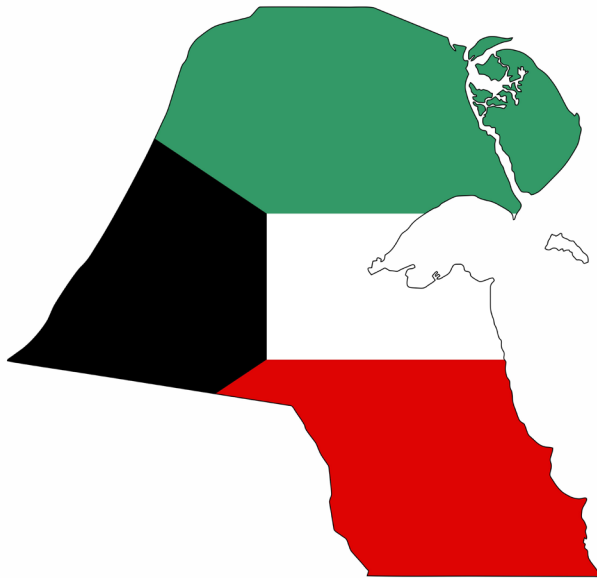
Thursday, 28 March—Bahrain's Assistant Foreign Minister, Abdullah bin Faisal bin Jabur Al-Doseri, received the Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief Outside the European Union, Jan Figel. Mr Figel praised Bahrain's key role in spreading the values of religious freedom and tolerance as well as peaceful coexistence, while Mr Al-Doseri commended the initiatives of the King, Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, to promote those values, notably the Manama Declaration and the establishment of the King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence.



State of Kuwait

Sunday, 24 March—Austria's Chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, arrived with his accompanying delegation for an official visit to Kuwait. Mr Kurz met with Kuwait's Emir, Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in the presence of Prime Minister, Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and held talks with other Kuwaiti officials, notably on trade, investment and cultural ties and opportunities for their development.

Tuesday, 26 March—Italy's Defence Minister, Elisabetta Trenta, and her accompanying delegation, arrived in Kuwait for an official visit to discuss bilateral defence cooperation and explore ways to develop them. They were received by the Emir in the presence of the Minister of Diwan Affairs, Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, and Kuwait's Army Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Mohammed Khaled Al-Khadher.





Sultanate of Oman

Wednesday, 27 March—A Czech business delegation, led by Vice President of the Czech Chamber of Commerce, Bořivoj Minář, arrived in Oman to explore investment opportunities with the local businesses. The delegation was comprised of representatives from around 35 companies, operating in various sectors, including energy, aluminium industry, telecommunications, tourism, education, real estate, and others. Mr Minář mentioned photovoltaic power stations, chemicals, computer components, infrastructure, healthcare and hospital equipment, food, textile and tourism as possible areas for cooperation. On Monday, the Public Authority of Civil Aviation and the Czech Republic signed an agreement on air transport services.



Thursday, 28 March—The Royal Army of Oman and the US 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit held joint Naval Exercises in Oman.

Friday, 29 March—The Oman Oil and Orpic Group will officially inaugurate the Sohar Refinery Improvement Project (SRIP), a \$2.7 billion investment project, under the auspices of Oman's Minister of Oil and Gas, Dr Mohammed bin Hamad

Al-Rumhy, on 31 March. The project will help to improve the Sultanate's heavy crude capabilities and to meet the growing demand for oil and refined products in Oman as well as worldwide, while contributing to Oman's economic development.



State of Qatar



Sunday, 24 March—The Qatari Armed Forces' Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Ghanim bin Shaheen Al-Ghanim, arrived in Turkey for a two-day visit. On Monday he met with Turkey's Defence Minister, Hulusi Akar, in the presence of the Chief of General Staff, Yaşar Güler, and other officials, to discuss defence cooperation, particularly regarding a project to strengthen Qatar's defence with air surveillance systems made by Turkey.

Monday, 25 March—Italy's Defence Minister, Elisabetta Trenta, and her accompanying delegation, arrived in Qatar for an official visit. They held talks with Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs, Dr Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah, on the opportunities to strengthen bilateral relations, with focus on the defence industry, and efforts to enhance regional stability, with the Libyan

dossier high on the agenda. The meeting was also attended by the Qatari Armed Forces' senior officials. From Qatar the Italian Defence Minister continued to Kuwait.

Thursday, 28 March—French Prime Minister, Edouard Philippe, travelled to Qatar on the occasion of the opening of Qatar's National Museum. During the visit, the Prime Minister Philippe met with the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, to discuss bilateral rela-

tions and cooperation, particularly in the fight against terrorism and its financing. He also held a joint press conference with Qatar's Prime Minister and Interior Minister, Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Tuesday, 26 March—Saudi Arabia's King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met separately with China's Defence Minister, General Wei Fenghe, in Riyadh. They discussed bilateral defence ties and cooperation on the development of Saudi Arabia's ballistic missile capabilities, along with the latest regional developments.

Tuesday, 26 March—Saudi Aramco signed an agreement to lease land to McDermott Arabia Company, a subsidiary of McDermott International, to establish a new fabrication facility in the King Salman International Complex for Maritime Industries in Ras Al-Khair on the East coast of the Kingdom. The 1.15 square kilometres facility will be used for large scale fabrication of



offshore platforms and onshore/offshore modules and is expected to become a major engineering, procurement, construction, and installation hub for the Gulf region.

Wednesday, 27 March—Saudi Aramco acquired a 70% stake in Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) from Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, the Kingdom's sovereign wealth fund, in a private transaction for \$69.1 billion.

Wednesday, 27 March—Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, commander of the Libyan Army, was received by Saudi Arabia's

King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud in Riyadh. During the meeting they reviewed the latest developments in Libya and King Salman affirmed the Kingdom's support for calming the situation in Libya and restoring security and stability. During his visit in the Kingdom, Mr Haftar also held a meeting with Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman.

Thursday, 28 March—Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, and his accompanying delegation of Ministers, arrived in Tunisia for an official visit. They were welcomed by the country's

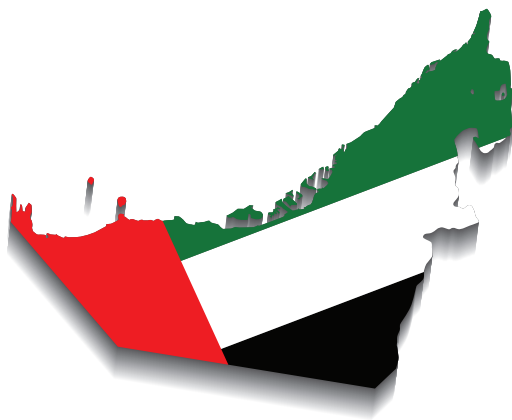


President, Beji Caid Essebsi. King Salman will lead the Saudi delegation to the 30th Arab League Summit in Tunis, which is expected to focus on the US decision to recognise Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights and will begin on 31 March. The two leaders will also discuss ways to enhance bilateral relations and should together oversee the launch of several development and investment projects in Tunisia, notably in infrastructure, housing and healthcare.

Friday, 29 March—The German government announced that it will extend the ban on arms exports to Saudi Arabia until 30 September 2019.



United Arab Emirates



Monday, 25 March—The delegation of the Council of the European Union Middle East/Gulf Working Group, led by its Chair, Roberto Storaci, arrived in the UAE for a four-day visit. During their stay, the delegation met with Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras Al-Khaimah, Nahyan bin Mubarak Al-Nahyan, the UAE's Minister of Tolerance, Dr Amal Al-Qubaisi, Chairwoman and the Speaker of the Federal National Council, and Dr Anwar Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. The delegation's aim was to strengthen ties, notably in trade and investments, and explore opportunities for cooperation, particularly in parliamentary relations.

Wednesday, 27 March—Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, travelled to Egypt, where he held talks on bilateral relations with Egypt's President, Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi. Both leaders then witnessed the signing of three Memoranda of Understanding between Egypt and the UAE to strengthen cooperation notably in irrigation, technical cooperation in standard specifications and technical regulations, and in housing, construction and infrastructure.

Wednesday, 27 March—The Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, Georgios Katrougalos, met with the UAE's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, to discuss opportunities for strengthening bilateral ties and cooperation, particularly in trade, political and social fields. They signed a Memorandum of Understanding on mutual recognition of driving licences, and on promotion of cooperation in agricultural research and technology. Mr Katrougalos also discussed ties with UAE's Minister of Tolerance, Nahyan bin Mubarak Al-Nahyan.



Thursday 28 March—The Chair of the Arab Investment and Development Authority (AIDA), Adil Al-Otaiba, and the CEO of the STC Energy, Nataliia Tykhonova, signed a \$2 billion agreement to develop 170-megawatt solar power plants in Ukraine.



The Arabian Gulf is rapidly becoming a geopolitical pivot. As a result, it is important to understand the internal and international dynamics unfolding in the region and the countries that compose it. We at EGIC are proud to present “The Last Thing to Read this Week” segment which contains a small, carefully selected, batch of the most important events unfolding in the countries of the Arab Gulf to help you map the region’s trends.

