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The Last Thing to Read this Week

by

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Kingdom of Bahrain



Sunday, 15 July—India's External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, met Bahrain's Prime Minister, Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, and co-chaired the second Joint Commission meeting between the two countries in order to strengthen bilateral ties. It was agreed upon that pharmaceuticals would be a key area of cooperation in a bid to boost the Indian healthcare industry. The states claimed that their relationships have entered a new phase.

Wednesday, 18 July—Bahrain's Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning Ministry Undersecretary, Ahmed Abdulaziz Al-Khayat, held a meeting with officials representing the Saudi Development Fund. The meeting focused on the progress of work on key road projects, in addition to the King Abdullah Medical City.

Wednesday, 18 July—Three Bahraini's are on trial for connection with terrorism and rioting in a Bahraini village. The three individuals are being investigated for association with the Iranian backed group Saraya Al Ashtar, a group that was added to the US terrorist list last week. Saraya Al Ashtar has claimed responsibility for numerous violent attacks, and is used as a proxy



State of Kuwait

Monday, 16 July—Kuwait officially denied reports stating that it intends to lease its islands to China for economic projects. Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister, Khalid al-Jarallah, said in a press statement that the agreements by the Emir, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahman al-Javer al-Sabah, during his visit to China on 07 July have nothing to do with the rumor that Kuwait is planning to rent its islands to China.

Tuesday, 17 July—Deputy Foreign Minister, Khaled Al-Jarallah, met with the US Ambassador to Kuwait, Lawrence Silverman. The two discussed bilateral relations and the latest regional and international developments. The meeting was also attended by, Assistant Deputy Foreign Minister Ayham Al-Omar, and Assistant Foreign Minister for American Affairs, Reem Al-Khaled. As the US continues to pursue a stricter stance on Iran, this meeting comes at a key time due to Kuwait's extensive links with Iran.





Sultanate of Oman



Sunday, 15 July—Companies in Oman will soon be required to provide health insurance to all their employees. Oman's Capital Market Authority (CMA) is currently drafting plans to roll out mandatory health insurance, for all residents and employees. According to the Minister of Health, Mohammed bin Obaid Al Sa'eedi, the CMA's plans are on track with the government announcement made in September 2017 about compulsory health insurance.

Monday, 16 July—A senior NATO official said the security body is prepared to welcome Oman, as well as Saudi Arabia, into its co-operation initiative with Gulf Countries. The official said NATO's 'Doors are open... Whenever they are ready, we will be ready to welcome them'. Oman and Saudi Arabia remain the only two Gulf states who are yet to join the initiative launched in 2004.

Tuesday, 17 July—The Royal Omani Police announced new short-term tourist visas for Indians who currently hold valid visas for a select group of countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Japan and Schengen Zone countries of the European Union. The visa will be valid for a period of 10 days, will cost 5 Omani Riyal and is intended to help boost tourism to Oman.

Wednesday, 18 July—Omani businessmen met with their Indian counterparts at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Indian government was looking to invite Omani companies to invest in India and benefit from the Make in India programme. Other topics including finding means of enhancing cooperation in various economic and tourist fields; as well as setting up joint ventures for foodstuff, logistics and plastic projects.



State of Qatar



Monday, 16 July—Germany denied comments about Qatar claimed to be made by the German Defence Minister. A Qatar New Agency circled quotes that suggested Ursula von der Leyen had spoken of a “conspiracy” by Germany and some of its neighbours to undermine Qatar’s security. Germany’s Defense Ministry Spokesman, Frank Faehnrich, stated ‘it’s a fact that the minister didn’t (make) these comments in any way... we can deny that the Minister was quoted correctly!’

Tuesday, 17 July—Leaked text messages between Qatari Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, and Qatar’s Ambassador to Iraq, Zayed al-Khayareen, illustrate that the Qatari government provided over \$1 billion (USD) to organisations and individuals listed in terrorism watchlists. After the abduction of 28 members of a royal hunting party in Iraq in December 2015, a series of negotiations for their release began to take place. Paying over \$1 billion (USD) and providing other gifts, the Qatari government allegedly paid the world’s largest ransom for the release of the hostages. Iran was involved in the negotiations

Thursday, 19 July—Qatar’s Minister of Management Development, Labour and Social Welfare, Issa al-Naimi, and Jordan’s Labour Minister, Samir Murad, have announced an agreement to create 1,000 jobs for Jordanians by September. This agreement is a part of a larger Qatari initiative in support of Jordan’s economy as it attempts to leverage Jordan against its closer allies- Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



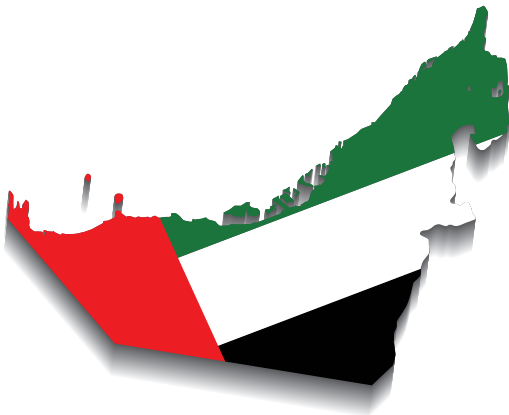
Monday, 16 July—The President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, returns to the African National Congress after a trip to Saudi Arabia to meet with Saudi King Salman. Concluding what seemed to be a ceremonial meeting, Saudi Arabia committed a \$10 billion (USD) investment into South Africa, primarily for energy and power generation. Oil was also an important topic of the meeting, as growing oil prices are affecting the “never-before-seen” cost of fuel in South Africa. South Africa imports 47% of all its oil from Saudi Arabia.

Monday, 16 July— Saudi Arabia offered extra crude volumes on top of its contractual supplies to some of its buyers in the Asian Market. The move is to help Saudi Arabia pump as much oil as possible in order to cover for output losses caused by the renewed U.S. sanctions on Iran, falling output in Venezuela, disruptions in Libya and strikes in Norway

Tuesday, 17 July—Saudi Arabia approved the formation of a Saudi-Kuwait Coordination Council. This agreement demonstrates that economic ties between the two are headed towards a new phase of growth and development.



United Arab Emirates



Sunday, 15 July—The UAE's ambassador to China said trade between the two states could double over the next decade. 60% of Chinese goods are already re-exported through UAE ports to other parts of the Middle East and Africa. President Xi Jinping is to arrive in the UAE this week for a series of high level meetings revolving around strengthening ties between the two states.

Sunday, 15 July—The UAE intends to match Saudi Arabia's \$10 billion (USD) invest in South African, however, focusing on tourism and mining instead of energy. This commitment was made after the first state visit by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Monday, 16 July—The UAE cabinet adopted a number of new visa facilitations for visitors, families and people overstaying their visa. The new legislative package includes a review of the current residency system as well as new rules for both transit visas, and overstaying job seekers. Transit passengers are now exempt from all entry fees for the first 48 hours, and obtaining a transit visa will be facilitated by a number of new express counters at the passport-control hall. People who overstay their visa will now have a chance to voluntarily leave without receiving a "no entry" passport stamp.

Tuesday, 17 July—The UAE Armed Forces' Patriot Missile Defence System intercepted a ballistic missile, fired by the Iran-aligned Al Houthi militia, heading in the direction of Yemen's northern district of Mocha. No casualties or damage were reported. The continued firing of missiles is a violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2216, and targeting populated cities and villages is also a violation of international humanitarian law.



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.

