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June 17 - 21



The Last Thing to Read this Week

by

FRAUKE GREIFFENHAGEN



Kingdom of Bahrain



Sunday, 17 June–The Kingdom is hosting the World Heritage Young Professionals Forum in Manama under the theme ‘Protecting Heritage in an Ever-Changing World’ from 17 to 26 June.

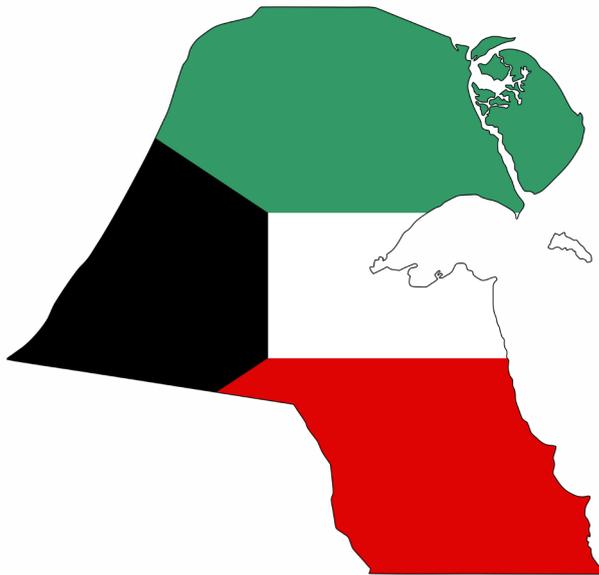
Bahrain is due to host the World Heritage Committee meeting from 24 June to 4 July, organized by the UNESCO. The meeting is set to attract delegations from all over the world, including from Israel as well as Palestine.

Wednesday, 20 June–A delegation of the Supreme Council for Women (SCW) represented Bahrain at the 2018 UN Women Executive Council meeting at the UN headquarters in New York. Shaikha Dina bint Rashid Al-Khalifa, the Director for Policies and Development of the SCW, reaffirmed the Kingdom’s commitment to implementing policies to support the advancement of women in Bahrain.

Thursday, 21 June–Bahrain dismissed reports that it would be the first Arab Gulf country to develop ties with Israel. The rumours stem from an Israeli television report, which cited an unnamed Bahraini official. Bahrain’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that no Bahraini official made such a statement and that the reports were ‘merely false allegations’.



State of Kuwait



Tuesday, 19 June—Officials of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) will reportedly visit Kuwait in July to complete discussions on how Kuwait's controversial Sports Law could be changed to comply with the IOC Charter. Kuwait was suspended by the IOC in 2015, after the law was introduced. Kuwaiti officials in April met with IOC representatives in Lausanne, signaling positive outcomes of the talks and the hope that a solution would be found soon. The IOC visit is set to finalise a solution and allow Kuwait to return to the international sports scene, Hmoud Al-Fulateih, Kuwait's Director of Public Authority for Sport, said.

Wednesday, 20 June—Kuwait's Shaikh Fahad Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah met with Bahrain's Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa in Manama. Both discussed the advanced cooperation between their countries and their role in the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab world.



Sultanate of Oman

Wednesday, 20 June–Oman’s Minister of Oil, Mohammed bin Hamad Al-Rumhy, said he believed that Iran would agree to an OPEC deal to increase output during the organisation’s scheduled meeting on Friday. Iran has previously signaled that it would only support modest increase in output. Saudi Arabia and Russia have been trying to gain support for raising output to meet rising global demand and furthermore called on the US, China and India to cool down prices by producing more crude.



Wednesday, 20 June–Oman’s Vision 2040 office held a meeting with undersecretaries and CEOs in preparation of Vision 2040, following a series of workshops and meetings with different segments of society. A series of workshops spanning the areas of man and society, economy and development, and governance and institutional performance were held. Oman is working to include representatives from all governorates and economy sectors to best implement the future vision.



State of Qatar



Wednesday, 20 June–Barwa Bank and International Bank of Qatar have entered advanced talks to merge, according to insiders. The combined worth of the banks amounted to some \$22.45 billion at the end of last year, with the value of the merger transaction not immediately available. Previous talks of a three-way merger with Islamic lender Masraf Rayan fell through last week. Qatar is working on securing its financial sector amid the ongoing Gulf crisis.

Thursday, 21 June–The European Commission opened an investigation on Qatari long-term liquefied natural gas (LNG) contracts. The case will investigate whether Qatar is breaching EU rules by imposing territorial restrictions in its contracts with EU companies. Qatar supplies around 40% of the EU's LNG and is its largest supplier. The Commission stated that the Qatari contract restrictions could limit or prevent EU importers from diverting Qatari LNG to other destinations, restricting free flow in the European Economic Area.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Tuesday, 19 June–Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthi rebels announced they had fired a missile at a Saudi Aramco oil facility in Asir, south-western Saudi Arabia. Aramco stated that all its facilities were safe and operating normally. Saudi state TV announced earlier that a Houthi missile aimed at the city of Khamis Mushait was intercepted, which is also in Asir. The Houthis have increased their attacks on Saudi targets in the past months, as pressure on the Iran-backed rebel group increases in Yemen.

Wednesday, 20 June–Saudi Arabia is moving ahead with plans to build a canal along its border with Qatar, effectively turning the peninsula into an island, Saudi news network Al-Arabiya reports. Five companies are in the run for the Salwa Canal contract, the selection is scheduled for 26 June, after which a bid will be selected within 90 days. The project is set to be completed within one year and be funded entirely by Saudi and UAE private sector investment. The Saudi government has never officially confirmed the project, which first made headlines in April 2018.

Gaza and brokering peace between Israel and Palestine. Kushner and Greenblatt are on a Middle East tour in order to push forward the White House’s Israel-Palestine peace plan with regional allies.

Wednesday, 20 June–Index provider MSCI said it would start including Saudi Arabia in its emerging market clas-



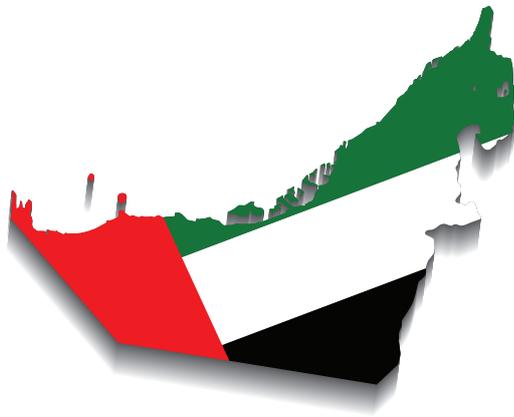
Wednesday, 20 June–White House senior adviser Jared Kushner met with Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia to discuss the Middle East peace process. Also in attendance was US Middle East Peace Envoy, Jason Greenblatt. During the meeting, they discussed increased cooperation between the Kingdom and the US, humanitarian relief for



sification, also reclassifying Argentina to the category. The move comes in anticipation of the Aramco Initial Public Offering (IPO), and is set to significantly broaden the investor base for both countries.



United Arab Emirates



Tuesday, 19 June–UAE and Saudi-backed forces in Yemen entered the main compound of Hodeidah's airport, where severe fighting against the Iran-backed Houthis was concentrated in the battle for the strategic port city. Taking the airport and seaport will be crucial for the coalition to defeat the Houthis in this largest battle of the war so far, and to secure the delivery of aid to civilians. UAE's Minister of Foreign Affairs said on Sunday that a victory in Hodeidah would force the Houthis back to the negotiating table.

Wednesday, 20 June–Emirati Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid announced on Twitter that the UAE would be sending an astronaut to the International Space Station (ISS) in 2019. The mission will mark the first time an astronaut from a Middle Eastern country will be sent to the ISS.



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.

