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The Last Thing to Read this Week

by

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Kingdom of Bahrain

Sunday, 7 October—Bahrain hosted the 9th International eGovernment Forum and IT Expo 2018, under the auspices of the Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Supreme Committee for Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, between 7-8 October. The Forum mainly focused on advances in ICT in the government sector with regional and international experts discussing topics such as cybersecurity, smart city, digital transformation, data analytics, cloud computing and blockchain.

Tuesday, 9 October—A forum on ‘The role of women in promoting Bahraini-Saudi economic cooperation’ was held in Bahrain. Businesswomen from Bahrain and Saudi Arabia agreed to strengthen their regional grouping as a platform for economic cooperation and discussed how cooperation between Saudi and Bahraini women entrepreneurs can promote bilateral trade. During the event, Ishraq Mohammed Ubaid, Head of Economic Affairs at the Saudi Embassy in Manama, announced the intention to bring Bahraini businesswomen to participate at the Saudi International Trade Excellence Fair held in February 2019 in Riyadh.

Tuesday, 9 October—Saudi Aramco and the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO) announced the commissioning of the new AB-4 pipeline, a new phase of the Aramco-Bahrain crude oil pipeline, which was constructed to meet Bahrain’s growing demand for energy. The 112-kilometres long pipeline will have a capacity of transporting up to 350,000 barrels of crude oil a day and will gradually replace the old pipeline in full crude oil supply to Bahrain in the following months.



Wednesday, 10 October—Bahrain Defence Force’s Commander in Chief, Field Marshal Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, received a delegation of US National Defence University representatives led by Retired Admiral, Henry Chiles.

Wednesday, 10 October—Bahrain-based cryptocurrency exchange, Rain, backed by bitcoin developer Jimmy Song, works towards securing a full operational licence in 2019 to expand its operations in the Gulf. In case of success, Rain would become the first regulated digital currency exchange in the region.



State of Kuwait



Sunday, Tuesday, 9 October—Kuwait hosted the 26th Meeting of the Gulf Ports and Maritime Authorities' Officials between 9-10 October. The Kuwait Ports Authority's Director General, Yousef Abdullah Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, highlighted the importance of cooperation and information sharing among the Gulf countries in maritime transportation and called for a Gulf states' representative in the International Maritime Organisation. To enhance the Gulf states' maritime transportation ties, the Meeting came up with a recommendation to form four private teams each assigned with different tasks, such as ship and port facility safety and security. The officials also decided to meet more frequently—every six months instead of annually.

Tuesday, 9 October—The Commissioner-General for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Pierre Krähenbühl, praised the unprecedented contributions of the Gulf countries, particularly Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, who pledged \$50 million each to UNRWA, and along with the European Union, which contributes 42%, or \$760 million, of UNRWA's total budget, helped to overcome the financial difficulties caused by the United States' decision to cut the funding for UNRWA in August 2018.

Sunday, Wednesday, 10 October—Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation signed a bilateral Open Skies Agreement with Cyprus as part of efforts to expand Kuwait International Airport's cooperation with other international, particularly European, air facilities. The treaty covers multiple security and navigation issues and allows the airlines to operate unrestricted number of flights between the two countries.



Sultanate of Oman

Monday, 8 October—Nama Holding, a state-owned electricity company, announced partial privatisation of a number of its subsidiaries to promote participation of the private sector and attract foreign investments. Up to 49% of the shares Nama Holding has in Oman Electricity Transmission Company and up to 70% of its shares in its distribution and supply companies, such as Muscat Electricity Distribution Company (MEDC), Majan Electricity Distribution Company (MJEC) and three others, will be sold.

Tuesday, 9 October—Oman is expected to be the fastest growing Gulf economy in 2019 with predicted growth of 5.0% compared to 1.9% in 2018, according to the International Monetary Fund's October 2018 World Economic Outlook.





State of Qatar



Monday, 8 October—In a bid to reduce its international isolation, Qatar held the first International Products Exhibition and Conference 2018. The event was organised to present investment and development opportunities in Qatar and boost private-public sectors' cooperation between Qatar and Algeria, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Jordan. Qatar remains frozen-out of engaging with its immediate neighbours since the 2017 crisis began.

Monday, 8 October—Qatar's Speaker of the Advisory Council, Ahmed bin Abdulla bin Zaid Al-Mahmoud, met with the Chairman of Russia's Duma, Viacheslav Volodin, and the President of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Binali Yildirim, on the sidelines of the 3rd Meeting of Speakers of Eurasian Countries Parliaments to discuss Qatari-Turkish and Qatari-Russian parliamentary relations and how to enhance them. Qatar currently stations some 8,000 Turkish troops on its soil and aims to house 60,000.

Tuesday, 9 October—Minister of State and Chairman of the Free Zones Authority, Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Sayed, announced that Qatar's first Special Economic Zone, Um Al-Houl, currently under construction near Hamad Port, will be launched in early 2019 and the second free zone, Ras Bu Fontas, developed near the International Airport, will follow suit later that year.

Tuesday, 9 October—The Qatari Businessmen Association (QBA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Association of Independent Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (MUSIAD) as both countries strive to promote bilateral trade and investments. MUSIAD also announced plans to establish a representative office in Qatar.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Monday, 8 October—Saudi Aramco and the French group Total SA signed an agreement for the Front-End Engineering Design (FEED) of a giant petrochemical complex in Jubail, located on the Kingdom's eastern coast next to the Saudi Aramco Total Refining and Petrochemical Co. (SATORP) refinery, a joint venture of Saudi Aramco and Total. The complex, which will comprise a mixed-feed cracker with a capacity of 1.5 million tonnes per year of ethylene and related high-added-value petrochemical units, should cost around \$5 billion and be finished by 2024.

Tuesday, 9 October— The King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) launched new platform for dialogue in Europe, the Islamic-Jewish Council. It is the first platform of its kind at the European level, striving to promote cooperation between Muslim and Jewish communities in Europe, enhance religious tolerance and combat extremism, while promoting coexistence under a common citizenship.

Tuesday, 9 October—Saudi Arabia's government appointed the Global Advisory Board overseeing the NEOM megaproject. The board consists of renown experts in key fields such as architecture, sustainability, manufacturing, design, urban planning, etc and include: Sam Altman, President of YC Group; Tim Brown, CEO and President of IDEO; Alexandra Cousteau, senior adviser to Oceana; Jean Fréchet, distinguished professor of chemistry; Neelie Kroes, former Vice-President of the European Commission; Marc Raibert, CEO of Boston Dynamics; and others.

Tuesday, 9 October—Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Germany, Prince Khalid Bin Bandar Bin Sultan, returned to Berlin as Saudi-German relations have recently began to warm up after almost a year of diplomatic crisis. He met with Germany's Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas.

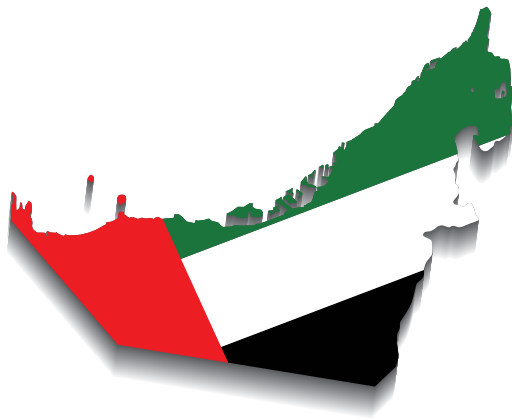
Thursday, 11 October—The Islamic Development Bank will launch two funds on Africa and Asia next year with the aim of raising \$1 billion for investments in infrastructure development in its member countries.





United Arab Emirates

Sunday, 7 October—The French space agency, Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales, became the first foreign space agency to open a representative office in the UAE. The move resulted from cooperation between France and the UAE in the space field as the CNES was also the first agency ever to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the UAE Space Agency (UAESA) in 2015.



Monday, 8 October—Baker Hughes, a GE company (BHGE), one of the world's largest oil field services provider based in the United States, and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) signed a strategic partnership agreement. As part of the agreement BHGE will acquire a 5% stake in ADNOC's subsidiary, ADNOC Drilling, the largest drilling company in the Middle East, for \$550 million, setting its total value on \$11 billion. It is the first time the state-owned ADNOC Group sold a direct interest in one of its services subsidiaries to an international company.

Wednesday, 10 October—UAE's Economy Minister, Sultan bin Saeed Al-Mansouri, and Austria's Finance Minister, Hartwig Loger, met in Dubai to discuss ways of enhancing cooperation between the UAE and Austria in fields of economy, commerce and investments as well as expertise exchange and development of public-private sector partnerships, with emphasis on digital economy.