



GCC IN REVIEW

A Weekly Publication of the main news surrounding the GCC States



18 – 22 February 2018

Kingdom of Bahrain

Wednesday, 21 February—The Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation and Special Presidential Representative for the Middle East and Africa, Mikhail Bogdanov, hosted the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to Russia, Ahmed Abdulrahman Al-Saati. Cooperation in the energy sector was very high on the meeting's agenda. This meeting comes as Gulf-Russia energy dialogues increase in tempo and frequency.

Thursday, 22 February—Bahrain's capital Manama hosted the 7th annual GCC Financial Forum by Euromoney Conferences, co-hosted with the Bahrain Economic Development Board (EDB). More than 700 leading financial experts, business leaders and government officials from across the MENA region and Europe attended the event.

State of Kuwait

Wednesday, 21 February—Kuwait drafted a resolution proposal for the UN Security Council demanding a 30-day ceasefire in Syria to allow deliveries of humanitarian aid and medical evacuations. The UNSC is expected to vote on the proposal by the end of the week.

Thursday, 22 February—Philippine officials arrived in Kuwait City to seek greater protection for migrant workers after a diplomatic row over the alleged mistreatment of Filipinos in the Gulf state. The trip comes after Philippine's President, Rodrigo Duterte, announced a departure ban for Filipinos planning to work in Kuwait, following the murder of a Filipina maid in Kuwait this month. A Syrian man and a Lebanese woman are sought for the crime.

Sultanate of Oman

Monday, 19 February—Oman's Duqm Refinery has signed contracts with its engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contractors for enlargement. Major contracts were awarded by Spain's Técnicas Reunidas S.A., South Korea's Daewoo Engineering & Construction Co., UK's Petrofac International, and to a joint venture between Italy's Saipem SpA and the Dutch company CB&I.

Tuesday, 20 February—Oman's Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs, Badr Bin Saud Al-Busaidi, received in Muscat a delegation from the US House Committee on Armed Services led by Jennifer Bird. The meeting gravitated around Oman's plans to increase its arms imports from the US.

State of Qatar

Monday, 19 February—Qatar's Foreign Minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, declared his intentions to attend the upcoming Arab Summit regardless of where it will be held. Saudi Arabia will host the summit. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE, continue to boycott Qatar.

Tuesday, 20 February—Qatar Airways' CEO, Akbar Al-Baker, announced plans for Qatar Airways-backed Air Italy to become Italy's flagship carrier as Alitalia undergoes bankruptcy proceedings. Over the next three years, 20 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, purchased by Qatar Airways, will be added to Air Italy's fleet.

Wednesday, 21 February—Qatar's Foreign Minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, met Chad's Minister of Foreign Affairs Integration and International Cooperation, Cherif Mahamat Zene. During the meeting Qatar and Chad decided to restore diplomatic relations and to return their ambassadors with immediate effect. Chad withdrew its diplomatic representatives to Qatar owing to Doha's support for Sahel-based Islamist terror groups.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Sunday, 18 February—Saudi Arabia's Cyber Security and Programming Federation has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the US based SANS Institute in a move that aims to exchange knowledge, transfer technology and localise capabilities. This is likely to enable the localization of cyber security skills in national critical infrastructures and contribute in realising the Kingdom's Vision 2030 project.

Monday, 19 February—Saudi Arabia warplanes launched more than 20 air raids on the Houthi controlled Saada region in Northern Yemen, destroying more than 17 verified Houthi targets, including military vehicles loaded with weapons, militiamen gatherings and transportation vehicles. The operation aimed to prevent further attacks on Saudi Arabia's border guards by the Iran-backed rebels.

Tuesday, 20 February—Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Russia, Raed bin Khaled Qrimli, declared that the final arrangements and technical issues, related to the Russia-KSA deal to ship S-400 to the Kingdom, are well under way. The S-400 Triumf is the latest Russian made long-range anti-aircraft missile system.

Wednesday, 21 February—The Supervisor-General of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid & Relief Center (KSrelief), Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, announced that the centre signed six agreements committing a total of \$33 million (USD) to implement humanitarian projects in Yemen to treat injured Yemenis and to complete the third and fourth phase of rehabilitation of child soldiers in Yemen. Al-Rabeeah stressed how the centre is the only institution taking care of child soldiers in war-torn Yemen.

Thursday, 22 February—Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Adel Al-Jubeir, in a speech before the European Parliament in Brussels, declared that the current nuclear agreement is not enough to modify Iran's aggressive international behaviour. The Minister also expressed his deep concern and offered Saudi Arabia's cooperation to avoid the establishment of ISIL's strongholds along the Libyan coast.

United Arab Emirates

Monday 19 February—The Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, met in Abu Dhabi with Sultan bin Suhaim Al-Thani and his accompanying delegation. Sultan bin Suhaim Al-Thani, member of Qatar's royal family, is an outspoken critic of Qatar's current foreign policy.

Wednesday, 21 February—The UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, received his Malian counterpart, Tieman Hubert Coulibaly. Coulibaly praised the pioneering stature of the UAE in the fight against terrorism and for the prominent Emirati role in supporting African nations in the Sahel region to keep jihadi violence at bay.

By Antonino Occhiuto