



# GCC IN REVIEW

*A Weekly Publication of the main news surrounding the GCC States*



**11 – 16 February 2018**

## **Kingdom of Bahrain**

Tuesday, 13 February—The Commander in Chief of Bahrain’s Defence Force, Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, warmly welcomed remarks from US Defence Secretary, James Mattis, who described Iran as pulling the strings in all the crises unfolding in the region.

Wednesday, 14 February—Bahrain celebrated the 17th anniversary of its National Action Charter, a social contract containing details on the protection of individual freedoms, equal rights for women, freedom of belief, expression and publishing, democratic life and principles of the free market. On 14th February 2001, the Charter was put to a referendum and 98.4% of the people approved it.

Thursday, 15 February—Bahrain’s Minister of Industry, Zayed bin Rashid Alzayani, met the US Ambassador to the Kingdom, Justin Siberell. The two highlighted the importance of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) recently signed between Bahrain and the US, and ways to expand the agreement to other countries in the region.

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## State of Kuwait

Monday, 12 February—The government of the Philippines announced a total ban on new employment for Filipinos in Kuwait. Filipino workers are crucial for many sectors of Kuwait's economy and provide a lifeline to the Philippines' troubled economy through remittances.

Wednesday, 14 February—Kuwait City hosted the Iraq Reconstruction Conference. At the margin of the conference, US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, delivered the message that Gulf unity should be preserved to face common challenges—such as Iraq's reconstruction. Tillerson also commended the importance of Kuwait's mediation efforts in the crisis between Qatar and its Arab Gulf neighbours.

## Sultanate of Oman

Monday, 12 February—Oman's Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, received the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, Johanna Brandt. They advanced the prospects of enhancing cooperation in the economic, trade and investment fields.

Thursday, 15 February—Oman's Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, visited Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque. Visits to Al-Aqsa by top diplomats are very rare. The Minister declared that the establishment of a Palestinian state is necessary to achieve stability and development in the region.

## State of Qatar

Monday, 12 February—Qatar's Ministry of Economy and Commerce published its periodic report on trade. The report revealed that a total of 418 companies shut down their operations in Qatar in January 2018. Important foreign investments began a capital flow out of Qatar since the beginning of the boycott by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE, which accuse Qatar of destabilising the region and supporting terror groups.

Wednesday, 14 February—Qatar's Emir, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, received an official invitation to visit the Russian Federation—for reasons unknown.

Friday, 16 February—Qatar's Emir, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, arrived in Munich, Germany to participate in the 54th session of the Munich Security Conference. This participation is part of Qatar's strategy to "win over" international sympathy and pressure Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE.

## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Sunday, 11 February—Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Adel Al-Jubeir, met a delegation from the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs in Riyadh. The nuclear deal with Iran and Teheran's ballistic aspirations were high on the agenda.

Monday, 12 February—Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud met with the representative of the UK Conservative Party, Lord Francis Maude, in Riyadh. A delegation of Middle East experts from the Conservative Party also joined the meeting, signalling the ever-deepening ties between Riyadh and London.

Tuesday, 13 February—The Saudi Arabia-led coalition, fighting to restore the UN-legitimised government in Yemen, signed economic and logistical agreements with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to fight cholera in the war-torn country.

Wednesday, 14 February—Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, discussed ways of re-balancing oil markets in Riyadh with Russia's Energy Minister, Alexander Novak. Russia-KSA energy cooperation flourished in the last two years to the point that Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister, Khalid Al-Falih, visited the port city of Sabetta, last December, deep in Russia's Arctic Circle, to oversee the opening of a liquefied natural gas plant, built as part of a Saudi Arabia-Russia joint investment project.

Thursday, 15 February—Saudi Arabia's military repelled a cross border attack by Iran-backed Houthi militias on the Kingdom's southern border. The bombardment by Saudi artillery guns killed 25 Houthis and wounded many others. Houthi militias have repeatedly carried out attacks against Saudi Arabia's civilians and often launch border incursions to weaken the resolve of the Saudi-led Arab coalition fighting to restore Yemen's legitimate government.

## **United Arab Emirates**

Sunday, 11 February—The UAE Space Agency and the Indian Space Research Organisation have identified key areas for cooperation, including the UAE's Mars mission, remote sensing applications and satellite platforms. This comes after India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, visited the UAE over the weekend.

Wednesday, 14 February—The UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Anwar bin Mohammed Gargash, offered \$500 million (USD) to help in the reconstruction of Iraq. The UAE has historically lent its support to Iraq, including a landmark decision to cancel a previous Iraqi debt worth \$7 billion in 2008.

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