



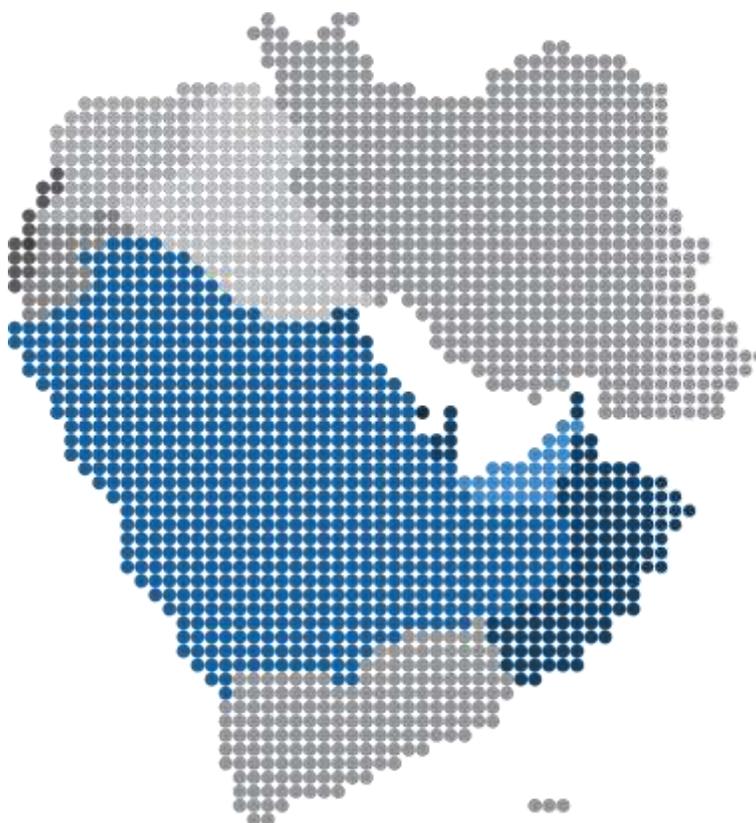
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# Arab Gulf

## C O U N T R Y B U L L E T I N S April 08 - 12



The Last Thing to Read this  
Week

*by*  
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## Kingdom of Bahrein



Sunday, 08 April—Bahrain hosted the 14<sup>th</sup> Bahrain Grand Prix—the second race of the Formula 1’s 2018 calendar. Bahrain’s Crown Prince, HRH Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, presented the trophies to the winners in the official closing ceremony, and highlighted the importance of the Grand Prix for the tourism sector, employment growth and local business opportunities.

Monday, 09 April—Bahrain’s Urban Planning and Development Authority hosted a session of reflection and continuation of the Bahrain-French city planning initiative, a product of a Memorandum of Understanding (signed in 2015), during a visit of HM King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa to France. The session centered around ‘Sustainable Cities and Waterfront Connectivity,’ as both partners seek to improve the development environment in the Gulf state.



## State of Kuwait

Wednesday, 11 April–Kuwait has purchased stakes in an Indian oil refinery in efforts to increase oil sales to the country, the Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Petroleum International, Nabil Bourisli, said at the International Energy Forum in New Delhi. The deal is set to be signed in the coming weeks, and is hoped to increase sales to India by 200,000 barrels a day.



Wednesday, 11 April–The Kuwaiti government refuted reports which claimed that Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, along with six other Ministers, had handed in resignations. The rumours were circulated on Twitter, and spread throughout social media platforms in the Gulf State. Kuwait's parliament speaker, Marzouq Al-Ghanem, urged Kuwaitis to be wary of fake-news and only consult trusted sources.



## Sultanate of Oman

Monday, 09 April–The Oman Oil Company laid the foundation stone for two plant projects, the Salalah Liquefied Petroleum Gas (SLPG) and Salalah Ammonia Plant. The value of the projects is estimated at \$826m, and will help in the diversification of the Sultanates' economy. The Oman Oil Company is developing the project in cooperation with the British Petrofac, which is tasked with the engineering, procurement and construction works.





## State of Qatar

Monday, 09 April—Following a visit to the US Central Command in Florida last Friday, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met with US Defence Secretary James Mattis at the Pentagon, Virginia. In the meeting Mattis stated the importance of the Al-Udeid military base for strikes against ISIL.



Tuesday, 10 April— Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met President Trump at the White House for bilateral talks. Both leaders told reporters that they were closely cooperating in the fight against terrorism. The talks were held as Trump prepares for a possible retaliatory strike in Syria. Al-Thani called Assad a 'war criminal', who could not be tolerated in the region. Despite these pledges, Doha continues to support Iran, in thus indirectly backing the Assad regime, as the Islamic Republic is the strongest defender and supporter of Assad in Syria.



# Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Sunday, 08 April–Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman (MbS), arrived in Paris for a three-day visit, to hold bilateral talks with President Macron. The two leaders discussed regional stability, issues of defense, security and economy. After meeting with the Minister of Defense, Florence Parly, and having dinner at the Louvre museum on Monday, the pair signed a number of contracts covering multiple economic fields—reportedly worth \$18bn (USD). Macron invited Lebanese Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, to join the farewell gala dinner at the Elysee Palace, prior to which the three leaders discussed stability in the Middle East and the issue of terrorism. In response to the suspected chemical attack in Syria, both leaders did not rule out participation in a coordinated military response and condemned the use of chemical weapons. In a joint statement, MbS and Macron also agreed that there was a need to ‘curb Iranian expansionism’ in the Middle East, as well as to contain Iranian ballistic proliferation.

Monday, 09 April–Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Finance, Mohammed al-Jadaan, told AFP that the eagerly awaited stock-market debut of Saudi Aramco can be expected in 2018, and the latest by 2019, pending market conditions. Speaking at a French-Saudi forum in Paris, he stated that Aramco was on track for a 2018 listing, however not desperate to make the move, which is expected to constitute the world’s biggest initial public offering day, 11 April– Saudi Arabia’s military shot down a Houthi drone at the airport of the Southern city Abha, after the Houthis (IPO).

Tuesday, 10 April–During the Crown Princes’ visit to Paris, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Saudi Aramco and Total, with the objective of building a large petrochemical complex in Jubail, Saudi Arabia. The contract entails some \$9bn, with \$4bn contributed by third party investors. The complex will be built next to the SATORP refinery, in order to fully utilize operational synergy. It is expected to reach a capacity of 1.5 million tonnes per year of ethylene and related petrochemical units.



Tuesday, 10 April–The Saudi Ambassador to the United States, Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, condemned the chemical attack in Syria, allegedly carried out by the Assad regime. The attack constituted a continuation of crimes committed by the regime with the backing of Iran and its proxies, which necessitated a strong response. The comments come as President Trump is set to announce a military response to the attack.

Wednesday, 11 April– Saudi Arabia’s military shot down a Houthi drone at the airport of the Southern city Abha, after the Houthis announced launching a drone to the airport, as well as a Saudi Aramco facility in Jizan province. Aramco, however, reported that its facilities were operating safely and normally. Air traffic was not interrupted.

Wednesday, 11 April– Saudi Arabia’s military intercepted at least one missile over the capital Riyadh, and two missiles in Jizan and Nairan province, in the south of the country. The Houthi TV network, Al-Masirah, claimed the attacks for the Yemeni rebels, and stated that the target was Saudi Arabia’s defence ministry. The attack comes after a previous missile attack last month, in which seven missiles were intercepted and one man left dead in Riyadh. Saudi Colonel, Turki al-Malki, confirmed the successful interception of an ‘Iranian ballistic missile launched from Sadaa’. The Houthi militia has increased the frequency of attacks on Saudi targets to the highest rate since the beginning of the Yemen conflict.



## United Arab Emirates

Monday, 09 April– The UAE’s Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Anwar Gargash, criticised Somalia for creating unnecessary tensions, after Somali authorities had seized a civilian aircraft, and \$9.6 million in cash. The money was allocated to the Somali army via a Memorandum of Understanding, signed by the countries in 2014 to improve military cooperation. The UAE’s state news agency, WAM, reported that some 47 military personnel were aboard the plane, with some held at gunpoint and assaulted by Somali security forces, after the plane landed at Mogadishu airport.



Wednesday, 11 April– Khalid Al-Bustani, Director-General of the Federal Tax Authority (FTA), told reporters that 98.8% of companies in the UAE had filed for tax returns required under the 100-day old value-added tax system. The FTA extended a deadline for companies to register until April, to give them more time to prepare their businesses, but reiterated that tax-evasion or avoidance would not be tolerated, and the deadline would not be extended again.



*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.*