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The Last Thing to Read this Week

by

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Kingdom of Bahrain

Sunday, 13 January—Bahrain's National Oil and Gas Authority sealed a strategic partnership with Italy's oil giant, ENI, to explore the Kingdom's offshore potential. NOGA and ENI signed a Memorandum of Understanding on petroleum exploration at the 2,800 km² maritime offshore Block 1. The drilling for oil should start this year.

Monday, 14 January—Commander-in-Chief of the Bahrain Defence Forces, Field Marshal Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, received the Commander of the French Forces stationed in the UAE and in the Indian Ocean, Rear Admiral, Didier Maletierre, and his delegation. They reviewed Bahraini-French relations and how to enhance military coordination and defence cooperation.

On Wednesday, Mr Hook spoke about US-Iran policy at the Bahrain Centre for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat) and praised Bahrain as a key partner in the US Iran strategy.

Thursday, 17 January—King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa received President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Gabriela Cuevas Barron, who is currently visiting the region. The IPU President commended cooperation between the Council of Representatives and the IPU.

Tuesday, 15 January—Bahrain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa, received the US Special Representative for Iran and Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary of State, Brian Hook. The Foreign Minister highlighted Bahrain's full support for all the US efforts to confront the Iranian regime's destabilising policies, countering Iran's meddling in other countries' internal affairs, and Iran's support for terrorism and efforts to incite tensions and violence in the region and worldwide.





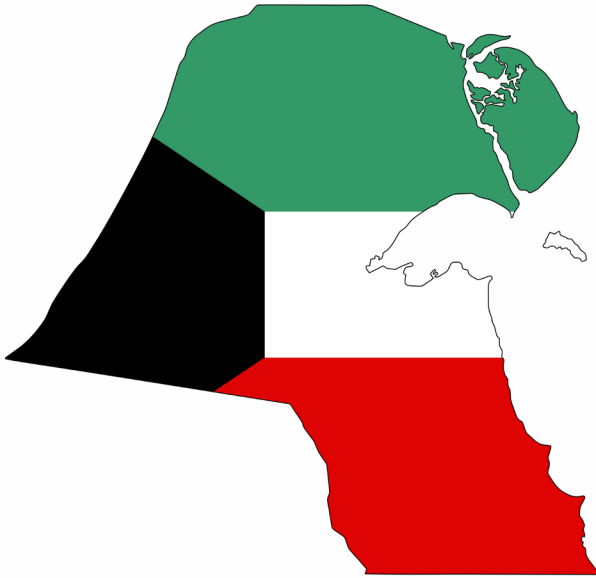
She also praised Kingdom's development and progress particularly in the parliamentary field and participation of women in Bahraini politics, highlighting the election of Speaker Fawziya bint Abdulla Zainal.

Friday, 18 January—Bahrain's court sentenced three Bahrainis on charges of joining a terrorist cell, Saraya al-Muqawama, and revoked their citizenships. One of them was present, the other two are believed to have fled to Iraq. They were charged with terrorist crimes, plots to carry out bombings in the Kingdom, transfer of material for making a bomb and of planning to assassinate an officer at the Interior Ministry.



State of Kuwait

Sunday, 13 January—Lord Mayor of London, Peter Estlin, visited Kuwait and held talks with Emir Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in which they focused on political issues linked to Brexit of the United Kingdom from the European Union. Following the meeting Mr Estlin stressed that the relations between the UK and Kuwait are historically strong, and would remain so despite the new political realities, and called for joint investments in the future.



Wednesday, 16 January—The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, had to cancel his visit to Kuwait due to a family death. The Kuwait-US Strategic Partnership will be rescheduled in the near future.

Friday, 18 January—Kuwait contributed \$9.1 million US dollars to United Nations specialised agencies to help people in Syria and Syrian refugees.



Sultanate of Oman

Monday, 14 January—Sultan Qaboos bin Said received the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, to discuss ways to promote peace in the region and economic and security partnership between the US and Oman. Mr Pompeo commended Oman's unique skills to create opportunities for dialogue on difficult issues, referring notably to the separate hosting of President of Palestinian Authority and Israeli Prime Minister by Sultan Qaboos in late 2018. On Yemen they agreed to continue working with the UN Special Envoy on political solution.

Thursday, 17 January—Sultan Qaboos issued 7 royal decrees, including one ratifying an agreement on economic cooperation between the governments of Oman and Lithuania.





State of Qatar

Sunday, 13 January—Turkey's President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said that cooperation between Ankara and Doha will be strengthened in many sectors including defence, trade, tourism and energy. During the speech he highlighted his appreciation for Qatar's support during Ankara's hardship between attempted coup in mid-2017 and the August 2018 Turkish lira crisis, when Qatar pledged to invest \$15 billion in Turkey.

Sunday, 13 January—The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, visited Doha to attend the second US-Qatar Strategic Dialogue and meet with the country's officials, including the Emir. Security and defence partnerships were on the top of the agenda and a Memorandum of Understanding on expansion of US presence at Al-Udeid Air Base was signed. Mr Pompeo stressed that the Gulf dispute should be ended soon as it harms mutual interests and stressed the importance of the unity among the GCC members for the Middle East Strategic Alliance and countering Iran.

Thursday, 17 January—Qatar's Prime Minister and Interior Minister, Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani, met with Turkey's Interior Minister, Suleyman Soyly. They discussed several regional and international issues of common concern, particularly in the areas of security, and reviewed bilateral cooperation and how to strengthen it.

Friday, 18 January—Qatar Armed Forces donated 68 modern military vehicles to the central government of Somalia.





Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Sunday, 6 January—Saudi Arabia's Am-
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Agency reported that Saudi Arabia's Min-
istry of Foreign Affairs denied reports that
the Kingdom is reopening an embassy in
Damascus, Syria.

Tuesday, 15 January—Minister of Labour
and Social Development, Ahmad Al-Rajhi,
announced that Saudi Arabia's government
will give cash incentives to the private sector
for hiring Saudi citizens. This is one of the
latest initiatives to improve the Kingdom's
human working capital in line with Vision
2030 plans to lower unemployment and
increase number of women workers. The
Kingdom already reserved some jobs only
to Saudis and pushed companies to employ
more Saudis than foreign workers.



Wednesday, 16 January—The King
Abdullah Sports City Stadium in Saudi
Arabia's city of Jeddah hosted a sold-out
football match of the Italian Super Cup,
where Juventus won over AC Milan. This
is the first time that such event was held
in the Kingdom and it marked a mile-
stone in the Saudi-Italian relations.

Thursday, 17 January—During the Abu
Dhabi Sustainability Finance Forum,
the Abu Dhabi Global Market and Saudi
Arabian General Investment Authority

signed a Memorandum of Understand-
ing to promote investment, industry and
trade cooperation between the UAE and
Saudi Arabia.

Thursday, 17 January—The Saudi Com-
munication and Information Technology
Commission and the International Tele-
communication Union, a United Nations
agency for information and communica-
tion technology (ICT), signed a deal to
strengthen cooperation and partnership
in the field of ICT.



United Arab Emirates

Sunday, 13 January—Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE's Armed Forces, Mohamed bin Zayed and Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Hiroshige Seko, discussed economic cooperation between the UAE and Japan.

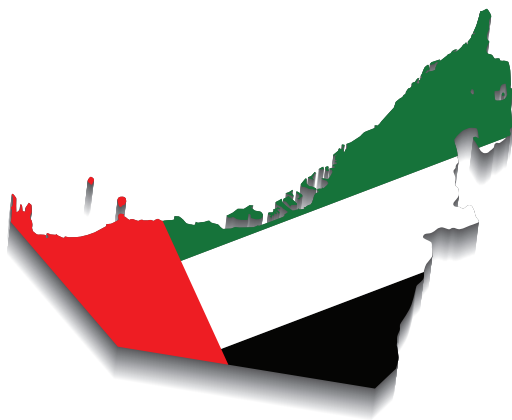
Monday, 14 January—Mohamed bin Zayed met with Australia's Defence Minister, to discuss ways to intensify military and defence cooperation between Australia and the UAE.

Tuesday, 15 January—Deputy Ruler of Dubai and Chairman of Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), Maktoum bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, received

Lord Mayor of the City of London, Peter Estlin, to discuss the global financial situation and ways how to boost cooperation and expertise exchange between the DIFC and the financial district in London, in various sectors, particularly in financial innovation.

Wednesday, 16 January—Mohamed bin Zayed received a phone call from the Austrian Chancellor, Sebastian Kurt. They discussed relations and cooperation between the UAE and Austria and several issues of mutual interest.

Friday, 18 January—Between 12-19 January, the UAE hosted the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, titled 'Industry Convergence: Accelerating Sustainable Development,' the largest sustainability event in the Middle East. It addressed issues such as digitalisation, youth, renewable energy and climate change, water security, future mobility, space exploration, biotechnology, and technology for good. The 2019 session focused also on ways how industries respond to the digital transformations in the global economy, which include advanced digital technologies like big data, artificial intelligence





and the Internet of Things, that can create new opportunities to support progress in societies and sustainable development.



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.

