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## Arab Gulf

C O U N T R Y  
B U L L E T I N S  
March 25 - 29



The Last Thing to Read this Week

*by*

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## Kingdom of Bahrain

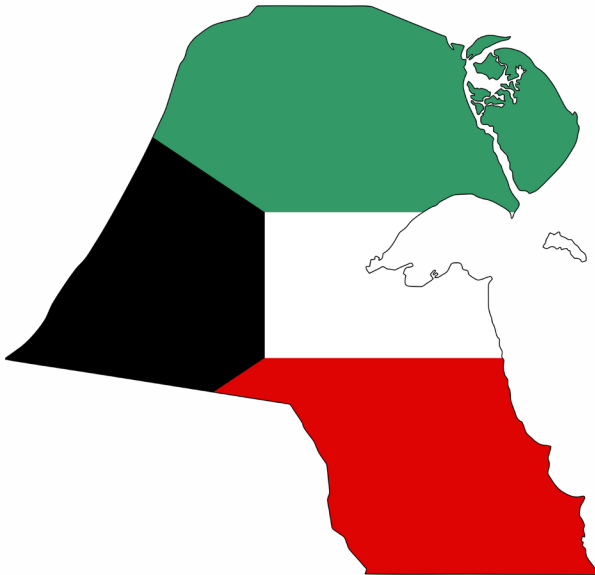


Sunday, 25 March–Bahrain announced stricter measures against social media accounts that ‘spread malicious rumours’ and promote fake news. The move follows ‘disruptive’ social media accounts that claimed affiliation with the Royal Court and spread rumours, which threatened social harmony and civil peace. Interior Minister, Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa, vowed to take follow-up measures and potentially draft new legislation to address the developing threat to national stability posed by fake news.

Wednesday, 28 March–Bahraini Foreign Ministry Undersecretary of International Affairs, Dr. Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, and the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Amin AL-Sharkawi, signed a Joint Cooperation Initiative in preparation of the voluntary national report to implement sustainable development goals. The document is part of Bahrain’s continued efforts to align the UN sustainable development goals with Bahrain’s Economic Vision 2030.



## State of Kuwait



Tuesday, 27 March–Lebanese national, Nader Essam Assaf, was charged Tuesday by a south Lebanon prosecutor for murdering Filipina maid Joanna Daniela Demafelis. The case sparked global outrage and prompted calls for improvement of the rights of migrant workers. A new agreement between Kuwait and the Philippines to regulate working conditions for domestic staff in the Gulf was signed earlier this month.

Thursday, 28 March–Kuwait's stock market will be added to the FTSE Russell's Emerging Market Index in September. Joining the index will attract foreign investment and boost the stock market.



## Sultanate of Oman



Tuesday, 27 March–Syria's Foreign Minister, Walid Al-Mulleh, met with Omani officials in Muscat in his second visit to the Sultanate since the Syrian war began in 2011. In a separate meeting, he held talks with his Omani counterpart, Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, and discussed 'various aspects of cooperation'. Oman is the only GCC state that still recognises the Assad regime as Syria's legitimate ruling authority.

Wednesday, 28 March–Oman's Ministry of Tourism and the ITB Berlin, the world's leading travel trade show, have signed an agreement for the Sultanate to be the Official Partner Country of the 2020 exhibition. Oman hopes to draw attention to the Sultanate as a major travel destination, as it hopes to expand the tourism sector.



## State of Qatar



Monday, 26 March-Qatar's Emir, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, met with Russian President, Vladimir Putin, in Moscow on Monday, to discuss the Syrian Crisis, the war in Yemen and the situation in Palestine. The talks happened as Russia-backed Syrian government forces close in on the last rebel-held positions in Eastern Ghouta. The two countries agreed on bilateral cooperation in various fields and discussed Qatar's potential role in post-conflict reconstruction in Syria.

Tuesday, 27 March-A prominent fundraiser to the Trump campaign, Elliott Broidy, is suing Qatar over alleged fake news stories amounting to a smear campaign. He stated that Qatari operatives had hacked his emails and fabricated content because of his ties to the UAE and his criticism of Qatar.

Wednesday, 28 March-In In a report filed to the United Nations Security Council, Qatar accused Bahrain of violating its airspace. Qatar did not provide any details of the incident, which it says occurred on Sunday. The move follows accusations of the UAE and Bahrain of Qatari jets flying dangerously close to two civilian aircrafts from the UAE, in Bahraini airspace. Both Bahrain and the UAE have condemned Qatari forces for their continued viola-



## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Sunday, 25 March-Saudi Arabia intercepted seven missiles fired from Yemen by the Iran-backed Houthis rebels. The missiles were directed at four locations, with three targeting the capital Riyadh. The debris rained down on residential areas following the interceptions, leaving an Egyptian national dead and causing much material damage. This is the first fatality caused by a missile-attack from Yemen. The official Saudi press release condemned the aggressive actions as violations of UN Security Resolution 2216 and 2231, and a threat to regional and international security.

Sunday, 25 March-The Saudi-led coalition supported the Popular Resistance (loyal to Yemen's UN-legitimised government) in fierce fighting in the Northern al-Jawf region of Yemen, in which 70 Houthi militiamen were killed. The coalition provided air-support through Apache helicopters and fighter jets, and played a vital role in the battle, destroying Houthi military reinforcements and vehicles. Fighting also broke out between Houthis and the Yemeni Army in the Al-Bayda region in the south-west, which left 30 Houthi militiamen dead or injured.

Tuesday, 27 March-SoftBank Vision Fund announced that it will invest in the creation of the world's biggest solar power project in Saudi Arabia. The final investment will total around \$200bn (USD), with the initial phase of the project costing \$5bn (USD), with \$1bn (USD) coming from SoftBank's Vision Fund and the rest from project funding. The project will eventually produce 200 gigawatts (GW) by 2030, tying in with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 plan to move away from oil-dependency.

received \$930 million from Saudi Arabia and the UAE in contributions to the Yemen Humanitarian Fund. UN Secretary General António Guterres expressed the organisations' gratitude for the generous donations after meeting Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman at the UN Headquarters in New York.

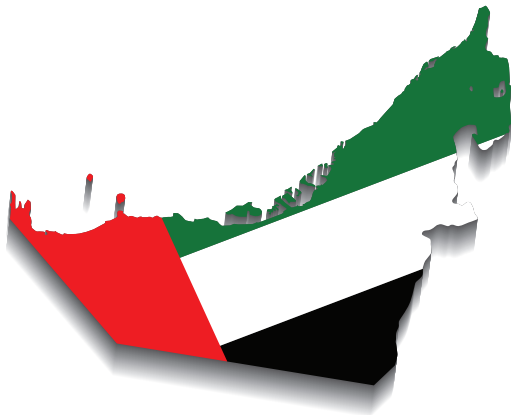
Wednesday, 28 March-Saudi Arabia will be joining the FTSE Russell's Emerging Market Index in January 2019, in a move that is expected to attract billions in foreign investment.

Wednesday, 28 March-The United Nations



## United Arab Emirates

Monday, 26 March–The Arab world’s first commercial nuclear reactor was opened in a ceremony attended by South Korean President Moon Jae-in. The Barakah Complex was built in cooperation with Korea Electric ‘Power Corp,’ in an effort to ease the Emirates dependency on fossil fuels and move towards cleaner sources of energy. President Moon also signed multiple Memorandums of Understanding with the UAE in an assortment of areas of cooperation.



Wednesday, 28 March–Ten UAE-trained soldiers in Yemen lost their lives in an attack by Islamist extremists in southwest Yemen. Five gunmen were also killed in the ensuing battle, which took place in the port city of Mukalla, in the Gulf of Aden. The UAE is deeply involved in training forces in the southwest area of Yemen, who are fighting alongside the Yemeni Army against the Iran-backed Houthi rebels.



*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.*

