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The Last Thing to Read this Week

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Kingdom of Bahrain



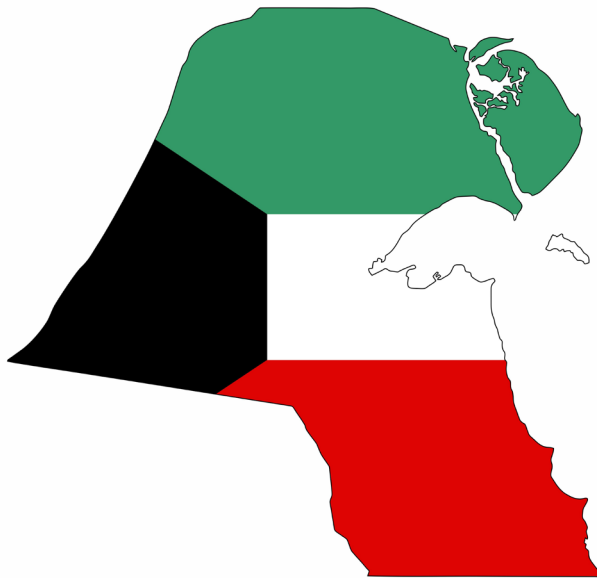
Monday, 30 April—Bahrain's Interior Minister, General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa, received the newly-appointed UAE Ambassador to Bahrain, Shaikh Sultan bin Hamdan bin Zayed Al-Nahyan to discuss cooperation to counter terrorism and to contain Iran's nefarious foreign policy. Bahrain and the UAE together with Saudi Arabia and Egypt are deeply integrated in security related issues.

Tuesday, 1 May—Bahrain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa, during a telephone call with his Moroccan counterpart, Nasser Bourita, affirmed Bahrain's support for Morocco's decision to sever its relations with Iran due to the Islamic Republic's military support to the rebels of the Polisario Front. Bahrain's Minister pointed out that Iran is providing support and funding for the enemies of Morocco and other Arab nations across the entire Middle East.

Wednesday, 2 May—The President of Bahrain's Olympic Committee, Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, received Kuwait's Ambassador to Bahrain, Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah, to discuss ways to enhance joint cooperation and produce a new framework to develop sports in small states.



State of Kuwait



Wednesday, 2 May–The CEO of the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), Farouk Bastaki, reported that the sovereign wealth fund was looking to increase investments in emerging markets such as China, India and Brazil. He explained that Kuwait is seeking to diversify its investment destinations and capitalise on the rapid economic growth of the developing economies. KIA is the fourth largest sovereign wealth fund in the world, managing some \$524 billion.

Thursday, 3 May–As the Philippine-Kuwait diplomatic crisis continues, three Philippine embassy employees have been issued arrest warrants on kidnapping charges, after footage of them “rescuing” Filipina maids emerged last week. The Philippines’ Foreign Minister, Alan Peter Cayetano, reiterated that there was no crime committed and that the Philippines coordinated the actions with the Kuwaiti government, with the exception of three cases in which the embassy saw necessity to act immediately, which he says was in accordance with international law. The Kuwaiti government sees the embassy actions as infringement on the country’s sovereignty and charged the three diplomats despite them being covered by diplomatic impunity.



Sultanate of Oman



Tuesday, 1 May—Oman's Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, met Germany's Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, Niels Annen in Muscat to explore potential German investments into Oman's refining sector.

Wednesday, 2 May—Oman's Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud Al-Busaidi, arrived in Washington D.C. to deepen US-Oman relations. The Secretary General attended a seminar organised by the Washington-based Middle East Institute in which he emphasised the importance of dialogue, and non-intervention in other countries' internal affairs as ideal means to address Middle East challenges.



State of Qatar



Monday, 30 April—Qatar First Bank's announced its losses widened to 28.6 million riyals (\$8 million USD) in the first quarter of 2018, compared to 9.5 million riyals in the entire last year. This announcement gives a clear indication on the severe financial impact endured by Qatari firms since the start of the Intra-GCC crisis.

Wednesday, 2 May—Qatar Airways' CEO, Mr. Akbar Al-Baker, held a press conference in Cardiff to mark the airline's inaugural flight to the Welsh airport. The conference was co-hosted by the First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, and the Chairman of Cardiff Airport, Roger Lewis.

Wednesday 2 May—Yemen government troops have arrested, Mohsen Al-Karbi, a Qatari intelligence officer on suspicions of him working with houthi militias backed by Iran in Yemen. According to Reuters Al-Karbi was arrested as he was trying to exit Yemen at a border point close to Al-Mahra province on his way to Oman. The Peninsula reported that Qatar confirmed the arrest of Al-Karbi and called through its 'Qatari committee for human right' for his immediate and safe release, stating that Al-Karbi is a Qatari citizen on a trip to visit his relatives.

Thursday, 3 May—The Vice-Chairman of Qatar's Chamber of Commerce, Mohamed bin Ahmed bin Towar Al-Kuwari, hosted a Malaysian trade delegation, representing 18 Malaysian companies, headed by the deputy CEO of Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation 'MA-TRADE', Dato Latif Wan Musa. The trade meetings come as Qatar is pushing to secure its economy amid the ongoing regional diplomatic crisis.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Sunday, 29 April—Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, received the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo to converse on the recent developments in the Middle East including joint US-KSA efforts in Yemen. Pompeo—like US President Trump—choose the Saudi capital Riyadh to commence his first Middle East visit.

Tuesday, 1 May—Precision air strikes by Saudi Arabia's Air Force allowed Yemen's national army to progress towards the strongholds of Houthi rebels in the country's North. Saudi Arabia has spearheaded efforts to support military forces loyal to the UN-legitimised government against Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

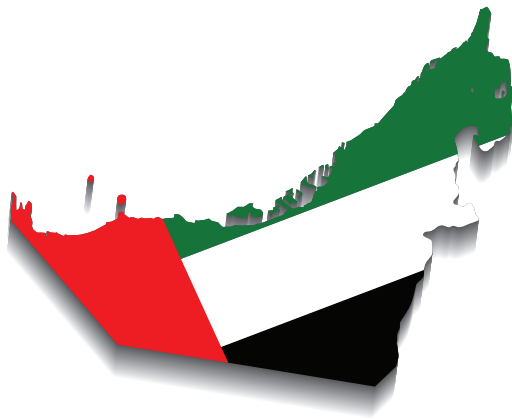
Wednesday, 2 May—Saudi Arabia's Finance Minister, Mohammed Al-Jadaan, declared that the Kingdom's first quarter fiscal results show significant progress in growing non-oil revenues and a raise in spending efficiency. Positive developments in such economic indicators is key to achieve the macro-economic objectives related to the Vision 2030 plan.

Thursday, 3 May—Saudi Arabia's armed forces participated in the EFES 2018 exercises, taking place in the Turkish city of Izmir, with land, naval and marine special units and F-15 fighter jets. Saudi Arabia's commander in the exercise, Colonel Abdullah bin Mohammed Al-Duraibi, said the Saudi armed forces will be participating in the exercise to enhance their maritime search and rescue operations capabilities in combat environments.





United Arab Emirates



Wednesday, 2 May–The UAE began talks with Apple and Microsoft to lift its year-long ban on Skype and Facetime. The ban is in place because of the country's telecoms laws, in which users have to pay to make calls rather than being able to use the free, internet-based calls. The talks come as Microsoft is set to open two data centres in Abu Dhabi and Dubai next year, which will be the company's first centres in the Middle East. Lifting the bans will significantly benefit small and medium-sized enterprises.

Wednesday, 2 May–The UAE's Federal National Council (FNC) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held their second meeting of the 'High Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism' in Abu Dhabi. The Speaker of the FNC, and president of the group, Dr. Amal Al-Qubaisi, stressed the importance of preventative measures and countering the root-causes of extremism. The Group would cooperate with the UN and governments around the globe to 'rewrite laws and legislation' in order to close gaps in counter-extremism practices and achieve 'concerted and sustained international cooperation' in the fight against terrorism.



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.

