



TOP UAE ADVISER IN IRAN ... SAUDI CROWN PRINCE TOURS GULF

Gulf diplomacy kicks into high gear



In this photo released by the official website of the office of the Iranian Presidency, President Ebrahim Raisi, (right), meets with United Arab Emirates' top national security adviser Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, (left), in Tehran, Iran, Dec. 6, 2021. (AP)

US, Abu Dhabi hold talks

RIYADH, Dec 6, (Agencies): The Gulf tour by the Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud will feature examination of a host of files and cement inter-GCC solidarity, according to prominent personalities.

Fadl Al-Bouainain, member of the Saudi Shura Council, said in a state-

ment to KUNA that the Saudi leadership is keen on strengthening joint Gulf action and attaining optimum integration among the GCC states for sake of regional security and stability. Moreover, Riyadh aspires to bolster economic prosperity in the Council's member states.

The Crown Prince Gulf tour is designed to bolster the joint GCC action, attain highest form of merger in various spheres namely in the security and economic sectors. Additionally, his mission will affirm significance of brotherly-level meetings for boosting the inter-GCC relations, tackling challenges and unifying views toward various crucial files, he said.



In this photo released by Saudi Royal Palace, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, waves to French President Emmanuel Macron, upon his arrival in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Dec. 4. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince was heading Dec. 6, 2021, to Oman, the first stop of a tour of Gulf Arab states. (AP)

Al-Bouainain elaborated, saying the Kingdom Vision 2030, launched by Crown Prince Mohammad, not only focuses on the local economy but also calls for creating economic links with the neighboring states.

The security file, he has added, is a main basis upon which all development and economic objectives are placed, also noting that the GCC countries have facing emerging dangers such as sabotage schemes.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Nahas, member of the Saudi Shura Council, said the tour is complementary to previous coordination among the GCC countries regarding key files that collectively affect the council member countries.

Dr. Al-Nahas indicated that among the topics on the tables of talks with the officials due to meet with the Crown Prince would be combating terrorism and extremism.

Moreover, he said, the tour will address "a certain mechanism to beef up the confrontation against the Iranian regime that continues to support terrorist organizations and groups, meddle in internal affairs of the GCC and Arab States, thus the need arises in this context to unify the efforts of the GCC states."

Furthermore, the Crown Prince tour emits a message to the global and regional communities; that the GCC states share concerns and policies at the political and security levels.

The Saudi Crown Prince was heading Monday to Oman, the first stop of a tour of Gulf Arab states that will see him meet neighboring rulers and allies as the kingdom closely watches negotiations in Europe to revive Iran's nuclear deal with world powers.

Coincides

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit coincides with a flurry of other diplomatic meetings in the region, including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to ally Qatar and a visit by a high-ranking security official from the United Arab Emirates to Iran. Confirmed by Saudi and Omani media, the tour also comes ahead of an upcoming annual six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council meeting of rulers this month.

Erdogan, whose country rushed to support Qatar during a diplomatic standoff that ended earlier this year with other Arab states, said Turkey welcomes reconciliation efforts in the Gulf region. Turkey has been trying to repair frayed relations with some Arab states, including with a visit by Erdogan to the UAE in February.

Meanwhile, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's tour will take him this week to the UAE, where a rivalry has heated up for business amid diverging foreign policies between the traditional allies, as well as Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait, according to diplomats who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss tour details.

The diplomats said the tour aims to eliminate geopolitical differences and enhance cooperation and coordination among the six Gulf Arab countries, particularly in dealing effectively with Iran's nuclear program and regional ambitions.

The national security adviser of the United Arab Emirates met Monday with Iran's hard-line president in Tehran, a major visit for the Gulf Arab federation that has long viewed the Islamic Republic as its main regional threat.

The visit by Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan comes as the Emirates and Saudi Arabia are both negotiating with Iran amid efforts in Vienna to save Tehran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers.

The UAE, home to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, reached a diplomatic recognition deal last year with Israel, increasing tensions with Tehran. The UAE has long served as a lifeline to the outside world for Iran amid international sanctions.

Sheikh Tahnoun, wearing a navy-blue thobe, black suit jacket and his signature aviator sunglasses, met first with Ali Shamkhani, the head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council. The two men smiled and shook hands in front of journalists before their meeting, a large map of Iran and the Arabian Gulf looming behind them, with just a sliver of the Emirates visible on it.

Also:

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke Sunday with the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan during which they discussed "important regional matters."

State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said in a statement that Blinken and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, a phone call, "reaffirmed their countries' strong partnership and discussed ways to broaden and deepen their wide-ranging cooperation."

Day by Day

MOST, if not all zakat money, the 'khums', and what is collected in the name of charity go to murderous militias and/or fill the pockets of rogues and smugglers.

Most people of this rich region who have kind hearts look to heaven for reward for their good deeds.

Unfortunately they are victims of deception because the money they donated for the needy and the poor — if not all money — feed the appetite of terrorist organizations and criminal gangs.

... Yet, tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Opinion

What it takes to normalize Lebanon-GCC relations

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

'Joint action' key on terror

CAIRO, Dec 6, (KUNA): Justice ministers from across the Arab region agreed on Monday that it was imperative to bolster cooperation across the board in order to stamp out terrorism, saying the fight against the scourge has to be a "collective" endeavor.

Citing a pan-Arab agreement against terrorism, the ministers, during talks in the Egyptian capital, said member states should introduce common measures to bring relevant legislations to fruition, calling for more coordination on the matter.

Withdrawing support for all "individuals or entities complicit in terrorist acts" is a necessity, the ministers underlined, in addition to more cooperation on the legal front through concerted and unified legislations, they added.

These measures will only bear fruit if rigid policies, running the gamut from tougher hate speech laws to anti-cybercrime efforts, in addition to initiatives espousing religious tolerance, are introduced on a national level, the ministers agreed.

Reaching out to international partners to boost cooperation on a global level is another effective measure given that the fight against terrorism is a collective effort, the ministers underlined.

The ministers stressed the need to bolster cooperation to keep crime and terrorism at bay, saying such a measure was necessary in light of mounting challenges.

The Secretary General of the League of Arab States (LAS) Ahmad Abul Gheit stressed the importance of regional and international judicial mechanisms for cooperation against serious threats facing the Arab world.

This came in Aboul Gheit's speech, Monday, before the opening session of the 37th assembly of the Arab Justice Ministers Council, under the chairmanship of Algeria, at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo.

In this context, Aboul Gheit called for "taking advantage of all opportunities and means provided by these mechanisms to promote an effective and comprehensive strategy to face terrorism on both Arab and National fronts."

He pointed out the "complexity" of terrorism and how it is linked to money laundering, smuggling, organized crime and irregular migration, and how it is impossible to face it unless they follow a comprehensive approach and strategy, that's not limited to a security aspect but also legal, technological and financial aspects.

He considered that success in facing terrorism is imperiled to the incorporation of all these aspects through a comprehensive strategy, while stressing on the great potentials offered by the Arab Agreements on Combating Terrorism, Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism, and Combating Information Technology Crimes.

Aboul Gheit clarified that these agreements "together constitute an integrated system not only to besiege terrorism, but also to eradicate its roots and dry its sources," noting that terrorism feeds on another phenomenon and that is hate speech.



Dr. Manjul Shukla transfers Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine into a syringe, Dec. 2, 2021, at a mobile vaccination clinic in Worcester, Mass. As the U.S. recorded its first confirmed case of the omicron variant, doctors across the country are experiencing a more imminent crisis with a delta variant that is sending record numbers of people to the hospital in New England and the Midwest. (AP)

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: Envoy of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah took part in opening the F1 Grand Prix competition held in Jeddah on Sunday, in the presence of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister.

Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah is the head of His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan. (KUNA)

RIYADH: The Saudi-led coalition, on Monday, intercepted two drones that were flying across the Yemeni skies in the direction of Saudi Arabia.

Official Saudi Press Agency (SPA), citing the coalition, said "In response to the threat and barbaric behavior, the threat was dealt with firmly".

It stressed that the coalition's operations were in accordance with international humanitarian law and rules. (KUNA)

BEIRUT: A U.S. airstrike targeting an al-Qaida leader in northern Syria wounded a family of six, including a 10-year-old child who suffered serious head injuries, The Associated Press has learned.

Ahmad Qassim had picked up his family from his in-laws in northwestern Syria where they had spent four days and was driving back home Friday morning when an explosion occurred, riddling their vehicle with shrapnel.

Qassim, a 52-year-old farmer, his wife, two sons and two daughters suffered various wounds in the blast apparently caused by a missile fired from a U.S. drone. The drone was targeting a man on a motorcycle that Qassim was trying to overtake, according to Qassim and first responders. The blast occurred near the northwestern village of Mastoumeh as the family drove back home to the northern town of Afrin.

Syria's 10-year conflict has killed hundreds of thousands and left large parts of the country destroyed. (AP)

BANGKOK: State television in Myanmar announced Monday night that country's military leader reduced Aung San Suu Kyi's sentence by two years.

Suu Kyi, who was ousted in a de facto coup this year, was sentenced to four years in prison earlier in the day after being convicted on charges widely dismissed as politically motivated.

But hours later, her sentence was cut in half, as was the sentence of former President Win Myint, convicted alongside her. The TV report said the sentence reductions were part of an amnesty.

According to the report on MRTV, the sentences would be applied "at their current detention places," apparently meaning they would not be sent to prison. It's not clear where Suu Kyi has been held but she has not described it as a prison.

Meanwhile, Aung San Suu Kyi, the civilian leader of Myanmar who was ousted in a de facto coup this year, was convicted of incitement and another charge Monday and sentenced to four years in prison - in a trial widely criticized as a further effort by the country's military rulers to reverse the democratic gains of recent years. (AP)

Omicron spreads

Early data shows more danger in delta variant

WASHINGTON, Dec 6, (Agencies): U.S. health officials said that while the omicron variant of the coronavirus is rapidly spreading throughout the country, early indications suggest it may be less dangerous than delta, which continues to drive a surge of hospitalizations.

President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser, Dr. Anthony Fauci, told CNN's "State of the Union" that scientists need more information before drawing conclusions about omicron's severity.

Reports from South Africa, where it emerged and is becoming the dominant strain, suggest that hospitalization rates have not increased alarmingly.

"Thus far, it does not look like there's a great degree of severity to it," Fauci said. "But we have really got to be careful before we make any determinations that it is less severe or it really doesn't cause any severe illness, comparable to delta."

Fauci said the Biden administration is considering lifting travel restrictions against noncitizens entering the United States from several African countries. They were imposed as the omicron variant exploded in the region, but U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has blasted such measures as "travel apartheid."

"Hopefully we'll be able to lift that ban in a quite reasonable period of time," Fauci said. "We all feel very badly about the hardship that has been put on not only on South Africa but the other African countries."

Omicron had been detected in about a third of U.S. states by Sunday, including in the Northeast, the South, the Great Plains and the West Coast. Wisconsin, Missouri and Louisiana were among the latest states to confirm cases.

But delta remains the dominant variant, making up more than 99% of cases and driving a surge of hospitalizations in the north. National Guard teams have been sent to help overwhelmed hospitals in western New York, and Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker issued an emergency order requiring any hospitals facing limited patient capacity to reduce scheduled procedures that are not urgent.

U.S. officials continued urging people to get vaccinated and to receive booster shots, as well as take precautions such as wearing masks when among strangers indoors, saying anything that helps protect against delta will also help protect against other variants.

Even if omicron proves less dangerous than delta, it remains problematic, World Health Organization epidemiologist Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove told CBS' "Face The Nation."

"Even if we have a large number of

cases that are mild, some of those individuals will need hospitalizations," she said. "They will need to go into ICU and some people will die. ... We don't want to see that happen on top of an already difficult situation with delta circulating globally."

Two years into the outbreak, COVID-19 has killed over 780,000 Americans, and deaths are running at about 860 per day.

More than 6,600 new hospital admissions are being reported daily, according to tracking data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

COVID-19 cases and deaths in the U.S. have dropped by about half since the delta peak in August and September, but at more than 86,000 new infections per day, the numbers are still high, especially heading into the holidays, when people travel and gather with family.

Kuwait's Civil Service Commission has instructed all government institutions to adhere to all government health protocols while on duty, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The CSC in a circular to all government agencies said this is required to confront and contain the new mutant of the Corona virus 'Omicron'.

The CSC said the circular was issued after discussions with the Corona Committee on Dec 2, 2021, which concluded that it is mandatory to observe health requirements related to combating the Corona virus, given the latest developments on this front.

Following the improvement in the epidemiological situation in Kuwait and the world many breathed a sigh of relief, took off their face masks and almost forgot about hand sterilizing and social distancing, only to be haunted by the new Covid-19 mutant Omicron, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In the face of this, the daily said, during a visit to pharmacies and supermarkets many people were seen buying protective gear once again and the sales are said to have almost doubled especially for face masks and hand sanitizers although the government has not yet sounded an alarm over the outbreak of Omicron elsewhere in the world, but citizens and residents are leaving nothing for chance.

The good news is, the daily said, the supply of face masks, sterilizers, disinfection materials and gloves are plentiful and available without any noticeable increase in retail prices.

Kuwait's Embassy in Germany urged, Monday, Kuwaiti citizens on German lands to follow new coronavirus countermeasures the German government put into effect.

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