



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

- Houthis strike UAE with drones and missiles
- Israel signs US\$ 3.4 billion submarine deal with Germany
- Iranian foreign minister visits Oman and Qatar
- GCC countries hold joint tactical exercise 'Arab Gulf Security 3'
- GCC foreign ministers visit China
- Qatar signs financial agreement to ensure natural gas supply to Gaza
- Gantz meets Jordanian King Abdullah II in Amman
- Kuwaiti Foreign Minister visits Lebanon
- India and Qatar hold first JWG meeting on healthcare cooperation

Houthis strike UAE with drones and missiles

On January 17, the Houthi rebels of Yemen attacked an oil storage facility of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) in Abu Dhabi and another under construction facility near the Abu Dhabi International Airport with drones and missiles. The Houthi attacks on the UAE has come after the group faced huge setbacks in the strategically important Marib and Shabwa regions of Yemen where the UAE backed 'Giants Brigade' militia have defeated the Houthis in the battlefield. While the Houthis have been targeting Saudi Arabia with drones and missiles since the beginning of the war in Yemen, the attack on Abu Dhabi further escalates the situation and has started a new phase in the conflict.

Israel signs US\$ 3.4 billion submarine deal with Germany

Israel has signed a US\$ 3.4 billion deal with Germany to buy the Dakar class diesel-electric submarines. The submarines will be produced by Thyssen Krupp and delivered to Israel in nine years. Procurement of these submarines will significantly improve the capabilities of the Israeli Navy and will provide it technological superiority in the region. Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz has stated that the procurement "will upgrade the capabilities of the Israeli Navy, and will contribute to Israel's security superiority in the region."

Iranian foreign minister visits Oman and Qatar

In an attempt to reach out to the Gulf Arab neighbours, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian visited Oman and Qatar. In Muscat, he met with his Omani counterpart Sayyid Badr Albusaidi and discussed ways to boost Iran-Oman

bilateral relations and the ongoing nuclear talks in Vienna. Later, on January 18, a trade delegation from Iran visited the Omani industrial city, Al Rusayl, to examine further business prospects in Oman. An agreement was signed between Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan aimed at reviving the transit line passing through them. In Doha, Abdollahian discussed bilateral, regional and international issues with Qatar's Sheikh Tamim. They also deliberated on the ongoing Iranian nuclear issue.

GCC countries hold joint tactical exercise 'Arab Gulf Security 3'

A joint tactical exercise 'Arab Gulf Security 3' was held in the Eastern Region of Saudi Arabia. Security forces from all the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries participated in the exercise. The aim of the exercise was to further 'strengthen the bonds of cooperation between the GCC countries in the security field and boost the level of coordination and readiness of the security forces to address all the threats and dangers facing the Arab Gulf region.' As all these countries face common security challenges, the exercise this year included the border guards and coast guards as well. The exercise included the activities and events keeping in view all the possible security threats that any of the GCC States may be exposed to.

GCC foreign ministers visit China

The Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain along with the Secretary-General of the GCC, Nayef bin Falah Al Hajrah, visited China and met with Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The meeting focused on enhancing the ties in the multi-dimensional areas between the Gulf Countries and China. Both sides agreed to accelerate the process of formulating and signing an action plan for a strategic dialogue in the next three years, and also to

complete negotiations on a free trade agreement between China and the GCC at an early date. While Wang appreciated GCC's support for China's positions on issues concerning China's core interests; Hajraf stated that his visit would strengthen the China-Gulf relationship in the light of the agreements signed between them in 2004 and 2010 on economic, investment and technical cooperation.

Qatar signs financial agreement to ensure natural gas supply to Gaza

Qatar has signed an agreement with the Gaza Electricity Generation Company and the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company for supplying gas and generating electricity. Earlier, in December 2021, Qatar had signed an MoU with the Energy and Natural Resources Authority and the Gaza Electricity Generation Company for supplying and purchasing gas necessary to operate the power plant in Gaza. Under the MoU, Qatar will finance the construction of the gas pipeline from the supplier company to the borders of Gaza for US\$ 60 million, while the Gaza Electricity Generation Company and the Energy Authority will undertake the work of converting the plant to work with gas production. As the Gaza Strip has been suffering severe chronic electricity deficit, the agreement with Qatar will help Gaza to overcome its energy crisis.

Gantz meets Jordanian King Abdullah II in Amman

Israeli Defence Minister, Benny Gantz, met with the Jordanian King Abdullah II in Amman to discuss the security and political issues. During the meeting, Abdullah highlighted the importance of maintaining peace in the Palestinian territories and taking all measures to achieve just and comprehensive peace based on the two-state solution. On the other hand, Gantz appreciated the expansion of relations

between the two countries under the new Israeli government. The meeting underlines the improving relations between the two countries following a period of tense relations under former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister visits Lebanon

Kuwait's Foreign Minister, Sheikh Ahmed Nasser Al Mohammed Al Sabah, visited Lebanon on 22 January. It was reported that the Kuwaiti official handed over a list of demands on behalf of the Gulf States to the Lebanese authorities in order to ease the tension between them. The visit is important as it is the first visit by a senior Gulf official to Lebanon since the diplomatic crisis erupted between Lebanon and the Gulf States in October 2021. Al Sabah said that the visit is part of various ongoing efforts to "restore trust with Lebanon."

India and Qatar hold first JWG meeting on healthcare cooperation

India and Qatar held the first meeting of the Joint Working Group on healthcare cooperation in a virtual format. Both sides exchanged views on digital health, the Covid-19 pandemic and other related issues. The two sides noted the need for regular interaction between the respective drug regulatory authorities and experience sharing in the regulation of medical devices. India invited medical professionals from Qatar to visit Indian healthcare facilities as part of exchange programmes. India also invited Qatar to avail of the opportunities provided by the robust and professional health sector in India for Medical Value Travel. Qatar has expressed interest in India's traditional medicine systems such as Ayurveda and Homeopathy and both sides have agreed to enhance cooperation in this regard.