



MANAMA: British Prime Minister Theresa May (center) poses with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders for a group picture yesterday, during a GCC summit in the Bahraini capital Manama. — AFP

GCC KEEN ON STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH UK: AMIR GCC - UK MEETING TACKLES NEED TO QUELL REGIONAL UNREST

MANAMA: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said yesterday that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region was keen on bolstering strategic ties and relations with the UK. This statement came during the final session of the 37th GCC Summit held in the Bahraini capital Manama. The event was attended by British Prime Minister Theresa May and GCC leaders.

Delivering a speech to the event, His Highness the Amir thanked the Bahraini monarch King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa and the people of Bahrain for hosting the 37th GCC Summit, saying that this was reflective of the Kingdom's efforts in boosting relations among nations within the regional and international arenas.

The summit was within the efforts to enhance strategic, economic, political, and security cooperation between the UK and the GCC, affirmed His Highness the Amir, adding that history proved that relations between the two sides were built on trust and a strong desire to bring security and stability to the region and the world. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah mentioned that the two sides were coordinating efforts on all levels.

On UK-Kuwaiti relations, His Highness Sheikh Sabah said that his country was proud to have historical ties with Great Britain, affirming that both nations were eager to bolster ties on all levels. The Kuwaiti leader fondly remembered the strong UK stance with his country during the Iraqi invasion in 1990, saying that Britain played a pivotal role in liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi aggressors in 1991. His Highness the Amir concluded his speech by welcoming the British Prime Minister Theresa May to the region, re-affirming that the GCC will seek all venues to boost ties with the UK.

Yemen

A meeting between GCC leaders and the British Prime Minister May has underscored the

urgent need to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Yemen. A statement issued after the meeting, which occurred on the sidelines of the GCC Summit that concluded yesterday, called for increased support of the United Nations' (UN) Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, as he works to establish a roadmap for peace in the war-torn nation.

Moreover, the statement urged Yemen's warring parties to remain committed to the peace process, adding that maximal efforts should be expended to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers in the country.

The statement also ramped up pressure on the international community to exert more efforts to put an end to a conflict that has remained unabated, underscoring the need to abide by the UN resolution 2216, which demands an end to the violence in Yemen.

Addressing the conflict in Syria, the statement underscored the need to ensure a sustained political solution to the conflict, while forming a government that will represent the Syrian people. It also added that the solution should guarantee an immediate end to violence in the country.

On deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Syria, the statement expressed "concern," while condemning any attempts to stall the advent of humanitarian aid into besieged areas. Similarly, on the situation in Iraq, the statement underscored the need of increased support of the Iraqi government in the fight to defeat the So-called Islamic State (IS), which can only be possible with concerted international efforts.

On Libya, the statement urged all sides in the conflict to endorse a plan where authority in the North African nation will be evenly shared, in line with UN resolutions and decisions. Meanwhile, on Lebanon, the statement pressed national institutions to fight all forms of terrorism that threaten the country's peace and security.

Dangerous threats

GCC leaders and the British premier pledged to maintain the mutual obligation to "face dangerous threats caused" by the notorious groups Al-Qaeda and so-called Islamic States as well as their offshoot factions.

The two sides decided to form a joint task team charged with combating terrorism and safeguarding states' border security. They also vowed to work together for tracking down, arresting and prosecuting terrorists, in line with national and international laws. They have decided to boost the action against terrorism funding, enhance intelligence cooperation and swap information on terrorists' whereabouts.

Moreover, the UK and the GCC agreed to bolster joint efforts for cooperation in the defense, cyber and marine security, in addition to organizing mutual training courses and drills. They have also agreed on cooperation for aborting cyber, attacks, hacking and misuse, enhancing military coordination, strengthening defenses of the regional countries, including the marine borders.

Business cooperation

GCC leaders and the British premier also decided to enhance mutual cooperation at the commercial and business levels, according to the official statement released after the meeting. The statement said volume of trade exchanges between the UK and the GCC countries exceeded 30 billion sterling pounds last year. It confirmed that the UK, once it has accomplished the 'Brexit', it would act as a priority to cement the commercial and economic relations with the GCC states.

The two sides agreed on holding the British-Gulf conference on partnership between the private and public sectors in the first quarter of 2017, in London, "which will focus on the schemes for economic diversification in the GCC countries." — KUNA

AMIR BACK HOME AFTER GCC SUMMIT

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, along with his official entourage, returned home yesterday from the Kingdom of Bahrain where he headed the State of Kuwait delegation at the GCC 37th summit.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was received at Kuwait International Airport by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, senior sheikhs, Deputy Chief of the National Guards Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, senior State officials, ranking chiefs of the Army, the Police, the National Guards and the fire department.

Delegation

His Highness the Amir was accompanied at the summit by First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Khaled Al-Saleh, Director of His Highness the Amir Bureau Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad, the Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abulhassan, Head of the Amiri Protocol Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah, Head of the Media and Cultural Affairs at the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Fawaz Saud Nasser Saud Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Assistant for the Minister's Bureau Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, senior officials of the Amiri Diwan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Upon his departure from Bahrain, His Highness the Amir was seen off at the airport by Sheikh Ali Bin Khalifa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the Bahraini Deputy Prime

Minister, Sheikh Azam Mubarak Al-Sabah, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and the State of Kuwait Ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain, and embassy staff.

Gratitude

Separately, His Highness the Amir has cabled Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa expressing deep gratitude on the warm hospitality accorded to him and the State of Kuwait delegation at the 37th GCC Summit, hosted by the Bahraini capital.

His Highness the Amir, in the cable to the Bahraini Monarch, expressed deep satisfaction at the brotherly and blessed meeting that grouped him with the top leaders of the other GCC member states, lauding King Hamad's sagacious and effective management of the 37th session, noting its success and "constructive resolutions that will boost our joint Gulf action."

He also lauded the summit that comprised the GCC leaders with the British Prime Minister Theresa May, which constituted an opportunity to hold discussions and exchange views on various issues of common concern, in shadow of rapid developments on the regional arena. His Highness the Amir expressed good wishes to King Hamad, his country and people.

Understanding

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir has cabled British Prime Minister Theresa May expressing deep satisfaction at the atmosphere of understanding that prevailed at the GCC-UK summit. The GCC-UK summit was an opportunity to discuss various issues of mutual concern between the GCC countries and the United Kingdom, he said, affirming that it would contribute to bolstering the distinctive ties and strategic relationship between them.

His Highness the Amir, moreover, hailed the GCC-UK meeting for touching on the deep-rooted historic ties between the two friendly countries and addressing mutual cooperation in various spheres. He expressed good wishes to Premier May and her nation and hoped the bilateral ties would be further enhanced. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is welcomed by His Highness Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah upon his arrival back to Kuwait. — KUNA

GCC UNDERSCORES CLOSER COOPERATION, INTEGRATION

FINAL COMMUNIQUE STRESSES BOOSTING ECONOMIC, MILITARY COORDINATION

MANAMA: The GCC leaders have stressed the significance of continuously propping up and beefing cooperation and integration among the GCC member states, leading up to the implementation of resolutions targeting full equal treatment among Gulf citizens in view of joint Gulf market fields.

In a final communique issued after their 37th summit in Manama, the GCC leaders said it is imperative to share credit information as per a short-term plan and a comprehensive framework for a Gulf credit facilitation exchange mechanism.

They also agreed to build a GCC payment system, and entrust Gulf central banks to own, run and finance the plan by means of establishing an independent company. They approved an anti-fraud bill as a binding law, according to the concluding statement.

Railway project

They further emphasized that the GCC member states have to commit to implementing a Gulf railway project, sending it to the economic and development committee for setting out a necessary mechanism in this regard.

It is also necessary to further promote and develop cooperation and coordination among the GCC member states in the military field, said the communique, while appreciating progress in the domain of mutual defensive cooperation in the face of various challenges and threats.

On terrorism, they reiterated their unshakable position of rejection and condemnation of all forms and manifestations of terrorism, but emphasized that more efforts should be exerted to stop terror-financing sources and to fight attempts to distort the image of Islam.

In this regard, they sharply denounced recent explosions and bombings in Saudi Arabia as heinous crimes that have nothing to do with the tolerant religion of Islam or values and principles of humanity and ethics. They reaffirmed their support to all regional and international efforts to fight the so-called Islamic State (IS) and all other terrorist networks and organizations in Syria, Iraq and other regions.

JASTA condemned

On the recent US Justice Against Sponsors of Terror Act (JASTA), the conferees condemned the law as a breach of the fixed principles of international law, mainly the principle of equality among the states.



MANAMA: A handout picture provided by the Saudi Royal Palace yesterday shows Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders attending a GCC summit in the Bahraini capital Manama. — AFP

They lashed out at the US act as a violation of the basics and principles of the relationship among the states and principle of sovereign immunity, calling on Washington to rethink about this legislation due to its negative reflections on the relationship among the states.

However, they congratulated US president-elect Donald Trump, hoping that historic and strategic relations between the GCC member states and the US would be further promoted and cemented during Trump's term of office. They also vowed to work with him to ensure security, peace and stability in the region and the entire world.

They congratulated Antonio Guterres on having been elected new secretary-general of the United Nations (UN), reiterating support to UN efforts to maintain world security and stability, according to the communique.

Moreover, the GCC leaders voiced much satisfaction with fervent efforts exerted to push forward strategic partnerships of the GCC countries with Jordan and Morocco, reflecting fraternal close relations.

The leaders also blessed the recent resumption of free trade negotiations between the GCC and the People's Republic of China (PRC). On meetings held in Manama between Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders and British Prime Minister Theresa May, the conferees highly commended the outcomes of GCC-UK talks which focused on the latest regional and inter-

national developments.

They hailed the announced strategic partnership between the GCC and UK, which reflected historical distinguished relations between both sides and set out frameworks of bilateral cooperation with a view to reaching closer ties in all fields.

Palestine

On Palestine, the GCC leaders reiterated that total, just and everlasting peace could be reached in the Middle East region only when Israel withdraws from all Arab territories it occupied in 1967. They reaffirmed support to an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital in line with the Arab peace initiative and relevant international legitimacy resolutions, the concluding statement added.

They also voiced support to the French initiative, together with other Arab and international efforts, to find a solution to the Palestinian state and to hold an early Middle East peace conference. The GCC leaders further called on the international community to put more pressure on Israel to end its occupation of all Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan Heights, and appreciated a recent UNESCO resolution recognizing Al-Aqsa Mosque as a purely Islamic site.

Iran

On the Iranian-occupied three islands of the UAE, they reiterated their rejection of the occu-

ation of the three islands, and supported anew the UAE's sovereignty over the islands as an integral part of this GCC member state.

In this regard, they called on Iran to positively respond to UAE efforts to resolve the issue through direct negotiations or the International Court of Justice (ICJ), while denouncing Iran's interference in the internal affairs of the GCC member states and the whole region. They also urged Tehran to revise its policies in the region by means of honoring relevant international conventions and treaties, and stop harboring terrorist groups, including Hezbollah, on its soil.

They emphasized that Iran should abide by its nuclear with the G5+1 in July 2015, urging the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to apply an effective mechanism to verify the agreement is put in place.

Syria

Regarding Syria, the statement reiterated the GCC's unwavering support to maintaining Syria's unity, stability and territorial integrity, while condemning nonstop airstrikes by the aircraft of the Syrian regime and their allies on the Syrian city of Aleppo.

The GCC leaders renewed backing to all efforts exerted by UN Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis, and vowed to continue work to ease out the sufferings of the Syrian people.

On Yemen, the conferees reaffirmed full sup-

port to Yemen's unity, sovereignty and independence and rejected any attempt to interfere in its domestic affairs, according to the final communique. They underscored the significance of finding a political solution to the Yemeni crisis in line with the Gulf Initiative and its Executive Mechanism, Output of the Comprehensive National Dialogue, Riyadh Conference and UNSC Resolution 2016.

In this context, they voiced much appreciation to Kuwait for hosting UN-facilitated peace negotiations among Yemeni political rivals, which began on April 21st and wound up on August 7th, 2016. But, they condemned the formation of a new government by Yemen's Houthis and former president Ali Abdullah Saleh as a serious blow to ongoing efforts to find a political solution to the Yemeni problem.

Iraq

On Iraq, they renewed keenness on maintaining this Arab country's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, while vehemently rejecting interference in its internal affairs. They voiced total support to the Iraqi government's efforts to liberate Mosul from the grip of the so-called Islamic State (IS), emphasizing that IS-controlled Iraqi areas should be retaken only by Iraqi army and police forces.

However, they denounced crimes committed against civilians in the liberated areas on a sectarian basis, calling on the Iraqi government to live up to its responsibility by protecting civilians and ensuring a safe return of internally displaced persons. Regarding Libya, the GCC leaders, according to the concluding statement issued after their summit in Manama, reiterated backing to UN efforts to ensure this Arab's security and stability.

Finally, they expressed much thanks and appreciation to Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa and Bahraini government for warm welcome and hospitality during the 37th session of the GCC Summit. They also welcomed His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's invitation for hosting the next 38th session in Kuwait in 2017. His Highness the Amir had stated earlier yesterday that the resolutions of the GCC Summit will help to consolidate the bloc's joint action and aid in realizing the people's expectations for further security and stability. This statement came during His Highness the Amir speech to the closing session of the GCC summit. — KUNA