



KUWAIT: A banner bearing pictures of Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud is seen above an entrance to the historic Mubarakiya Market in Kuwait City yesterday, ahead of the Saudi King's visit to Kuwait. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Workers put up a banner bearing pictures of Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud at the historic Mubarakiya Market in Kuwait City yesterday.

KING SALMAN'S VISIT TO KUWAIT COMES AMID VOLATILE REGIONAL CONDITIONS

OFFICIALS, ACADEMICS EMPHASIZE VISIT'S IMPORTANCE

KUWAIT/RIYADH: Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud is set to arrive in Kuwait today on an official visit where he will hold talks with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The upcoming visit will add another milestone to the strong and historic relations linking the two nations. In his first official state visit to Kuwait since ascending the throne on January 23, 2015,

King Salman will focus on reinforcing the strong relations with the State of Kuwait.

King Salman and His Highness the Amir are expected during their meeting to look into topics of mutual concern and will also touch on issues pertaining to bilateral relations. Regional and international happenings will also be on the radar of the top GCC leaders.

King Salman visited Kuwait on numerous

occasions. In December of 2013, King Salman was in Kuwait as representative of the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud at the 34th GCC summit. In March of 2014, the Saudi King took part in the 25th Arab summit which was also held in Kuwait. He headed the Saudi delegation to the second donors' conference for Syria held mid-January of 2015.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad also made numerous visits to Saudi Arabia before and since becoming the head of the State of Kuwait. The history of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had been interconnected with leaders exchanging visits since the early 1900s.

In 1910, founder of Saudi Arabia King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud visited Kuwait in the era of the Amir Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. After the death of King Abdulaziz Al Saud, his son Saud - who was born in Kuwait in 1902 - became King of Saudi Arabia.

King Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud is remembered fondly by the people of Kuwait with him being one of the first Arab leaders to visit the country after the independence in 1961. Perhaps the most important gesture of solidarity between the two nations came during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Back then, the late Saudi King Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al Saud stood with Kuwait against the Iraqi aggressors. Saudi troops were among the international coalition which liberated Kuwait in 1991.

Cementing ties

First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said the upcoming visit by King Salman will add to the already firm ground of the bilateral ties. "The visit will be a historic juncture in the relationships between the two countries in all fields which stood the test of time and continue to serve the joint interests, and fend off the common threats and challenges," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said in statements yesterday.

"His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is keen on strengthening the relations, wither on the state-to-state or the people-to-people levels, with all GCC member countries, particularly the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Kuwaiti-Saudi relations continue to grow thanks to the care and keenness of the leaders of both countries," he pointed out.

"King Salman will be more than welcome to be here as guest of His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people who remember with gratitude the Kingdom's historic stances towards, and strong support to, Kuwait," he went on.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled recalled the "the heroic and decisive" help offered by Saudi Arabia to Kuwait in the struggle against the Iraqi invasion in 1990-1991 until the liberation

of Kuwait and restoration of legitimacy.

He reaffirmed Kuwait's desire to continue working with the Kingdom to meet the aspirations of the two peoples, boost cooperation among the Arab and Muslim nations, and contribute to international peace and stability.

Very important

The upcoming visit by King Salman will be very important to coordinate efforts between the two countries, said Kuwaiti Ambassador to Riyadh Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. King Salman's meeting with His Highness the Amir will be of utmost significance, affirming that relations between the two nations went beyond the parameters of diplomatic and political ties, the ambassador said.

the visiting Saudi leader and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. They noted that the importance of the talks stems from the fact that the Kingdom is the strategic depth of the State of Kuwait.

They expected that the talks could also touch upon the Saudi proposal to develop the Gulf Cooperation Council to a union as to unite Gulf states in the face of impending challenges facing the region. King Salman's visit came at a delicate time for the whole the region, Political Science Professor at Kuwait University (KU) Dr Abdullah Al-Ghanem said, he noted that this was the first visit of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Kuwait since he assumed power.

Ghanem indicated that the growing dangers and challenges in the region would fea-



People walk under the flags of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia inside the historic Mubarakiya Market yesterday.



Kuwaiti and Saudi flags decorate a street in Kuwait City yesterday, ahead of the Saudi King's visit to Kuwait.

Saudi Arabia had been standing in solidarity with the State of Kuwait since its independence in 1961, said the Kuwaiti Ambassador who also praised the Saudi strong opposition of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and also the Kingdom's participation in the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia will continue to cooperate and develop ties in order to achieve the aspirations and dreams of people in both nations, said Sheikh Thamer.

Volatile conditions

In the meantime, Kuwait's governors welcomed King's impending visit to the country, which they said comes amid volatile regional conditions. In separate statements, they hailed the Saudi King's historic visit as a testament to the deep-rooted ties shared by both nations, noting that the visit will be instrumental in further bolstering these ties.

"The Saudi King's visit is historic and unprecedented," Governor of Farwaniya Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malik Al-Sabah said, adding that the visit will provide both countries with the opportunity to exchange vantage points on issues of mutual concern.

Moreover, Governor of Al-Ahmadi Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah underscored the amicable ties between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and how both nations' fates have always been intertwined. "Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have shared unforgettable moments," he said, adding they helped solidify bilateral ties.

Meanwhile, Governor of Hawally Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah described the Saudi King's visit as "historic," saying that Kuwaitis from all walks of life view this visit as an emblem of special ties between the two Gulf neighbors.

Similarly, Capital Governor Lieutenant General Thabet Al-Muhanna noted that leaders of both nations are expected to discuss a series of pivotal issues, chief amongst them, the mounting threat of terrorism. He also foreboded that this "brotherly visit" will yield fruitful results that will serve the interests of the Gulf region.

Heated topics

Kuwaiti academics stressed the importance of the historic upcoming visit of King Salman to the country. In separate interviews, they pointed out that several key and heated topics would be on the table of discussions between

ture high on the bilateral talks. Topping the list was the terrorism threats, especially from groups such as the so-called Islamic State (IS) and Al-Qaeda, as well as the ongoing war in Yemen and its economic cost and impact on the region's security and stability, he said. He also expected that the two leaders would tackle the declining oil prices and its effects on the budgets of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.

In this regard, the GCC States were exerting relentless efforts to strike a balance on the oil market by cutting their production to stop the deterioration of oil prices, Ghanem boasted. He pointed out that the developments in crisis-hit regional countries such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen need thorough discussions from both leaders.

On the GCC, he clarified that the GCC was formed during the Iran-Iraq war in early 1980s to cement cooperation during that period and now as the challenges grow, work for the transformation to the union stage became more urgent. He underlined that Saudi Arabia has been Kuwait's main strategist backer in crisis times such as the Iran-Iraq war and the subsequent Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Academic and Political Researcher Dr Ayed Al-Manaa Manaa pointed out that the wisdom of the two leaders and their experience in Arab, regional and international policy will increase the feasibility of the talks, especially as it comes after Manama summit.

Manaa stated that Kuwaiti-Saudi political, economic and cultural relations are deeply-rooted at the government and popular levels. He pointed to the unforgettable supportive stance of Saudi Arabia during the brutal Iraqi invasion in 1990.

On the main dossiers to be opened during the visit, he pointed to bilateral relations, regional security, whether in Iraq, Yemen, Syria and its impact on the region as well as relations with Iran. He underlined the importance of mulling the issue of requirements and steps needed to be taken before moving to the union stage.

Manaa stated that relations with the United States after the election of the President-elect Donald Trump and the recently passed the controversial JASTA law as well as the GCC efforts to diversify income resources and study post-oil stage could be discussed during the coming visit. —KUNA

A HISTORIC VISIT AND CONTINUOUS CONTACTS

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Kuwait Dr Abdulaziz Al-Fayez issued the following statement on Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz's visit to Kuwait, scheduled for today:

"Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (May Allah support him) begins an official visit to Kuwait at the invitation of his brother, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (May Allah protect him). This historic visit is a confirmation of the depth and strength of relations between the two leaders, ruling families and peoples. It also reflects the advancement and development of these relations in all fields, and it affirms the unity of goals and destinies.

This visit comes during a delicate period the Gulf region and Arab nations are going through, as they face foreign aggression and interventions that threaten the security and stability of the region. The two countries also face these interventions and threats, as it was evident in the Decisive Storm opera-

tion that halted foreign intervention in Yemen. The Kingdom and Kuwait worked with their wise leaderships in facing the threats and thwart foreign plots aiming to weaken Arabian Gulf countries and control brotherly Arab countries.

As for bilateral relations between the two countries, this historic visit represents an extension of the continuous contacts between the two leaders and a confirmation of the strategic relations between the Kingdom and Kuwait, along with consultations and continued coordination between them at all levels and fields.

The Kingdom and Kuwait are keen on pushing the development of joint Gulf action and reclaim balance in oil prices, and to send the distinguished relations between them to larger horizons in the interest of the two brotherly peoples. These are relations that represent a distinguished model in cooperation and coordination between two brotherly countries that have historic links and long for a bright future."



Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Kuwait Dr Abdulaziz Al-Fayez