



LHOKNGA, Indonesia: A woman uses a telescope to look for a sighting of the new moon, which marks the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan and the beginning of Eid-Al Fitr, on Lhoknga beach in Aceh province yesterday. — AFP

## 'Grudges' remain as Qatar marks second year of embargo

**DOHA:** In a region of tight media control and official statements, the body language of Saudi Arabia's king and Qatar's prime minister spoke volumes about one of the Gulf's deepest fault lines. Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser Al-Thani did not bow or kiss the cheek of King Salman, whose country has led a two-year economic boycott of Qatar, when they met in Makkah on Thursday.

Their closely watched meeting was the highest level encounter between the neighbors since the crisis began on June 5, 2017. Diplomats said the embargo enforced by Riyadh and its allies over Doha's alleged support for Islamist movements and Iran-charges Qatar denies-was unlikely to ease following the frosty encounter. "At least they're meeting at the highest level in two years, but so many grudges (remain)," said a Western ambassador in Doha.

The weekend talks in Makkah were aimed at addressing soaring regional tensions between Iran on one side and the United States and its allies, including Riyadh, on the other. "Will Qatar go along with a purely anti-Iranian narrative? Interesting times in any case," added the ambassador. King Salman used the meeting of Gulf and other Arab powers to call on attendees to confront Iran's "criminal" actions after attacks on oil assets heightened fears of a regional flare-up.

But Qatar's Foreign Minister Mohammed bin

Abdulrahman Al-Thani questioned on Sunday how the "Gulf summit statement talked about a unified Gulf". "Where is it amid the continuation of Qatar's blockade?" he added, rejecting the gathering's position on Iran. Riyadh's minister of state for foreign affairs Adel Al-Jubeir fired back yesterday, criticizing Doha for backtracking "after the end of the meetings" and accusing Qatar of "distortion of the facts".

### 'Stability of the Gulf'

"I don't think it will prove to be a rapprochement. Qatar couldn't refuse the invitation sent to the emir, they had to send someone on such an important issue-the stability of the Gulf nations," a European diplomatic source said. "But sending the prime minister instead of the foreign minister is a novelty."

Andreas Krieg, an assistant professor at King's College London, said it was a positive sign that the king's invitation to the talks did not have "strings attached". "They might overcome their smaller differences for the time being in addressing the issue of Iran," he said. The Makkah meetings kicked off a day after hawkish US National Security Advisor John Bolton said Iran was almost certainly behind this month's sabotage of four ships, including two Saudi oil tankers, off the coast of the United Arab Emirates-

charges Tehran rejected.

But Doha has looked to Tehran over the past two years to ease its economic isolation, sourcing key imports from Iran and re-routing many flights by its flag carrier Qatar Airways over the Islamic republic. Saudi and its allies the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt have barred Qatari flights from their airports and airspace, banned most Qatari visitors, cut trade and shipping links, and closed the border.

The Saudi-led bloc initially set out a 13-point list of demands, including the closure of Qatar's flagship Al Jazeera broadcaster, curbing its relations with Iran and closing a Turkish military base in the emirate. Doha dismissed the demands as "unrealistic and (not actionable)", pressing on despite the sizable diplomatic and economic impact of the embargo-which Qatar refers to as a "blockade". But as the crisis continues, it is ordinary people who have borne the brunt of the restrictions.

### 'Missed out on our dreams'

"I'm Qatari so it's impossible for me to cross to Bahrain," Wafa Al-Yazeedi, a Qatari medic who was married to a Bahraini man said. Her three children-aged 24, 22 and 19 - hold both Qatari and Bahraini citizenship but have not visited their father or grandmother in

the nearby Gulf kingdom since the start of the crisis, she said. Though they have not formally been told by Bahrain that they are barred from the country, "we know because it's in the newspapers". "The children showed allegiance to Qatar at the beginning but there has to be relations between families, whatever the political situation," said Yazeedi.

"It's having a psychological burden on those affected." Qatari Salah Al-Yafie, 42, was studying for a post-graduate degree provided by the University of Northampton in the UAE when the embargo came into force. "We were 18 male and female students. We tried everything after the blockade saying 'we are students and have no fault in this crisis'," he said. "Unfortunately, the university told us that we are prohibited from attending."

Stories like his are common, as are accounts of business ventures disrupted by the restrictions. "The crisis cost me a lot financially and psychologically. We lost lots of money, lost our diplomas and missed out on our dreams," he added. Ahead of the talks in Makkah, a senior Qatari official said "there are some small signs" the boycott could begin to ease, but he did not provide any details. "They are our family," he said. "Thank God we are not a poor country so we can deal with any crisis." — AFP

## Scientists edit chicken genes...

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"We haven't produced any birds yet and we need to check if the DNA change has any other effects on the bird cells before we can take this next step."

In the further work, the team hopes to use the gene editing technology, known as CRISPR, to remove a section of the birds' DNA responsible for producing a protein called ANP32, on which all flu viruses depend to

infect a host. Lab tests of cells engineered to lack the gene showed they resist the flu virus - blocking its entry and halting its replication and spread. The death toll in the last flu pandemic in 2009/10 - caused by the H1N1 strain and considered to be relatively mild - was around half a million people worldwide.

The historic 1918 Spanish flu killed around 50 million people. Wendy Barclay, professor and chair in influenza virology at Imperial who worked with McGrew, says the idea behind developing gene-edited flu-resistant chickens is to be able "to stop the next flu pandemic at its source". And she said work so far was showing promise: "We have identified the smallest possible genetic change we can make to chickens that can help to stop the virus taking hold." — Reuters

the night to pray.

The moments of Ramadan are slipping quickly away, and the opportunity to demonstrate such devotion in solidarity with all Muslims worldwide is passing. Farewell, Ramadan, we will miss you. As we start counting the days until your return, stay in our memories and inspire us to carry on with our worship through fasting, reading Quran and praying late at night. Be with us, Ramadan, throughout the coming year.

*Courtesy of the TIES Center: The TIES Center aims at empower Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and inter-faith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, you can contact TIES at Tel: 25231015/6; Hotline: 94079777; e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.*

## Britain rolls out royal red carpet...

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leader to meet him after he took office, is cast as a chance to celebrate Britain's "special relationship" with the United States, boost trade links and reaffirm security cooperation.

At Buckingham Palace, Melania, stood beside Elizabeth and Charles's wife Camilla, while Charles and Trump inspected the guard. Trump will have lunch with the queen before the monarch's second son Prince Andrew accompanies him to Westminster Abbey where the president will lay a wreath at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior. The day culminates with a lavish state banquet at Buckingham Palace - where men wear white tie coats with tails and women evening gowns.

But away from the pageantry, Trump is set to make his trip the most unconventional state visit in recent British history. He has already waded far into Britain's turbulent domestic politics, where more than a dozen candidates are vying to replace May, who announced last month she was quitting after failing to get her EU divorce deal through parliament.

The president, who has regularly criticized May's Brexit tactics, said Britain must leave the bloc on the due date of Oct 31 with or without a deal and praised a more radical Brexit-supporting potential successor as British leader. He also called for arch-Brexit Nigel Farage, a scourge of May's ruling Conservative Party, to conduct talks with the EU. Brexit is the most significant geopolitical move for the United Kingdom since World War Two and if it ever happens then London will be more reliant on the United States as ties loosen with the other 27 members of the EU.

At a meeting with May, Trump will also warn Britain that

security cooperation, a cornerstone of the western intelligence network, could be hurt if London allows China's Huawei a role in building parts of the 5G network, the next generation of cellular technology. The Trump administration has told allies not to use its 5G technology and equipment because of fears it would allow China to spy on sensitive communications and data. Huawei denies it is, or could be, a vehicle for Chinese intelligence.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told Britain last month it needed to change its attitude towards China and Huawei, casting the world's second largest economy as a threat to the West similar to that once posed by the Soviet Union. Britain's relationship with the United States is an enduring alliance, but some British voters see Trump as crude, volatile and opposed to their values on issues ranging from global warming to his treatment of women.

Hundreds of thousands protested against him during a trip last year and a blimp depicting Trump as a snarling, nappy-clad baby will fly outside Britain's parliament during the visit. Other protesters plan a "carnival of resistance" in central London. Jeremy Corbyn, the socialist leader of Britain's opposition Labor Party, who has declined an invitation to attend the state banquet, scolded Trump for getting involved in British politics.

Another senior Labor lawmaker, Yvette Cooper, said it was wrong to gift Trump the opportunity of photographs with the royal to boost his re-election campaign next year. "So appalled Theresa May has given this man a red carpeted platform to do this," she wrote on Twitter.

"Doesn't help Britain to be lavishing pomp on a president so determined to be divisive, childish & destructive." While yesterday was dominated by pageantry, the second day of Trump's trip will focus on politics, including a breakfast with business leaders, talks with May in 10 Downing Street, a news conference and a dinner at the US ambassador's residence. — Reuters

## Farewell Ramadan...

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expressing our gratitude and reliance through frequent prayer and supplication. Everyone will miss this immense opportunity to draw closer to Allah.

Once Ramadan has passed, the focus on worship and charity will pass and mundane duties and distractions will creep back into our lives. I will miss the feeling of lightness when my stomach is empty and my head is clear - when I am naturally drawn to thoughts of God and His abundant blessings. I will miss the joy of breaking fast, and the camaraderie of fellow fasters who gathered for the meal. I will miss the attention to the Quran, and routinely waking up in the last part of