



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

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India and Egypt to build strategic partnership

President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El Sisi, was on a state visit to India from January 24-26, 2023. Sisi was invited as the Chief Guest for India's 74th Republic Day celebrations, which also registered the participation of a military contingent from the Egyptian Army on January 26, 2023. He met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and both the leaders exchanged "views on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest." India and Egypt decided to elevate the bilateral relations to a 'Strategic Partnership' covering political, security, defence, energy and economic areas. During the visit, both countries signed five MoUs focusing on deepening cooperation in the areas of cyber security, youth matters, information technology, broadcasting and cultural domain. Sisi's visit has contributed to further strengthen the relationship between India and Egypt.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visits West Asia

US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, was on three days long visit to Egypt, Israel and the Palestine from January 29-31, 2023. The visit came at a time when the conflict between Israeli and Palestinian people residing in Jerusalem has severely intensified. On January 29, 2023, he met with President Sisi, Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and senior Egyptian officials to advance the US-Egypt strategic partnership and promote peace and security in the region. On January 30, 2023, he visited Jerusalem and held meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The issues discussed during the meeting

included US' support for Israel's security, Israeli-Palestinian relations, the importance of a two-state solution and a range of other global and regional issues. On January 31, 2023, while visiting West Bank, Blinken met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to discuss Israeli-Palestinian relations and the importance of a two-state solution, political reforms and further strengthening the US' relationship with the Palestinian people and leadership.

Kuwait's cabinet resigns

Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al Sabah submitted the resignation of his cabinet on January 23 after tensions resurfaced between the government and the elected parliament over a debt relief bill. The prime minister and his cabinet were sworn in October 2022 but the growing tension between the executive and legislative authorities in the country has led to resignation of the cabinet. Three days later, on January 26, the resignation of Kuwait's government was accepted in an Emiri decree.

Arab leaders meet in the UAE

A meeting of leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Jordan and Egypt, was held in Abu Dhabi on January 18, 2023. The meeting called as 'Prosperity and Stability in the Region', aimed at deepening cooperation between the GCC countries as well as forging regional integration. The meeting reviewed a number of regional and international issues as well as the challenges facing the region. The leaders also deliberated on a joint Arab action to deal with the challenges and to build a more stable future for the region.

Benjamin Netanyahu visits Jordan

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made a surprise visit to Jordan and met with King Abdullah II. The visit was Netanyahu's first official trip abroad since assuming office and aimed at holding talks with King Abdullah amid increasing tensions over the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem. Both the leaders discussed regional and bilateral issues, especially related to strategic, security and economic cooperation between the two countries. The Jordanian royal court said that both the leaders discussed the situation in the Al Aqsa Mosque compound and the importance of respecting the historical and legal status quo in the area.

Qatari Foreign Minister visits Iran

Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, visited Iran and met with the Iranian foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on January 29, 2023. Al Thani “conveyed the message of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) parties regarding negotiations on lifting sanctions to Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.” During the meeting, both the leaders discussed ways to expand bilateral ties, “especially developing commercial and economic cooperation in the private and public sectors.” Both leaders agreed that dialogue and cooperation is the successful way to achieve regional peace, stability and collective security in the region. They also discussed regional and international developments, including the developments in the Russia-Ukraine war.

Italy's Eni signs US\$ 8 bn gas deal with Libya

The Italian Energy company Eni signed a US\$ 8 billion gas production deal with Libya's National Oil Corporation for a duration of 25 years. The deal will guarantee a production capacity of up to 750 million cubic feet of gas per day. The deal also consists of carbon capture projects and solar energy. The energy agreement was signed during Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni’s visit to Tripoli where she met the Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhamid Al Dbeibah. The deal aims to increase the Libyan domestic gas output as well as exports through the development of the two offshore gas fields. According to the Chief Executive, Claudio Descalzi, the agreement will enable important investments in Libya's energy sector and also contribute to local development and job creation in Libya. The agreement is signed in the backdrop of Libya's internal conflict, highlighting the political risk associated with the deal.

UAE Foreign Minister meets President Assad in Damascus

UAE’s Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed visited Syria and met with the Syrian President Bashar Al Assad in Damascus. Both the leaders discussed ways to enhance bilateral relations and focussed on regional and international developments as well. The Emirati Foreign Minister expressed his support for finding a political solution for the Syrian conflict and hailed Assad’s official visit to the UAE in March 2022 and his meeting with the UAE President. Zayed visits Damascus as both the countries have restored their relationship and Assad is trying to gain the support of other Gulf Arab countries.