

Arab leaders meet in Aqaba

Sat, 2022-03-26 18:52

CAIRO: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Jordan's King Abdullah II, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi met in the Jordanian city of Aqaba to discuss the impact of global developments on food security and energy.

They discussed ways to enhance cooperation "in all fields, especially trade and economy," said Bassam Rady, spokesman for the Egyptian presidency.

"The meeting witnessed an exchange of views and visions on the overall political and economic situation at the regional and international levels, especially with regard to confronting the repercussions and effects of the current global conditions on the sectors of food security, energy and trade, in a way that preserves regional stability and security."

Al-Kadhimi's media office said they discussed the promotion of joint Arab action in various fields, expanding economic cooperation and increasing trade exchange "to achieve the interests of brotherly peoples in prosperity and development."

This is the second summit of its kind hosted by Jordan. The first was held last August in Amman between the leaders of Egypt, Jordan and Iraq.

The latest meeting comes days after a summit in the Egyptian city of Sharm El-Sheikh between El-Sisi, Abu Dhabi's crown prince and Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

The meeting preceded a regional tour that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken started on Saturday that includes Israel, the Palestinian territories, Morocco and Algeria.



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[Arab League chief slams Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia](#)

Sat, 2022-03-26 18:36

CAIRO: Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit has condemned "in the strongest terms the recent Houthi attacks on Saudi oil facilities and infrastructure."

These attacks by the Iran-backed Yemeni militia pose "a grave threat to security in the region and to energy supplies at a time when the international economy is going through a delicate circumstance," he said.

"The targeting of civilians and civilian facilities, including those of (Saudi) Aramco in Jeddah, represents a dangerous development that the international community must pay attention to."

The international community "must deal more firmly with these terrorist operations, and the ongoing violations of international law by the Houthi militia," Aboul Gheit said. "Saudi forces dealt efficiently and vigilantly with the attacks."

He added: "International solidarity with the Kingdom must be reflected in a clear position ... regarding these attacks, and those behind them or supporting them."



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World condemns Houthis as US says Iran 'clearly enabled' Jeddah oil attack
Houthi crimes highlighted at European Parliament

[Outrage as Iran's Revolutionary Guards display weapons at Doha show](#)

Fri, 2022-03-25 02:36

JEDDAH: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has caused outrage by displaying missile models and other weapons at a defense show in Qatar in which the US also took part.

Guard commanders held meetings in their booth, which featured a giant poster of a fast boat filled with commandos, while others strolled around the trade

floor.

"We reject the presence of Iran at a maritime defense exhibition, considering that it's Iran that single-handedly is threatening maritime stability throughout the Gulf region," US State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Thursday.

Qatari officials said the IRGC had not been invited to the three-day event in Doha, which concluded on Wednesday. "The participation in the event and pavilion was by the Iranian Ministry of Defense and there were no invitations sent to Iran's Revolutionary Guard," a spokesman said.



A model of an Iranian launch system missile is seen at a stand at the DIMDEX exhibition in Doha, Qatar, on March 23, 2022. (AP Photo/Lujain Jo)

During the show, Iranian delegates passed the entourage surrounding the commander of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, took photos of an Italian armored personnel carrier and handled Turkish machine guns.

Qatar's DIMDEX exhibition drew international defense companies hoping to boost sales to Gulf states that are expanding the military capabilities.

In a booth next to Iran's, the US supplier General Atomics showcased its MQ-9B predator drone, which is engineered to conduct anti-surface warfare, including maritime surveillance and precision-guided munitions. The US State Department has authorized the company to sell 18 of the drones to the UAE in a deal worth up to \$2.9 billion.

The Revolutionary Guards, who answer directly to Iran's supreme leader, have expanded in the region via proxies, including the Houthis in Yemen, who last

weekend launched a barrage of strikes on Saudi oil facilities.





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What terrorist delisting of Iran's IRGC would mean for US interests, allies in Middle East
Human rights groups urge UN to keep watch on Iran's 'dire situation'

[A top-notch hospital in Doha is busy: Only falcons allowed](#)

Author:

Fri, 2022-03-25 00:56

DOHA: At first glance, the Souq Waqif clinic in the historic center of Doha, the capital of Qatar, could be any other state-of-the-art hospital.

Nurses in blue scrubs move briskly through the bright wards, conducting rounds. Radiology and operating rooms whir with the beeps and blinks of monitors. Specialists squint at X-rays and masked doctors make incisions with all the high-tech tools of modern surgery on hand.

There's just one thing: The rooms are filled with falcons.

In the tiny, wealthy emirate of Qatar, the desert birds are among the nation's most pampered residents.

Long revered across the Arabian Peninsula for their ferocity and hunting prowess, falcons today serve as status symbols recalling a Bedouin past. The bond between falconers and their falcons has been an inspiration since the Paleolithic period, when drawings of the creatures first appeared on cave walls.

Although less fashionable now than in the days of yore, the art of falconry is still passed down from one generation to the next in Qatar and other Arabian Gulf countries.

With demand growing in recent years, clubs that teach the sport have sprouted up across the region. Falcons compete in an increasing number of races and beauty contests. The finest falcons fetch at least a few thousand dollars and Qataris spare no expense to maintain their good health.

"The establishment of the hospital was to support the hobby and heritage of raising falcons ... it's a pastime that stretches its veins into multiple generations," Souq Waqif hospital director Dr. Ikdam Al Karkhi said. "Keeping them alive and well is an essential duty."

Public hospitals like Souq Waqif offer expert care to sick and wounded hawks, roughly 30,000 a year. The marbled reception area bustles with owners and handlers bringing their birds in for check-ups, medical tests, feather replacements, orthopedic surgeries – and even something akin to mani-pedis.

Falcon nail filing is very serious business, as birds transplanted from the desert wild to opulent homes in skyscraper-studded Doha or bred in captivity cannot easily find sharp surfaces on which to trim their talons.

The falcon's hunt may be a long-venerated tradition, but it's also grisly work. The cornered prey at times puts up a fight, clawing an attacking falcon and hobbling its wings. Each of a falcon's feathers is vital to its flight, necessitating careful feather replacement after a scuffle.

Doctors pull from a bank of shed feathers to find one that perfectly matches the wounded bird's breed – plumage of the same pattern, length and color.

"If these damaged feathers remain, it can cause loss or reduction of the bird's fitness," Al Karkhi said. "They must be treated."

Hospital surgeons treat other casualties of the hunt, too. Falcons' beaks and talons suffer damage from all that swooping and plunging and gobbling.

In the clinic waiting room, falcons perch regally on their owners' gloved wrists. The Qatari men in their flowing white robes treat the prized birds like children, stroking their feathers and misting their beaks with water.

"If a person is neglecting their bird, it's a huge problem," said Hamad Al-Mehshadi, a falcon festival manager taking his raptor for a regular medical checkup. "When one holds onto their bird, it is something else. The love of

the bird is extraordinary.”

Oil wealth and global business may have transformed Doha into a futuristic capital with a gleaming array of skyscrapers and megaprojects, including giant stadiums soon to host millions of soccer fans for the upcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup. But Souq Waqif still sees a steady stream of 150 falcons a day – a sign that the echoes of Qatar’s ancient past are not lost.

“Even the look that a falcon and its owner share, it’s different than any other look,” Al Karkhi said. Falconers “feel the loyalty of this bird – a fierce warrior in the wild and yet a pet in my hand.”



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Saudi Falcons Club takes part in Expo 2020 Dubai3rd Saudi International Falcons and Hunting Exhibition opens

[Lebanon optimistic about resumption of relations with Gulf states](#)

Fri, 2022-03-25 00:51

BEIRUT: The Saudi and Kuwaiti foreign ministries have responded warmly to the Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati's call to restore diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.

The Lebanese are hoping for a swift resumption of the suspended relations, hopes which have been bolstered by statements from Riyadh and Kuwait City.

Saudi Arabia praised the "positive points" in Mikati's statement, adding that it hoped it would "contribute to the restoration of Lebanon's role and status on the Arab and international levels." The Kuwaiti government, meanwhile, said it was looking forward to engaging in practical measures that would contribute to more security, stability and prosperity for Lebanon.

Mikati's expression has also been enhanced by the announcement of the launch of the French-Saudi joint fund to support the Lebanese people.

The Saudi and Kuwaiti statements came after Mikati issued an official statement pledging that the Lebanese government would commit to taking all necessary measures to enhance cooperation with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Mikati also pledged that Lebanon would abide by all Arab League resolutions, focus on international legitimacy and complete the implementation of their decisions in a way that guarantees civil peace and national stability for Lebanon and fortifies its unity.

In the statement published on Monday evening, Mikati stressed the "necessity to stop all political, military, security and media activities that affect the sovereignty, security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, which originate from Lebanon."

Mikati affirmed "the obligation to take all measures to prevent the smuggling of contraband, especially drugs, to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, directly or indirectly, tighten controls at all border crossings."

He pledged Lebanon's commitment to the Riyadh Agreement for judicial cooperation and the extradition of wanted persons to Saudi Arabia.

Mikati pledged that the "Lebanese government will work to prevent the use of Lebanese financial and banking channels to conduct financial transactions that might harm the security of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries."

In the Cabinet session that was held on Wednesday afternoon, Mikati welcomed "the statements issued by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which indicate that the cloud that disturbed Lebanon's relations will soon disappear, and we are keen to implement the ministerial statement and call on the Arabs to stand by Lebanon."

Lebanese political commentators declared that this step will help usher in the return of the Saudi and Kuwaiti ambassadors to Lebanon and that relationships between Lebanon and the Gulf countries should return to normal

before the next Arab summit is held.

Saudi Arabia's return to diplomatic engagement with Lebanon will be achieved primarily through the French-Saudi joint fund, according to some observers, who said that it will help the Lebanese people from beyond the framework of the state.

Politician and author Dr. Khaldoun Al-Sharif said the Saudi Foreign Ministry's position on Lebanon is a good response to Mikati's statement.

"As for the political return of the Kingdom, it needs a regional settlement, and Lebanon is not a party to it. The strong party in Lebanon is Hezbollah, which supports forces opposed to the Arabian Gulf directly or indirectly, and this affects the relationship between Lebanon and the Gulf," said Al-Sharif.

He added: "What is currently required is the stability of Yemen, then Iraq, and Lebanon comes after that."

The reopening of closed doors between Lebanon and the Arabian Gulf states came about 36 hours before the arrival of Iranian Foreign Minister Hussein Amir Abdollahian to Beirut.

Flying over from Damascus, Abdollahian's visit was supposed to take place a week ago after he visited Moscow, but developments related to the so-called nuclear deal delayed it until Thursday.

The Iranian official's visit fell the day after Lebanese President Michel Aoun defended Hezbollah's weapons and said in an interview during his stay in Rome that the group's arms "have no security effect inside Lebanon, and resisting the occupation is not terrorism."

At Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport, the Iranian minister said that there are many important political developments and all parties must ensure everyone has an opportunity to exchange views.

The minister reaffirmed "Iran's official readiness to extend bridges of cooperation with Lebanon in various fields, especially economic and commercial ones."

Abdollahian also reiterated the proposal he made during his meeting with Mikati on the sidelines of the Munich Security Forum about a month ago regarding Iran's willingness to contribute to building two power plants in Lebanon with a capacity of 1,000 MW each.



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Italian president says Lebanon 'must be supported' to ensure Middle East stability
Political concerns shape Russia's economic relations with the GCC amid the Ukraine crisis