



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

- **Israel hosts Negev Summit with Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, UAE and US**
- **Israel, UAE and Egypt hold a three-way summit in Egypt**
- **Syrian President visits UAE**
- **Iran claims responsibility for missile attack on Israeli “strategic centre” in Iraq**
- **US and GCC conduct joint military exercise**
- **Jordan's King Abdullah visits Ramallah**
- **Israeli President visits Turkey**
- **Fathi Bashagha sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Libya**

Israel hosts Negev Summit with Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, UAE and US

Israel hosted the Negev Summit on March 27, 2022 in Kibbutz Sde Boker, with the participation of Israel, Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, UAE and US. The central issues of discussion included the Iran nuclear talks and the fallouts of the Ukraine-Russia war. While Egypt and Morocco expressed their concern over the deteriorating food security situation as a result of the war, the impact on the global oil supply levels and their prices were also a matter of deliberation at the Summit. The participating countries decided to form six working groups focussing on security, energy, tourism, health, education and food and water security. They also expressed their willingness to turn it into a permanent gathering which would attempt to meet once or twice a year. The Summit holds significance considering the participation of Arab countries such as Morocco, Bahrain, UAE who had recently normalised relationship with Israel.

Israel, UAE and Egypt hold a three-way summit in Egypt

Against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine crisis and the Vienna talks in on the Iranian nuclear issue, the Israeli Prime Minister Neftali Bennett, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi held a three-way summit on March 22, 2022. During the meeting, the leaders discussed negotiations over the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), ties between the three countries and ways to strengthen them on all levels. Another important issue discussed in the trilateral meeting was regarding enhancing energy ties between the three, especially in light of

the fluctuation in the energy market due to the recent sanctions on Russia.

Syrian President visits UAE

Syrian President Bashar Al Assad visited Abu Dhabi on March 18, 2022 and met with the Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The visit is significant as it was the first time Assad visited an Arab state since the Syrian war erupted in 2011. Assad discussed the withdrawal of foreign forces from Syria and humanitarian support to his country. The visit underlined growing rapprochement between Syria, UAE and other regional countries, who previously isolated Assad. This was also evident in the Jordanian King's telephonic conversation with Assad in October, following which he urged the US to lift sanctions on Syria for it to be able to resume trade with the neighbouring countries. The trip was criticised by the US, calling it 'extremely disappointing.'

Iran claims responsibility for missile attack on Israeli "strategic centre" in Iraq

Iran took responsibility for a missile strike on the Iraqi city Erbil, claiming it to have targeted an Israeli 'strategic centre' on March 13, 2022. This was reconfirmed by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) who later established that the targeted sites were used by Israel. The authorities in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region confirmed that 12 ballistic missiles targeted the US installations and wounded two civilians. The strike came a week after the IRGC vowed to take revenge for its two officers who were allegedly killed in a rocket attack in Syria by Israel. Masrour Barzani, Prime Minister of Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government, criticised the attack and appealed for calm. The strikes have severely intensified the tensions between Israel and Iran.

US and GCC conduct joint military exercise

US and GCC conducted a two-week long military exercise, Eagle Resolve 2022, at the Fort Carson base in Colorado. The Exercise was conducted under the guidance of the Kuwaiti Army, and saw participation by other GCC States, US and other friendly countries. The aim of the Exercise was to enhance regional defence cooperation between the GCC countries and other friendly countries. The drill included a Command Centre Exercise (CPX) based on scenarios that simulate air threats, missile attacks, airspace and border protection operations, in addition to counterterrorism operations, crisis and disaster management. Commander of the Joint Duty Force of the Exercise Eagle Resolve 2022, Brigadier General Mubarak Al Zoubi stated that the drill achieved its goals of exchanging and acquiring experiences, unifying concepts and visions on enhancing integration in air and missile defence, coordinating efforts to combat terrorist operations and the safety of population and infrastructure.

Israeli President visits Turkey

Israeli President Issac Herzog visited Turkey on March 9, 2022 and met with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan. This was the highest-level meeting of an Israeli leader in Turkey in 14 years. While interacting with the media, Erdogan stated that Herzog's "historic visit will be a turning point in relations between Turkey and Israel". He further mentioned that strengthening ties with Israel will have great value for Turkey. Both the leaders discussed their bilateral ties, events in Ukraine and in the Eastern Mediterranean, and Turkey's relations with the Palestinian Hamas. Herzog said that 'rekindling' ties with Turkey would not be easy but it will be useful for the whole region. The positive

development in relations between Israel and Turkey can be seen as a Turkish initiative to break isolation in the region as also reflected in its attempt to normalise ties with various countries of the region such as the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Jordan's King Abdullah visits Ramallah

Jordan's monarch King Abdullah II, visited Ramallah on March 28, 2022 to meet the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. This is King Abdullah's first visit to the West Bank since 2017. The meeting primarily discussed the challenges faced by Palestinians in the light of Israel's West Bank settlement expansion. It also aimed at reducing the ongoing violent friction between Israel and Palestine ahead of Ramadan. The visit also meant to convey a message to the US of a need to take forward the diplomatic process with Israel, as also mentioned explicitly during Abdullah's meeting with the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken on March 27, 2022. Further, King Abdullah scheduled his visit to Palestine at a time when Israel held the Negev Summit with the Arab countries like UAE, Morocco, Bahrain and Egypt.

Fathi Bashagha sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Libya

Libya got a new government on March 1, 2022, after parliament approved a new cabinet in a challenge to unity government led by Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, who was unwilling to cede power until elections.

As per the speaker of Libyan House of Representatives (HoR) Aqila Saleh, a majority vote of 92 members out of 101 attending ones, showed their confidence in Fathi Bashagha. Meanwhile, Bashagha has vowed to "work together to achieve reconciliation and justice and to end the transitional stages."