



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

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Lebanon holds Parliamentary Elections

Lebanon held elections for the 128-member parliament on May 15, 2022. None of the political parties or alliances have been able to secure a clear majority in the new parliament. Hezbollah and its allies lost the majority in the House as they won 62 seats as opposed to 71 seats they had in the outgoing parliament. Lebanese Forces, a Christian political party, has won 19 seats, up from 15 in 2018. President Michel Aoun's Christian Free Patriotic Movement and its allies also registered a fall in its support and secured only 18 seats in comparison to 29 seats in 2018.

Israel and UAE sign free trade agreement

Israel and the UAE signed a free trade agreement (FTA) in Dubai, aimed at further strengthening bilateral trade and commerce between them. This is the first FTA Israel has signed with an Arab country. Israel believes that the FTA would remove tariffs on 96% of goods, including food, agriculture, cosmetics, medical equipment and medicine; while Thani Al Zeyoudi, the Minister of State for Foreign Trade, stated that the "agreement will accelerate growth, create jobs and lead to a new era of peace, stability, and prosperity across the region."

Iraqi Parliament passes a law to criminalise relations with Israel

Iraqi parliament passed a bill criminalising normalisation of ties and establishing any relations, including business ties, with Israel. According to the bill, the violation of law will be punishable with capital punishment or life imprisonment. A huge majority of 275 members in the 329-member parliament supported the law. The supporters of Muqtada Al Sadr took to the roads to celebrate the legislation and raised anti-Israel slogans. In addition, parliament said that the law is "a true reflection of the will of the people". In the last few years,

Iraqi territories have become an indirect battle ground for the Israel-Iran conflict.

Turkish Foreign Minister visits Israel

For the first time in the last 15 years, Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, visited Israel on May 25, 2022 and met with his Israeli counterpart, Yair Lapid. The meeting can be seen as a sign of gradual improvement in the relations between the two countries. In a joint press conference after the meeting, Lapid said their objective is to "expand economic and civil cooperation". On the other hand, Çavuşoğlu said that normalisation of ties between them will have an impact on Israel-Palestinian issue. He further noted that Turkey's support for the Palestinian cause will not change and it will continue to follow its independent foreign policy. During the visit, the countries decided to re-launch the Joint Economic Commission and commence work on framing a new Civil Aviation Agreement between them.

Jordan's King meets President Biden in Washington

King Abdullah of Jordan visited Washington on May 13, 2022 and met with the US President Joe Biden. During the visit, Biden expressed his "strong support for a two-state solution" and said that the historic status quo of the Temple Mount must be maintained. Biden acknowledged the indispensable role of Jordan as a custodian of Muslim holy places in Jerusalem. Both the leaders also discussed political and economic advantages of "regional integrations" in various fields such as energy, infrastructure, water and climate change for which Jordan will be a "critical hub".

Qatari Emir visits Iran, Turkey and UAE

In an effort to bolster regional relations with key regional countries, Qatari Emir

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani visited Iran, Turkey and UAE. On his visit to Iran on May 12, he met with the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi. During the visit he discussed bilateral and regional issues and ways to reinstate Iranian nuclear deal of 2015. On May 13, he met with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul and discussed ways to expand bilateral ties, specifically economic ties, regional and global issues affecting them. He visited UAE and paid homage to Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed who died on May 13.

Saudi Deputy Defence Minister visits US

Deputy Minister of Defence, Prince Khalid bin Salman was on an official visit to the US on May 18, 2022. During the visit, he met with US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan in Washington and discussed the prospects for joint cooperation and coordination and ways to deepen ties between the two countries. In addition, they both discussed regional and international issues of mutual concerns. On May 20, 2022, he met with US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin and deliberated on issues related to strategic relations. On May 24, 2022, Prince Khalid bin Salman also visited the US Central Command headquarters in Florida and was received by Gen. Michael E. Kurilla. During the meeting both discussed issues related to military and defence cooperation, and ways to strengthen them. They also deliberated on challenges faced by both countries within the West Asian region and ways to address them.

11th meeting of the India-UAE Joint Defence Committee held in New Delhi

The 11th meeting of the India-UAE Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) was held in New Delhi on May 25, 2022. As a part of this meeting, Chief of the Force

Development Authority at Ministry of Defence (UAE), Major General Staff Hassan Mohamed Sultan Bani Hammad, met the Indian Defence Secretary Dr. Ajay Kumar. The two sides discussed the possibility of expanding the scope and complexity of the joint exercises between their armed forces. The countries also reviewed the progress achieved in various other areas such as military-to-military engagements, R&D and expert exchanges. Additionally, the visiting delegation also interacted with the defence industries in India. The meeting is yet another step in strengthening the longstanding defence relationship between India and UAE.

UAE special envoy on climate change meets Environment Minister and External Affairs Minister

The UAE Climate Envoy and Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, visited New Delhi on May 26, 2022. He met with India's Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav to discuss issues of climate change, hosting of Conference of Parties (COP 28) and implementation of the Paris agreement. Prior to the meeting, the two ministers signed a MoU on climate action in order to develop a framework aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation on the same and contributing to the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, the two countries agreed to broaden their areas of bilateral cooperation to include public-private partnership across renewable power deployment, green hydrogen and carbon market development, agriculture efficiency and sustainable finance. The UAE Climate Envoy also met India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.