

Saudi Arabia: Middle East on brink of exploding and GCC intends to go Nuclear

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Six Gulf Arab nations wrapped up their two-day summit on Sunday, announcing their intention to acquire peaceful nuclear technology, while the Saudi King had warned on Saturday that the region is on the brink of exploding.

The 27th summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a regional alliance grouping [Saudi Arabia](#), [Kuwait](#), [Qatar](#), Oman, [Bahrain](#) and the [United Arab Emirates](#), has been held on Saturday and Sunday in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia.

EYEING PEACEFUL NUCLEAR PLAN

On Sunday, six Gulf Arab nations announced at the end of the summit that they intended to pursue nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and would establish a joint plan in this regard.

“The (leaders) commissioned a study by members of the Gulf Cooperation Council to set up a common program in the area of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, according to international standards and systems,” said the statement read by GCC Secretary General Abdul-Rahman al-Attiya.

“The peaceful use of nuclear energy is the right of every country,” said Attiya, underlining that “every nuclear-related activity will abide by international treaties and be subject to inspection.”

In a press conference after the summit, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal dismissed the speculation that GCC’s nuclear intention would add to the regional threat.

“We will develop it openly, not in secret. We want no bombs. All we want is a whole Middle East that is free of weapons of mass destruction,” he told reporters.

Faisal also urged neighboring [Iran](#) to cooperate with the international community on the nuclear standoff which has raised great concerns among Gulf states.

Many suspect Iran is secretly developing atomic weapons, which has been bluntly denied by the Persian country.

Faisal, meanwhile, called on [Israel](#) to accept international inspection on its nuclear facilities, saying, “Israel has no excuse to develop nuclear arms.”

Although widely believed to be the only nuclear power in the region, Israel has never admitted or denied that it has nuclear weapons.

ARAB ON BRINK OF EXPLODING

Saudi King Abdullah warned, while inaugurating the summit on Saturday, that the Arab world was on the brink of exploding because of escalating conflicts in the Palestinian territories, [Iraq](#) and [Lebanon](#).

In his unusually strong rhetoric, King Abdullah said, “our Arab region is surrounded by unrest and danger. It is almost like a powder keg waiting for a spark to explode,”

Speaking of Palestinian problem, he said “the most dangerous thing is the internal rift between the Palestinian brothers,” referring to the in-fighting between the rival ruling Hamas movement and Palestinian President [Mahmoud Abbas](#)’ Fatah.

As for Iraq, the Saudi King said “brothers in Iraq are slaughtering each other, and the country is engulfed by bloodshed and violence,” warning of the division in the country.

On Wednesday, the U.S. bipartisan Iraq Study Group issued the highly-anticipated report that recommends major changes in the Bush Administration’s Iraq policy, which it says is “not working.”

The Sunni-dominated Gulf nations also fear Iraq will be under too much influence imposed by the Shiite Iran.

As for Lebanon, he also voiced concern that the unity of the country is in danger.

HINDERED ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

The already slow-paced GCC economic integration process suffered another blow as reports said Oman will not join the Arab Gulf monetary union by the deadline of 2010.

“Oman will not join the single currency union because it won’t be ready by that time (2010),” an unnamed official from a Gulf state told local media on Sunday.

The decision, although not being officially announced yet, cast doubts over the possibility of achieving GCC’s main economic goals — establishing a common market by 2007 and a single currency by 2010.

There had been a major setback in last year’s summit when the GCC decided to extend the transition period of the bloc’s customs union from 2005 to the end of 2007.

Founded in 1981, the GCC has been striving to achieve wide- ranging cooperation among member states in face of internal and international challenges.

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