

Obama meets King Salman

# 'THERE IS MUCH TO DISCUSS'

Washington

US President Barack Obama welcomed Saudi Arabia's King Salman for a first and long-delayed White House summit yesterday, marked by warm public words amid clashing views on Middle Eastern crises.

Obama made the rare move of greeting the 79-year-old monarch at the doors of the White House, as he hailed the "longstanding friendship" between the two countries.

Salman's inaugural visit as king - originally scheduled for May and cancelled by Riyadh - has been billed as a way of putting relations back on a more stable footing.

In the Oval Office, Obama was effusive, saying he wanted to "once again reaffirm not only our personal friendship,



King Salman (L) speaks with US President Barack Obama during their meeting in the Oval Office at the White House

but the deep and abiding friendship between our two people."

For his part Salman said his visit was a "symbol of the deep and strong relationship that we have with the United

States." These meetings normally end in "some kind of public statement that puts as positive a spin as possible on the meeting," said Anthony Cordesman of the Centre for Strategic and International

Studies. "Both nations are close strategic partners in spite of their differences, and both states need each other."

However, behind the warm public statements, there are deep disagreements on Syria and Yemen as well as lingering Saudi doubts about the nuclear deal with Iran.

The White House said that during the meeting Salman "expressed his support" for the Iran deal.

Saudi officials have privately expressed grave misgivings that the nuclear agreement may legitimize their arch-foe Iran.

To assuage those concerns and bolster Riyadh's military edge, the pair also discussed "fast-tracking the provision of certain military equipment" to the kingdom. Obama

acknowledged that the two sides had much to discuss. Obama said the two sides

**King Salman said that his country was willing to collaborate with the United States to ensure stability in the region**

"share concerns" about the need to restore a functioning government in Yemen and relieve an urgent humanitarian crisis.

During the meeting the White House said King Salman had committed to "work

toward opening Red Sea ports" that would bring vital supplies, so long as the operation is monitored by the United Nations.

Obama also said that the pair "share concerns about the crisis in Syria and will have the opportunity to discuss how we can arrive at a political transition process within Syria that can... end the horrific conflict there."

Ahead of the meeting senior Obama foreign policy aide Ben Rhodes said the White House wants to make sure both countries "have a common view" on which Syrian opposition groups get support.

"We are looking to isolate more extremist elements of the opposition, that's been an ongoing conversation with Saudi Arabia," he said.

## UN chief invites Arab countries to Mideast Quartet meeting

United Nations

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has invited Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to a meeting this month of the Middle East Quartet seeking a diplomatic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The foreign ministers of the three Arab countries will join their counterparts from Russia, the United States and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini for the talks on September 30, the UN spokesman said yesterday.

The secretary general of the Arab League will also

attend the meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly gathering of world leaders.

The invitation follows a decision by the Quartet in February to include Arab countries in the diplomatic effort to restart the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

Speaking in Luxembourg earlier, Mogherini said the European Union had "revitalized the work of the Quartet" and voiced hope that this could help "re-open prospective and political horizons to the talks."

## Saudi policeman, gunman killed

Riyadh

A Saudi policeman and a gunman were killed in a pre-dawn shootout yesterday in the Abqaiq region of the oil-rich Eastern Province, an interior ministry spokesman said.

The gunman had tried to infiltrate a security forces site when he was spotted by policemen who moved in to arrest him, the official Saudi Press Agency quoted the spokesman as saying.

The suspect opened fire at the police as he tried to escape but they shot back and he was killed, the spokesman said, adding that a policeman also died in the shootout and two more were wounded.

Authorities have opened an investigation into the motives with most blamed on or claimed by the Islamic State



Attacks on the security forces in Saudi have multiplied

of the gunman, who was armed with a machinegun and was identified as Nawaf al Otaibi.

Attacks on the security forces in Saudi Arabia have multiplied in recent months,

occurring on August 6 when a suicide bomber detonated an explosives-packed vest in a mosque within the grounds of a police headquarters in the southern city of Abha, killing 15 people.

But the deadliest attack

**Authorities have opened an investigation into the motives of the gunman, who was armed with a machinegun and was identified as Nawaf al Otaibi**

## World's shortest man Chandra Dangi dies aged 75

London

The world's shortest man, as verified by the Guinness Book of Records, has died of an undisclosed illness in American Samoa, a hospital spokeswoman said yesterday.

Nepal's Chandra Bahadur Dangi, who was 21.5 inches tall (54.6 cm), died late Thursday at the Lyndon B. Johnson Tropical Medical Centre in Pago Pago.

The 75-year-old lived in a remote village around 400 kilometres (248 miles) from Kathmandu but travelled the world after he was officially declared the world's smallest man, posing for a photograph with world's tallest man Sultan Kösen in 2013.

Family friend Sujit Dilip,

owner of India's well-known Rambo Circus, based in Pune, said: "Today, our circus is

flooded with tears at the loss of the world's smallest man... whom we lovingly called

Prince Chandra." Dangi, who was just 21.5 inches, broke the record in 2012 when he was

crowned by Guinness World Records in Kathmandu, India.

A spokeswoman at the hospital said he died of an undisclosed disease but it was believed he'd been suffering from pneumonia, as reported by the Kathmandu Post.

Dangi was popular in his area after his title enabled him to travel abroad and earn money for Reemkholi, the Nepalese village where he lived some 335 miles southwest of Kathmandu.

Before that he made placemats and head straps for villagers carrying heavy loads.

The tiny man, who was a primordial dwarf, was the same size as six cans of baked beans stacked on top of each other.



Dangi launches the Guinness World Records Book 2013 with the world's smallest woman, Jyoti Amge



Dangi broke the record in 2012



Dangi with the world's tallest man, Sultan Kösen, in 2014