

UAE, France lay ground for nuclear partnership

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PARIS — French President Nicolas Sarkozy received here yesterday His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

A source at the Elysee Palace said after the talks that the UAE and France were laying the foundation for a partnership on joint cooperation in use of nuclear energy for peaceful, civilian purposes.

“French President Nicolas Sarkozy holds the view that countries have the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful use and considers it the energy of the future.

“The president is pleased that the UAE will be the first country to have a fruitful cooperation with France in this field,” the French source said.

Shaikh Mohammed held expanded talks with his French host over best mechanisms to boost historic relations of friendship and cooperation in political, economic and military domains.

They also took stock of regional and international issues of mutual concern including the Middle east crisis. the two leaders also discussed means to achieve justice, equality and freedom to the peoples of the region.

Shaikh Mohammed highlighted the vital role France can play in maintaining just peace which brings about peaceful coexistence, dialogue and security. The two leaders said both Abu Dhabi and Paris welcomed the memorandum of understanding for peaceful settlement of the Lebanese crisis signed by the Lebanese political parties in Doha yesterday.

Shaikh Mohammed told reporters that his visit to Paris underlined the deep-rooted relations of cooperation and friendship between the two countries.

“The UAE and France welcome the agreement between the brethren in Lebanon and we hope all signatories would commit themselves to the Doha understanding for the benefit of Lebanon.”

The French presidential source said Shaikh Mohammed’s visit is the first political one by a high-profile UAE official to Paris.

The source said the French and the UAE leaders had expressed satisfaction at the progress of construction work on a French military base in the UAE which Abu Dhabi and Paris agreed to establish during the French head of state visit to Abu Dhabi last January.

The source said the French president has lauded the agreement for building the base as “strategic resolution” to France and epitomises the deep relations and mutual confidence between the two countries. He said the talks touched on a wide-range of regional and international political issues with an eye on Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and other Middle Eastern topics.

The Elysee source said President Sarkozy was impressed with the staggering progress in the UAE mainly the economic development.

Quoting Sarkozy, the source said the exemplary UAE-France relations were based on extremely excellent political and cultural bonds.