

Saudi, Iranian FMs plan to meet during Ramadan: Riyadh

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Online Desk: The Saudi and Iranian foreign ministers have vowed to meet before the end of the holy month of Ramadan to implement a landmark bilateral reconciliation deal, Riyadh said on Monday. Saudi Prince Faisal bin Farhan and his Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, held their second phone call in less than a week and discussed “a number of common issues

in light of” the surprise agreement brokered by China and announced on March 10, the officials Saudi Press Agency reported. “The two ministers also agreed to hold a bilateral meeting between them during the current month of Ramadan”, which this year ends in the third week of April, SPA said, reports AFP.

The report did not specify the exact date or location of the meeting. Saudi officials have said the meeting is the next step in restoring ties seven years after they were severed. Riyadh cut relations after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in 2016 following the Saudi execution of Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr — just one in a series of flashpoints between the two longstanding regional rivals.

The deal is expected to see Shiite-majority Iran and mainly Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia reopen their embassies and missions within two months and implement security and economic cooperation deals signed more than 20 years ago. An Iranian official said on March 19 that Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi had favourably received an invitation to visit Saudi Arabia from King Salman, though Riyadh has yet to confirm.

Amir-Abdollahian told reporters the same day that the two countries had agreed to hold a meeting between their top diplomats and that three locations had been suggested, without specifying which. The detente between Saudi Arabia, the world’s biggest crude oil exporter, and Iran, strongly at odds with Western governments over its nuclear activities, has the potential to reshape relations across a region characterised by turbulence for decades.