

MEIWeekly.



Deposed Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's (above) corruption trial began on Monday. His 30-year rule saw the secession of South Sudan in 2011 and the eruption of the Darfur crisis in 2003. Photo: US Navy

CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

ME 101: The Syrian Refugee Crisis

More than six million Syrians have fled Syria in nine years of civil war. Join us on 28 August as Love Aid Singapore Founder Gilbert Goh shares about the NGO's humanitarian trips to the Middle East to provide relief partner assistance to Syrian schools and NGOs. The ME 101 series of lectures give an overview of the circumstances and impact of the encounters between the Middle East and the rest of the world in terms of politics, economics, and cultural norms.



WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Al-Bashir Admits to Receiving Saudi Payment

Sudan's deposed leader Mr Omar Hassan al-Bashir revealed that he had received US\$90 million from Saudi Arabia during his trial on corruption charges. While in power, Mr al-Bashir sent thousands of troops to support the Saudi-led war campaign in Yemen in return for Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates' backing. These countries have, however, quickly switched sides after Mr al-Bashir was ousted to instead support the military junta that toppled him. This marked a dramatic start to a trial that is set to bring about momentous change in Sudan.



Participants (above) dancing at an Afghan wedding in Nangarhar, Afghanistan. Photo: US Army

IS Kills 63 in Kabul Wedding Blast

An Afghan affiliate of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (IS) has claimed responsibility for the bombing of a wedding in Kabul. The blast took place in a neighbourhood with a significant Shiite Hazara community, and was described by the IS as the martyrdom of a Pakistani IS fighter targeting a large Shiite gathering. The attack comes as the United States and the Taliban work towards a peace deal, fuelling Afghans' worries about their safety under the approaching deal.

Australia Joins US in Strait of Hormuz Patrols

Australia is the third country — after Britain and Bahrain — to join a fledging American-led effort to protect ships from Iranian threats in the Strait of Hormuz. This comes after several attacks on oil tankers in the strait. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison emphasised that the decision is about the "freedom of shipping" and protecting Australia's economic interests.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

61st Damascus International Fair to Open

The 61st Damascus International Fair, set to open on 28 August, is the first to garner participation from the United Arab Emirates and Oman since Syria's suspension from the Arab League in 2011. The annual fair allows businesses and organisations from around the world to showcase their goods and services, and participation from the UAE and Oman is regarded by the industry as a sign of warming relations between Syria and the Gulf states.

Iranian Foreign Minister to Visit China, Japan

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif will visit China and Japan later this month. The situation in the Strait of Hormuz is expected to be on the agenda. Mr Zarif's visit comes amidst United States pressure on other countries to join its coalition to protect shipping in the strait, a move regarded by Iran as unhelpful for alleviating tensions.

#MUSTREAD: WHAT'S POPULAR ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK: With a spy plane deal facilitated by a mysterious Israeli businessman, the UAE will gain advanced intelligence capabilities to ward against Iran, seen by the UAE and Israel as a common enemy.
<https://bit.ly/2ZjoF9C>

Iran has updated its military doctrines and capabilities as a result of its experience in Syria. The United States and others should take heed of its new capabilities as a confrontation in the Gulf looms.
<https://fam.ag/2Zjp0co>

TWITTER: "In the Arab world, where racism is a deeply rooted yet rarely discussed issue, blackface comedy is facing a surge of criticism on social media, even forcing the occasional apology."
<https://nyti.ms/2Z9Gy6p>



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