

MEI Weekly.



An uncertain future looms for Mr Benjamin Netanyahu (above) after an unprecedented repeat election left Likud in a deadlock with Mr Benny Gantz' Blue and White party. Photo: Kremlin

CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

Interlacing of Middle East with South-east Asia

Although the Middle East and South-east Asia are relatively distant regions, they share a number of common interests. Beyond religion, terrorism and energy, they are bound to each other by a deep historical connection, as cited in the *Sejarah Melayu*. Join us on 25 September as Dr Zoltan Pall explains how the Middle East interlaces with South-east Asia against the backdrop of the rise of Asia in the 21st century.



WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Netanyahu's Tenure Perilous After Election

Israel's former military chief Benny Gantz declared victory on Thursday, following Tuesday's repeat election. Rebuffing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's call for power sharing, Mr Gantz vowed to lead a broad coalition from across Israel's political spectrum, ending several years of right-wing and religious majorities led by Mr Netanyahu. Mr Gantz has yet to receive the go-ahead to form a government from Israel's president but appeared to have a slight edge in unofficial results with 98 per cent of the vote counted. For the first time in a decade, Mr Netanyahu no longer appeared to be in control of the direction of Israeli politics.



An aerial view of Saudi Arabia's Khurais oil processing facility (above) before the drone attacks on 14 September. Photo: planet.com

Asia Feels Strain After Saudi Attack

The impact of the reduction in Saudi Arabia's crude oil production following drone attacks on important oil-producing facilities are likely to be magnified for oil-thirsty Asian countries, which buy about 72 per cent of the Kingdom's crude oil exports. Analysts have pointed out that in the short term, higher crude oil inventories in Saudi Arabia and its Asian trading partners will likely mitigate the market impact from the attack. China might focus more on domestic production, while Aramco, the state-owned Saudi Arabian Oil Co has offered customers lower-quality alternatives to light, high-quality crude.

Oil Attack Tests US-Gulf Relations

The United States' commitment to protect the oil-rich monarchies of the Persian Gulf was put under test after last Saturday's drone attack crippled Saudi Arabia's most critical oil installation. Both Washington and Riyadh blamed Iran, despite its denials, though President Donald Trump has been hesitant to take military action and Saudi Arabia has called for an international investigation, not immediate retribution. Tehran may now be emboldened to carry out further attacks, calculating that Mr Trump will balk at another war in the region.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Trials for Bouteflika Regime Figures to Begin

The trial of former Algerian officials and officers, some linked to former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, is set to start on 23 September. The suspects are accused of conspiring against the army and the state. Those on trial include Saïd Bouteflika, the youngest brother of the former president, and two former intelligence chiefs.

Saudi Arabia to Celebrate 89th National Day

Saudi Arabia will celebrate its 89th National Day on 23 September. The General Entertainment Authority (GEA) has announced a season of record-breaking events starting from 19 September. The entertainment activities planned across 13 regions of the Kingdom include fireworks, a specially designed show by the world's largest theatrical producer Cirque du Soleil, forums in five cities where speakers will present inspirational events, a major aero show and a Saudi falcon show, amongst others.

#MUSTREAD: WHAT'S POPULAR ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK: The drone strikes on Saudi Arabia are clear strategic warning that the era of fast jet air supremacy is over, as the tiny, cheap, unmanned and hard-to-detect aircraft are transforming conflicts across region. <https://bit.ly/2WLe11>

In this week's ME 101 lecture, Dr Fanar Haddad and Ms Susan Kurdli tackle the immense topic of geopolitical competition in the Middle East. What factors contribute to recurring conflict in the region? What are the roots of the rivalries between the structurally similar countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council? Watch: <https://bit.ly/2kTQIVY> or listen: <https://spoti.fi/2kR9pQT>

TWITTER: Six months after IS loses its territories, South-east Asia may be the newest breeding ground for militant Islam. Since 2018, the increasing difficulty in travelling to Iraq and Syria has led foreign fighters flocking to the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. <https://bit.ly/2Zo1Mj>



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