

MEI Weekly.



Iran will abandon restrictions on nuclear research and development, said President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday. Photo: Tasnim News Agency under a Creative Commons licence

CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

Wahhabism in the World

For the past half-century, Saudi Arabia has engaged in a wide range of activities to propagate globally its distinctive brand of Islam. Join us on **30 September** as Dr Peter Mandaville explores the origins and evolution of Saudi transnational proselytisation, reviews ongoing debates about the impact of these influences in regions and localities around the world, and discusses future trends in light of new Saudi leadership.



WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Iran to Breach Nuclear Deal Again

Iran has announced that it is “suspending all its commitments” to the nuclear deal in response to the United States’ withdrawal in May 2018 and the Europeans’ subsequent inability to cushion Iran from the effect of renewed US sanctions. Iran is already pushing through limits on stockpile of enriched uranium and producing uranium of purity above 3.67 per cent. The focus is likely to shift to this month’s United Nations General Assembly meeting where US President Donald Trump has said he might meet with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani—the first of its kind since Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution.



“I tell the Israeli army on the border — be prepared and wait for us,” Hezbollah Secretary General Syed Hassan Nasrallah (featured above on a poster at a 2006 rally in Toronto, Canada) announced in the week preceding Sunday’s strikes. Photo: humbleslave, shared on Flickr under a Creative Commons licence

Israel and Lebanon Exchange Fire at Border

Hezbollah fired antitank missiles into northern Israel on Sunday, prompting an Israeli strike in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah hailed the strike on Israel as retaliation for the latter’s killing of two of its commanders in a drone attack the previous weekend. The encounter lasted for about an hour, with no casualties reported. Although the United Nations expressed concern that the flare-up would unravel a 13-year truce, both sides appeared to be holding their ground while avoiding a larger conflict.

Lebanon Declares Economic Emergency

Lebanese officials declared a state of economic emergency on Monday, days after credit rating agency Fitch downgraded the country’s credit rating from B- to CCC for “increasing risks to the government’s debt servicing capacity”. At 150 per cent of GDP, Lebanon has one of the heaviest public debts in the world. Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri pledged mitigations, including a state hiring freeze and public offerings in state-owned enterprises.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

UK Invites Saudi Arabia to Arms Fare

Despite a court ruling in June deeming United Kingdom arms sales to Saudi Arabia unlawful, the British government has invited representatives from Riyadh to the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) taking place in London from 9–12 September. The biannual arms fair, the world’s largest, has traditionally generated large protests from human rights groups. This year, protests are expected to focus on the UK’s arms exports to Saudi Arabia.

24th World Energy Congress in Abu Dhabi

Around 15,000 delegates, including 70 ministers and 500 chief executives from 150 countries, will visit Abu Dhabi for the World Energy Congress from 9–12 September. It is the first time that a Gulf country is hosting the triennial summit. The event will focus on the transition from hydrocarbons to green energy. Speakers include energy ministers from the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, as well as executives from Total and Huawei.

#MUSTREAD: WHAT’S POPULAR ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK: MEI Chairman Bilahari Kausikan held a closed-door round table discussion with Qatar’s Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani (below) on international issues and strategic policies last week. The round table is part of a series of engagements that MEI has held with senior Gulf officials recently, including Bahrain’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for International Affairs Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed al-Khalifa. Read about Sheikh Mohamed’s visit in *Gulf Times*.
<https://bit.ly/2lrWJhv>

It is unclear what the decision to end the division of the West Bank into Areas A, B and C will mean in practical terms.
<https://bit.ly/2lwxUkp>

TWITTER: The threat of an Israeli strike on Iran “was not a bluff — it was real. And only because it was real were the Americans truly worried about it,” said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
<https://nyti.ms/2k1Fw66>



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