

MEIWeekly.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, beside his wife Sara Netanyahu, addressing supporters on Tuesday (3 March) at the Likud party campaign headquarters in Tel Aviv, Israel as confetti falls on them after polls officially closed. Photo: Gil Cohen-Magen/AFP.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

Suspension of Public Events

All MEI public events for February and March have been suspended until further notice, in view of the Ministry of Health's advice to cancel or defer all large scale and non-essential events.

New event dates will be announced once the situation stabilises. Please check our website and social media channels for updates.



WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Israel Heading for Fourth Election?

Securing just 36 seats to challenger Mr Benny Gantz's 33 after polls closed on Monday (2 March), incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu once again emerged as the winner of Israel's third election in less than 12 months. However, Mr Netanyahu's Likud party still lacks an overall governing majority in the Knesset, having secured only 58 seats in the 120-member parliament. To break the deadlock, intense coalition negotiations have begun again, though a fourth election seems increasingly likely.



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan shaking hands in the Kremlin on Thursday (5 March), after hours of talks that resulted in a ceasefire in Syria's Idlib province. Photo: Pavel Golovkin/Pool/AFP.

Russia and Turkey Agree on Ceasefire

After six hours of talks on Thursday (5 March), Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed to halt fighting in Syria's Idlib province, putting an end to escalating tensions that almost pushed both countries to the brink of open war. Russia supported Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime forces in their assault on the last major rebel stronghold in Idlib, while Turkey has sent troops to support the rebel stronghold. If these accords are enforced, Turkish and Russian forces will halt fighting, even though the Syrian government is insisting on continuing the attack on Idlib.

Nuclear Weapons and Coronavirus in Iran

The number of coronavirus cases in Iran has reached the thousands, with 8 per cent of Iran's parliament also testing positive. However, the Iranian government has done little to manage the pandemic. Instead, the authorities seem to be focusing their attention on improving Iran's nuclear capacities. *The New York Times* reported on Tuesday (3 March) that it now has enough enriched uranium to produce a single nuclear weapon, a move that experts say is aimed at pressuring the Trump administration.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

IAEA Board of Directors' Meeting

The International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Board of Governors will meet next Monday (9 March) at its headquarters in Vienna, Austria. The UN agency is the main international organisation seeking to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Following Iran's recent refusal to answer questions from IAEA inspectors and denial of access to two of its three nuclear sites, this meeting will likely see members of the international community call for greater transparency from Iran regarding its nuclear activities.

India PM to Visit Egypt Next Week

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Cairo next Saturday and Sunday (14-15 March), his first visit to the Middle East in 2020. This visit seeks to expand India's strategic ties with Egypt as well as to reaffirm India's commitment to Africa ahead of the fourth India-Africa Summit later this year. Both nations have a security agreement against terrorism as well as expanded bilateral military training co-operation.



#MUSTREAD: WHAT'S POPULAR ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK: The Turkish parliament broke out into a fistfight among dozens of Turkish politicians after an opposition MP accused President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of disrespecting members of the Turkish armed forces.
<https://bit.ly/2InGXw6>

In this latest Insight, Professor Silvio Ferrari explains the Vatican's shift from its longstanding call for the internationalisation of Jerusalem to calling only for the preservation of Jerusalem's cultural and spiritual identity.
<https://nus.edu/38s9iMm>



TWITTER: In an interview with CNBC on Monday (2 March), MEI Senior Research Fellow Asif Shuja explains how the fear of a low election turnout and preoccupation with the high-stakes election itself has resulted in Iran's lack of transparency regarding its COVID-19 outbreak.
<https://bit.ly/3axYeyD>

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