

MEI Weekly.



A supplicating pilgrim at Masjid Al Haram, Mecca in 2003 . Saudi Arabia has recently barred foreigners from attending the Hajj due to the coronavirus pandemic. Photo: Ali Mansuri / shared on Wikimedia Commons.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

GCC Outlook and Implications for Asia

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries has recently finalised a production cut of nearly 10 million barrels of oil due to the impact from the coronavirus pandemic. In this event, Dr Fereidun Fesharaki will be discussing the grim economic outlook for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC) and its implications for net oil-importing Asian countries.



Join us for this virtual public talk conducted via Zoom on **2 July** from **10.30am to 12pm**. Registration is free and all are welcome. Check out <https://nus.edu/3hTIIHz> for more details now!

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Saudi Arabia Bars Arrivals to Hajj

Saudi Arabia announced on Monday (22 June) that it will prohibit arrivals from abroad to attend the hajj this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, reported *Reuters* on Tuesday (23 June). This marks the first year in modern times that Muslims around the world will not be allowed to perform the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The ban would also hit Saudi Arabia's economy, to the tune of US\$12 billion.



One of the rarest and best-preserved plant species, the Dragon's Blood Trees is one of the landmarks in Socotra Island, a Unesco World Heritage Site. The recent coup in Yemen threatens to cause irreversible damage to heritage sites on the island. Photo: Rod Waddington / shared on flickr.

Yemen Accuses UAE for Coup

Yemen's internationally recognised government says the Southern Transitional Council fighters, a separatist group backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), staged a coup in Socotra Island on Saturday (20 June), reported *Aljazeera* on Sunday. The island is important as it overlooks a vital international shipping lane. The fighting between the militias and the government, however, could cause irreversible damage to the Unesco World Heritage Site, which is also known as the Galapagos of the Indian Ocean.

Divide on Israeli Annexation

United States President Donald Trump's Middle East team were slated to meet this week to discuss Israel's planned annexation of the West Bank, which may take place as soon as 1 July, reported *The New York Times* on Monday (22 June). With American and Israeli officials sending mixed signals over the issue, both sides remain deeply divided on how and when the annexation should proceed, if any.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Lebanon International Airport to Reopen

Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport will be reopening its commercial flight services beginning next Wednesday (1 July). This marks a significant step in the resumption of global leisure travel and tourism. Air traffic, however, would be limited at 10 per cent of capacity from a year ago.



Turkey to Reopen All Tourism Facilities

From next Wednesday (1 July), all tourism facilities in Turkey will resume as part of the normalisation process. In his announcement earlier this month, Turkey's minister of culture and tourism said the country is prioritising the resumption of air traffic to all countries in a bid to revive its tourism industry.



#MUSTREAD: WHAT'S POPULAR ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK: In our latest virtual public event, Dr Arsalan Khan, a researcher focused on ritual, gender and ethics in the context of the Islamic revival in Pakistan, outlines how a ritualised form of face-to-face preaching, or dawat, creates a distinct pious based on what he calls the "ethics of hierarchy". Missed the talk? Fret not! We've uploaded the event recording at this link: <https://nus.edu/38384sn>

In academic discourse, when the Trump administration recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, it sparked international outcry. Read the latest MEI Insights to learn more about the city, its history and diplomatic tensions surrounding it. <https://nus.edu/2VixgWC>



TWITTER: Oman steps up its plan to build Middle East's biggest oil-tank farm which could provide an alternative for those eager to avoid the Strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint at the mouth of the Gulf that has seen numerous flare-ups in recent years. <https://bit.ly/3dvaK39>

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