

MEIWeekly.



Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei attending a meeting with commanders of paramilitary division of the elite Revolutionary Guard in Tehran on 25 November 2015. Earlier this week, he backed efforts to engage with incoming US President Joe Biden to revive the 2015 nuclear deal with the US, but warned Iranian officials to remain skeptical of America and not to trust it.
Photo: Shared on Flickr by Oswald Samson

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ: Writing the latest Insight for MEI, Dr Abbas Assi breaks down the failure of Lebanon's 2019 uprising and explains how sectarianism was responsible. Read the full article [here](#).

READ & LISTEN: In this week's Boots of the Ground episode, Mr Gene Yu, co-founder and CEO of the Blackpanda Group, a firm with roots in ransom negotiation services that has since pivoted towards cyber-security, discusses challenges, opportunities and the future of digital security services. Listen to the podcast or read the transcript [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Khamenei Supports Efforts to Revive Nuclear Deal

Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei gave strong support to efforts to revive the 2015 nuclear deal with the US, echoing President Hassan Rouhani's comments earlier this week. His message sends a direct signal to hardliners who may attempt to disrupt such efforts, which incoming US President Joe Biden has signalled he will pursue. However, the Supreme Leader tempered his call by warning Iranian officials that they should remain skeptical of the US. He also ordered efforts to mitigate the impact of sanctions and shield the economy from external factors.

Vaccines Rollout Raises Hopes of Economic Recovery

Stock markets reflected confidence in an economic recovery for the Middle East as countries in the region prepare for vaccination rollouts. While Egypt, Bahrain and the UAE opted for Chinese-backed Sinopharm's vaccine, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait went for Pfizer and BioNTech's product. Experts are expecting stronger oil prices and rebounds in the real estate and tourism sectors, with Saudi Arabia and UAE leading the recovery.



A healthcare worker holding a vial of Pfizer-BioNTech's Covid-19 vaccine, which Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have opted for.
Photo: US Department of Defence, via Wikimedia Commons.

Singapore-flagged Oil Tanker Attacked in Jeddah

A Singapore-flagged oil tanker was attacked by an explosive-laden boat in a port in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on Monday (14 December). The attack, which was blamed on "terrorists", resulted in a small fire that was put out. There were no casualties, and damage was minimal. The attack is the latest in a series aimed at Saudi oil infrastructure. A previous attack, on a Greek-flagged tanker a few weeks ago, was blamed on Houthis.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

[Prelude] Middle Eastern Film Festival 2021

The Middle East Institute and Singapore Film Society have partnered with The Projector to screen titles online as part of a prelude to the Middle East Film Festival, which will be held early next year. The Lebanese film "The Insult" will be screened till 24 December. Enjoy \$2 off each rental [Promo Code: MEFF2off] when you watch the film on The Projector's online platform.



Haven't gotten your tickets yet? They are available now at Projector for viewing in Singapore only.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Kushner to Visit Israel and Morocco

White House senior adviser Jared Kushner will travel from Israel to Morocco via the first commercial flight between the two countries next Monday (21 December) to mark their re-establishment of diplomatic relations. He will meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and is expected to sign bilateral agreements with the Moroccan government Lebanese coalition government.



Israel Set to Roll Out Covid-19 Vaccinations

Israel plans to begin rolling out a major Covid-19 vaccination programme as early as next week after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reached out personally to the head of US pharmaceutical company Pfizer. They reached an agreement for the supply of eight million doses of the vaccine, enough for nearly half of the country's population. Palestinians, on the other hand, will have to wait - their cash-strapped leaders are banking on vaccine donations from humanitarian groups.

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