MEETING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE INDO-PACIFIC AND THE MIDDLE EAST

23 – 25 February 2021 | 4pm
### PROGRAMME DETAILS

**NOTE**: This is a virtual conference happening across three days from 23-25 February 2021. Each day’s proceedings will run from 4pm to 6.30pm, Singapore Standard Time.

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*This first panel will discuss new trade flows as the Middle East looks increasingly towards Asia. This “Look East” trend is particularly evident among Gulf nations, as they seek new partners for their economic modernisation.*

*In turn, East Asian nations are also looking towards West Asia in search of new markets – China’s BRI envisions the Middle East as a key node, while India has looked increasingly towards the Gulf, Israel, and Iran.*

*Singapore has long cast its eye on opportunities in the region – could this new swing bear fruit in the form of a key role for the “hinge state”? Where are the areas to be exploited? How can East Asia’s key strengths boost the Middle East in terms of governance, education, and tech? Leaving aside energy, how will the “Asian Century” transform the region?*
The dual shocks of low oil and gas prices and pandemic-induced global economic slowdown have hit the GCC countries at a time when the urgency for promoting economic diversification, expanding employment opportunities for their youthful populations and attaining fiscal sustainability had already become critical in the low oil price environment which took hold in mid-2014. This has created an existential challenge to restructure and diversify their economies, and for re-negotiating their “social contracts” with citizens will be a critical task. Asia, as the Middle East’s largest economic partner in trade and investments, can play a significant role in this process.

Moderator:
Ms Kathy Lai
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Enterprise Singapore

Panel Members:
Dr Choi Byung-il
Professor, Ewha Womans University
President, Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies

Mr Masakazu Toyoda
President, Institute of Energy Economics Japan

Professor Shen Dingli
Director, Programme on Arms Control and Regional Security
Fudan University

Dr Monica Malik (TBC)
Chief Economist, Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank

End of Day One

Day Two: Wednesday, 24 February 2021

Panel 2: The Role of Tech - Building Resilience through Smart Cities and Cybersecurity

Keynote Speech
Dr Vivia n Balakrishnan
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister-in-charge of Smart Nation Initiative

Panel Discussion
The development of smart cities and digital infrastructure are crucial components of Asia’s development strategy, and the Middle East is increasingly looking in this direction as well.

New technologies are set to improve the life of citizens by making the delivery of public services more efficient and effective. Smart cities encompass highly complex, interdependent networks of devices, systems, and users.

That said, sophisticated cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, from smart utilities to telemedicine, e-government and automated surveillance, could severely disrupt years of development in a matter of seconds. Understanding the challenges and the opportunities for cooperation between the Middle East and Asia’s smart cities could be crucial in building resilience.

Moderator:
Mr David Koh
Chief Executive Officer, Cyber Security Agency Singapore

Panel Members:
Dr Gulshan Rai
Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation
Chief Information Security Office, Prime Minister’s Office
Government of India

Professor Isaac Ben-Israel
Head, Security Studies Programme and Head, Blavatnik Interdisciplinary Cyber Studies Centre, Tel Aviv University

Dr Steve Griffiths
Senior Vice-President (Research & Development), Khalifa University

HE Dr Abdullah bin Sharaf bin Jamaan Al-Ghamdi (TBC)
Chairman, Saudi Authority for Data and Artificial Intelligence (SDAIA)

End of Day Two

Day Three: Thursday, 25 February 2021

Panel 3: Human Capital Development - Building Resilience through Education and Training

Keynote Speech
Mr Lawrence Wong
Minister for Education and Second Minister for Finance

Panel Discussion
Across the Middle East and North Africa, around half of the population is less than 25 years old. To turn this into a “demographic dividend”, countries in the region need to secure sufficient education and training facilities, either internally or abroad. This panel will explore how the experience of Asia’s developmental model, which emphasised education, can be turned into the Middle East’s “school”.

We ask: What strategies can Asian states use to convince students in the Middle East to look eastwards, and what kinds of benefits can they expect in return? Can the Asian education sector promote itself as one whose expertise, pedagogy, and lifestyles are better suited to the needs of Middle Eastern students than their counterparts in Europe and the US? Can reputable Asian universities find parallel universities to sign mutually beneficial collaborative agreements? Should Asian states, building on the American model, establish scholarships for foreign citizens to nurture pro-Asian educated elites abroad? Can the Asian education model spur upskilling in the Middle East?

**Moderator:**
Professor Tan Eng Chye
President, National University of Singapore

**Panel Members:**
Professor Guido Saracco
Rector, President, Commission for Strategies for Development, Politecnico di Torino

Dr Mariët Westermann
Vice Chancellor & Professor, NYU Abu Dhabi

Mr Shigeo Katsu
President, Nazarbayev University

**Wrap-Up and End of Conference**