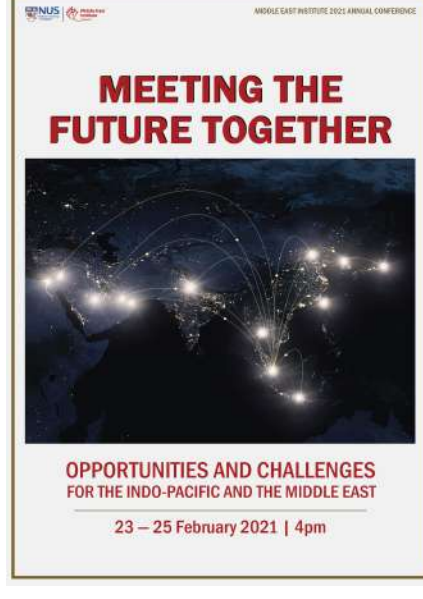


MEI Weekly.



Technology, human capital development, people-to-people ties and sustainable city development are just some of the opportunities at hand. The MEI Annual Conference this year is themed “Meeting the Future Together: Opportunities and Challenges for the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East”. The conference will take place virtually from **Tuesday, 23 February to Thursday, 25 February 2021** from 4.00pm to 6.30pm (Singapore Standard Time) each day. Registration is still open so click [here](#) to sign up for free.

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ: In our latest Insight, Mr Mark Finley of the Baker Institute’s Center for Energy Studies, Rice University, argues that while many countries have built robust systems to mitigate risks to oil supplies, little work has been done for other energy forms. Mr Finley offers his insights in assessing energy security based on evaluation of vulnerability, risk and offsets. Read the full article [here](#).

WATCH & LISTEN: Join MEI’s Principal Research Fellow, Dr Alessandro Arduino, as he talks about relations between China and the Middle East in 2021 and beyond, alongside other experts. This talk, titled “China’s Middle East Policy: What Next?” is organised by Cambridge Middle East and North Africa Forum (MENAF). Tune into the Cambridge MENAF Facebook page on 27 February 2021, from 1.00am onwards (SGT) to see and listen to the live streaming of this discussion. Click [here](#) for more details.

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Jerusalem Experiences Rare Snowfall

Jerusalem woke up to the rare experience of seeing its holy sites covered in snow on Thursday (18 February), with the Dome of the Rock and the Western Wall under a layer of white after an overnight snowstorm. The snowstorm began on Wednesday evening, leading the authorities to shut down public transportation and block the main road to Jerusalem. But as it eased overnight, the municipality said it would resume services and people even drove to see the spectacle.

US Formally Offers to Restart Talks with Iran

The United States took a major step on Thursday (18 February) towards restoring the Iran nuclear deal that the Trump administration abandoned. The Biden administration offered to join European nations in what would be the first substantial diplomacy with Tehran in more than four years. However, it is unclear whether the Iranians would agree. The first obstacle to restoring the deal may be a politically delicate dance of who goes first. President Biden has also said he would lift sanctions imposed by the Trump administration only if Iran returns to the limits on nuclear production that it observed up until 2019.



Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei demanded real action from US President Joe Biden to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) during a virtual speech in Tehran on Wednesday (17 February). On Thursday (18 February), the Biden administration announced that it will restart nuclear talks with Iran, but Tehran has yet to respond to that offer. Photo: Official Khamenei Website.

Egypt Offers Support to Libya’s New PM

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi met incoming Libyan prime minister Abdulhamid Dbeibeh in Cairo on Thursday (18 February) and offered his country’s support in achieving stability in Libya. Egypt has welcomed the announcement of a new interim government – the latest UN-brokered effort to unite rival camps in east and west Libya – and is planning to reopen its embassy in the capital Tripoli. Egypt’s attempts to work with Tripoli signals a recalibration of policy after the failure of military commander Khalifa Haftar’s campaign which enjoyed Egypt’s backing until it crumbled in June 2020.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

MEI Annual Conference 2021

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Middle East Film Festival 2021

For this year’s Middle East Film Festival, the Middle East Institute at the National University of Singapore, in partnership with the Singapore Film Society, has curated a selection of films that are set against backdrops of family and expectations, harsh landscapes or tumultuous social change.



Each tell of the resilience of spirit and unbowed soul, focusing on individual struggles and the society. This gives us a more intimate look into the everyday lives of people and how they navigate hurdles.

The Middle East Film Festival 2021 will take place virtually starting today, **19 February and runs till 3 March 2021** at Shaw KinoLounge. Tickets are available now!

Click [here](#) for more details.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Saudi Arabia to Raise Oil Output as Prices Recover

Saudi Arabia plans to increase its oil output in the coming months, reversing a recent big production cut and it is a sign of growing confidence over an oil-price recovery, say advisers to the Kingdom. The world’s largest oil exporter surprised oil markets last month when it said it would unilaterally slash one million barrels of crude oil production a day in February and March, to raise prices. The output rise will not kick in until April given the Saudis already have committed to stick to cuts through March. Advisers cautioned the plans could still be reversed if circumstances change and the Saudis’ intention has not yet been communicated to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).



As Israel Reopens, ‘Whoever Does Not Get Vaccinated Will Be Left Behind’

Israel is one of the first countries grappling in real time with a host of legal, moral and ethical questions as it tries to balance the steps toward resuming public life with sensitive issues such as public safety, discrimination, free choice and privacy. Beginning Sunday, under a new “Green Badge” system, the government is making leisure activities accessible only to people who are fully vaccinated or have recovered and they will have to carry a certificate of vaccination with a QR code.

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CAN'T MAKE IT TO OUR EVENTS? LISTEN AT YOUR OWN TIME!

