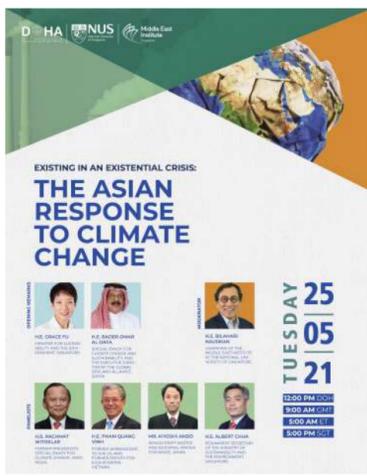


# MEI Weekly.



MEI (NUS) and the Doha Forum jointly present a session on Asian perspectives on climate change which will be conducted online via Zoom on **Tuesday, 25 May 2021, from 5.00pm to 6.30pm (SGT)**. Click [here](#) to register.

## WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

**WATCH & LISTEN:** Singapore's Minister for Sustainability and the Environment, Ms Grace Fu, will deliver opening remarks at a Doha Forum panel on climate change on Tuesday, 25 May 2021. Organised by MEI, the panel features experts from Asia who will discuss the impact of climate change on their countries. MEI Chairman Mr Bilahari Kausikan will moderate the panel at the global event. Don't miss this chance to get a front row seat to a discussion on an existential issue for humankind. Click [here](#) for more details and to register.

## WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

### Israel and Hamas Begin Ceasefire

A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, which was mediated by Egypt, took effect early this morning, Friday, 21 May, hours after both sides agreed to end more than 10 days of fighting that had claimed hundreds of lives. In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced on Thursday evening that his security cabinet had voted unanimously to accept the Egyptian proposal and officials of Hamas, the militant group that controls Gaza, confirmed that it, too, had accepted. However, each side cautioned that its compliance could depend on the other's actions.

### Iran's Oil Exports Rise Despite US Sanctions

Iran is exporting hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil each day, violating American sanctions even as world powers negotiate to lift the economic penalties and revitalise a nuclear accord that was rendered all but defunct by the Trump administration. This has raised questions about the effectiveness of American sanctions when they are imposed unilaterally, as they were during the Trump administration. Iran and its oil buyers may be betting that any penalties they may face are worth the risk as the Biden administration works to rejoin the 2015 nuclear deal.



A worker of the Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA waves an Iranian flag as the Iranian-flagged oil tanker, Fortune, docks at the El Palito refinery in Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, on 25 May 2020. Photo: AFP.

### Crackdown Spurs New Generation of Activists in Saudi Arabia

After entering the line of succession six years ago, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman suppressed outspoken voices in local newspapers and on social media. Starting in 2017, he launched waves of arrests targeting conservative clerics, women's rights activists and intellectuals who criticised the kingdom's economic or foreign policy. Despite that, a new group of Saudi activists – previously apolitical – have emerged, leveraging international media and lobbying Western governments to try to influence policy in Riyadh.

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

### MEI's Bridging the Gulf Series: Session 5

The Omani sultanate was once under Portuguese control and at one point, had a Swahili ruling class. Uncover the journey of Oman's rich history and learn more about its Vision 2040 project in this session of MEI's Bridging the Gulf series with Mohamed Saad Al Muqadam, Assistant Professor at the Sultan Qaboos University and Yousuf Hamed Al Balushi, Chief Economist of the Oman Vision 2040 taskforce.



Join us for this talk via Zoom on **Friday, 28 May 2021, from 4.00pm to 5.00pm (SGT)**. All are welcome to participate. Click [here](#) for more details and to register.

### Iran-GCC Dynamics and Regional Security

What is the current nature of Iran's relationship with the GCC states and how might it change with attempts to revive the 2015 nuclear deal and an increased Arab-Israeli closeness from the Abraham Accords? A panel of experts will delve into the respective security concerns of the two parties and examine possibilities for co-operation.

This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Tuesday, 1 June 2021, from 4.00pm to 5.30pm (SGT)**. All are welcome to participate. Click [here](#) for more details and to register.

### Beyond the Chokepoints: New Geopolitics of Arabian Seaports

About one-sixth of the global oil supply moves through the Strait of Hormuz, making this chokepoint perhaps the most crucial 21 miles in the world. The US and its North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies have long-held open and safe passage through the strait as their primary Middle East foreign policy goal. However, several recent infrastructural developments immediately to the east are set to move us beyond this chokepoint politics. Listen to a panel of experts as they discuss the broader implications of these developments.

This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Wednesday, 9 June 2021, from 3.00pm to 4.30pm (SGT)**. All are welcome to participate. Click [here](#) for more details and to register.

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### 'I am a Real Contender,' Says Syria Presidential Candidate

One of two candidates running against long-time Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad is casting himself as the first opposition representative to vie for the country's top post. Mohamad Marci said Tuesday (18 May), that as a critic of the government who remained in Syria, he may have the keys to solving the ruinous 10-year conflict. However, Marci, a lawyer who heads a small government-sanctioned opposition group, has virtually no chance of waging real competition to the incumbent in the Syrian election on 26 May. Competition with Assad is largely symbolic and seen by the opposition and Western countries as a sham aimed at giving the incumbent president a veneer of legitimacy.



### EU Envoy Upbeat on Iran Nuclear Talks

The European Union (EU) official leading talks to revive Iran's nuclear deal said on Wednesday, he was confident a deal would be reached as the negotiations adjourned, although European diplomats said success was not guaranteed with very difficult issues remaining. The talks resumed in Vienna on 7 May with the remaining parties to the deal – Iran, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany – meeting in the basement of a luxury hotel and the United States based in another hotel across the street. Enrique Mora, who is coordinating indirect talks between Iran and the United States, told reporters at the end of the fourth round of negotiations that a final agreement is imminent. Russia's envoy, Mikhail Ulyanov, echoed those comments by saying on Twitter that he hoped a final round, expected to begin next week, would be the last one.

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