

MEI Weekly.



Beachgoers at the La Mer North marina in Dubai, with the Burj Khalifa and the Dubai skyline in the background. This week, the UAE announced that starting 1 January 2022, its workweek would be a 4½-day one – Monday to Friday noon – that promotes work-life balance. Photo: Karim Sahib / AFP.

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ: In our latest *Insight* article, MEI Senior Research Fellow Jean-Loup Samaan explains how deeply NATO forces were affected by the Afghan withdrawal. Read the full piece [here](#).

READ: MEI Senior Research Fellow Asif Shuja told CNBC that although it may appear like Russia and China are on Iran's side, things could change when they meet face to face. Read the full article [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

UAE Announces New Workweek

Starting 1 January 2022, the UAE has decided to match the rest of the world with a Monday to Friday workweek. However, this decision has residents scrambling to figure out how the change will affect their lives and livelihoods. Work will begin Monday and end at noon on Friday, a 4½-day week that the government has framed as a boon for work-life balance. The move is aimed at making the Gulf state a more attractive place for foreigners to do business, vacation at and live in. Most Middle East countries work from Sunday to Thursday, including Israel, where the Sabbath begins Friday at sundown.

Qatar and Turkey Boost Economic Ties

Turkey's president has ended a trip to Qatar after signing 15 agreements in areas ranging from media to disaster management and pledged to “explore more ways” to boost economic ties and financial co-ordination. A joint statement of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani said Qatar will extend a currency swap agreement with Turkey, which Doha had tripled to \$15 billion last year. The agreement is designed to bolster Turkey's foreign reserves and steady the lira.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (R) shakes hands with Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (L) after a meeting at the presidential palace in Ankara in 2014. On Tuesday, the two leaders signed 15 agreements in areas ranging from media to disaster management and pledged to “explore more ways” to boost economic ties and financial co-ordination between the two countries. Photo: AFP.

KSA Pleads for Missile-Defence Resupply

Saudi Arabia is running out of the ammunition it uses to defend against weekly drone and missile attacks on its kingdom and is urgently appealing to the US and its Gulf and European allies for a resupply. Over the past few months, Saudi Arabia has been attacked by nearly a dozen ballistic missile and drone strikes launched each week by the Yemen-based Houthi rebels. The kingdom's military has successfully fended off most of the barrages with its Patriot surface-to-air missile system but its arsenal of interceptors—missiles used to shoot down airborne weapons—has fallen dangerously low. KSA's appeal has tested US' commitment to Riyadh, where the Biden administration has attempted to reshape the relationship over a range of issues.

CALENDAR: MEI EVENTS

#ICYMI Lebanon: On the Brink of a New Civil War?

Since 2019, Lebanon has faced a financial crisis that the World Bank ranks among the three worst in the last two centuries. This economic collapse was enabled and aggravated by the inability of the political elite to satisfy the demands of international organisations and governments involved in the recovery plan. The Beirut Port blast last August added on to the country's existing problems.



Click [here](#) to catch the insightful discussion we had about the various challenges Lebanon is faced with and what this means for the country and the wider Middle East as well.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

42nd Gulf Summit Meet

The 42nd Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit will be hosted in Riyadh on Tuesday, 14 December. Diplomatic sources revealed that the meeting will address issues of vital importance such as results of the nuclear agreement negotiations between Iran and the international powers and the continuation of Iranian interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries. The situation in Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Libya and developments in the Palestinian cause are on the agenda as well. Sources say strategic relations between the GCC states and international countries and blocs will be discussed too.



US Envoy to Return to Vienna for Iran Talks

US Special Envoy for Iran, Rob Malley, plans to travel to Vienna over the weekend for fresh talks on reviving Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with major powers. The talks seek to find a way for the US and Iran to resume compliance with the agreement, under which Iran restricted its nuclear programme in return for relief from US, the EU and UN sanctions.

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