

MEIWeekly.



Members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec+) group following a meeting in the Saudi city of Jeddah in 2019. This week, Saudi Arabia – the world's largest crude exporter – declined to pump more than what it agreed to in last year's Opec+ deal, despite calls from US President Joe Biden for it to do so. Photo: Amer Hilabi / AFP.

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ: In our latest *Insight* piece, read about Pakistan's role in (de)stabilising Afghanistan since the US withdrawal. Read the article [here](#).

READ: Ben Lynfield, former Middle East affairs correspondent at *The Jerusalem Post*, writes that an end to the occupation may be the only way for Israel tackle the security and surveillance web entangling and endangering it. Read his piece [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

As Oil Prices Soar, Saudis Snub US Call

Rising oil prices and fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine have created a dilemma for Saudi Arabia: Help the West by pumping more crude to tame the market, or stand by a five-year-old oil alliance that is helping Moscow at the expense of Washington. For now, the world's largest crude exporter is sticking with Russia. President Joe Biden has repeatedly called on Persian Gulf producers to pump more to reduce petrol prices that are about twice as high as they were earlier in the pandemic for Americans. These calls have grown more urgent as oil prices have edged towards US\$100 a barrel for the first time in nearly eight years, and could go higher. But the Saudis rejected the call, saying they would stick to its commitments under an Opec+ deal struck last year.

Israeli Leader Makes Historic Visit to Bahrain

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett became the first Israeli leader to make an official visit to the small Persian Gulf state of Bahrain on Monday, a historic trip that highlighted strengthening ties between Israel and some Arab governments. Mr Bennett's visit, unthinkable a few years ago, builds on a diplomatic thaw that began in 2020, when Israel forged formal ties for the first time with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, revived diplomatic relations with Morocco, and improved ties with Sudan. Bahrain is a tiny but strategically important country, and is widely considered a proxy for Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's most powerful state. The visit underscores the shifting geopolitical priorities of some Arab leaders, who are now more concerned about containing Iran – a concern they share with Israel – than they are about the Palestinian issue.



Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett delivering a speech during his visit to Manama on 15 February 2022. Mr Bennett's visit, the first official visit by an Israeli leader to the Gulf state, came 17 months after the Abraham Accords were signed. Photo: Guillaume Lavallée / AFP.

Erdogan Aims to Jump-start Ties with UAE

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan touted his country's investment advantages to businessmen in the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday (15 February), after a flurry of economic agreements between two countries that are seeking to end a period of animosity. Mr Erdogan, visiting for the first time since 2013, received a grand reception on Monday, with the UAE's de facto ruler, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, meeting him on arrival while Turkey's flag was projected onto the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest tower. The moves are part of an effort to ease a regional rivalry rooted in differences over the role of political Islam.

CALENDAR: MEI EVENTS

#ICYMI MEI's Bridging the Gulf Series: Session 13

The Al Zubarah Archaeological Site is Qatar's first entry into the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2013. It showcases excavated findings, including a city wall, ancient residential palaces, and structures which provide a glimpse of a Gulf merchant town in the 18th and 19th centuries.



Click [here](#) to catch the audio and video recordings to learn more about the place.

#ICYMI Iran-Europe Dynamics and the JCPOA Negotiations

Since the start of the Iranian nuclear controversy about two decades ago, the European Union (EU) has been steadfastly mediating between Iran and the US. This webinar explores the EU's motivations behind its central role in the nuclear negotiations, the nature of Iran-EU relations, and the grouping's foresight of Iran's role in the Middle East.



Click [here](#) to catch the insightful discussion we had.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Efforts to Revive Nuke Deal Enter Final Stretch

Iran has reached a moment of truth and must decide in days, not weeks, whether to accept the text of a nuclear deal accepted by China, Russia, European powers, and the US, the French foreign minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, has said. His claim that the text was now agreed not just between Western powers, but also Russia and China, is designed to put maximum pressure on Iran to accept a revival of the landmark nuclear deal. In recent weeks, Tehran's negotiators have been holding out for the wider lifting of US economic sanctions and some form of political statement by the US Congress that America will not walk away from the deal, as it did in 2018.



Israel, Morocco Move to Widen Economic Ties

Israel's economy minister will travel to Morocco next week to sign an economics and trade deal as the countries look to broaden cooperation since normalising ties in late 2020. Economy Minister Orna Barbivai will start her visit on Sunday and meet ministers, government officials and business leaders in Rabat, Casablanca and Marrakesh.

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