

# MEIWeekly.



Breaking the relative calm in Yemen’s stalemated civil war and heightening risks for the Persian Gulf, the Southern Transitional Council (STC) force, a United Arab Emirates (UAE)-backed separatist group, this month seized most of Hadramout and Mahra, including oil facilities, and is now turning its sights on the capital, Sanaa. Photo: AFP

## WHAT’S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS, & MORE

**READ:** The Gaza war may be over but it has set the Middle East on a new collision course — from Qatar to Iran, states are now racing to recalibrate security and alliances. Dive into this MEI Perspective [here](#).

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

### UAE-Backed Yemeni Separatists Set Sights on Sanaa

The Southern Transitional Council (STC) seized control of parts of Yemen over the past week, with ambitions to create a “south Arabian state”. The UAE-backed group’s website quoted its leader as saying that “the next goal must be Sanaa, peacefully or through war”.

### Lurking Seismic Catastrophe Threatens Istanbul

New research suggested that powerful quakes are marching towards a nine- to 13-mile-long locked-up part of what scientists call the Main Marmara Fault. Experts say this has the potential to trigger a tremor of magnitude 7.0 or greater in the Turkish city of 16 million.



Ankara is no stranger to major earthquakes. In early 2023, a pair of quakes — a magnitude 7.8, followed just hours later by another of 7.5 — devastated parts of southern Turkey and Syria, killing at least 55,000 people. Photo: AFP

### Syrians Celebrate Anniversary of Assad’s Fall

Many Syrians were united in joy over their newfound freedom even as the country grapples with sectarian violence, deep economic challenges, and security gaps. While many Syrians in Damascus see cause for optimism, some view emigration as their only hope for a better future.

## CALENDAR: MEI EVENTS

### [ICYMI] S R Nathan Distinguished Lecture 2025

At this year’s S R Nathan Lecture, Mr Mohammed Khalid Alyahya (pictured) — Adviser to Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Minister — highlighted how the Kingdom is advancing its Vision 2030 ambitions, drawing inspiration from Singapore and its late leader Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s pragmatic, results-driven governance model. Speaking alongside MEI Chairman Joseph Liow, he urged Singaporean firms to seize emerging opportunities in Saudi Arabia’s tourism boom ahead of Expo 2030 and the 2034 Fifa World Cup. If you missed the event, you can catch the video of the lecture or the podcast [here](#).



The Adviser added that youth are a strategic asset, with Saudi Arabia and the wider Gulf region harnessing their energy to drive reforms and development. Photo: MEI

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP A WATCH ON

### Iran, Egypt Furious Over ‘Pride’ Match at Fifa World Cup

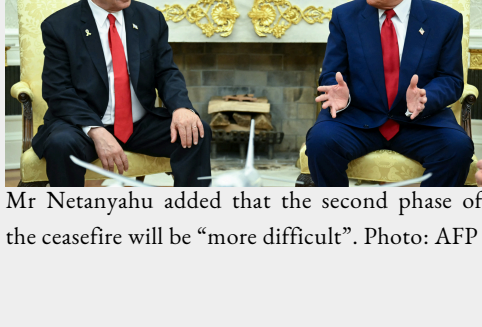
The football federations representing both Egypt and Iran have publicly objected to any ‘Pride’ celebrations around the match. The Egyptian Football Association issued a lengthy statement on its website earlier this week, confirming that it had lodged an official complaint in a letter sent to Fifa. It said the planned celebrations “directly contradict the cultural, religious and social values of the region, particularly in Arab and Islamic societies”.



The organisers confirmed that ‘Pride Match’ activities will still go ahead despite complaints from both nations. Photo: AFP

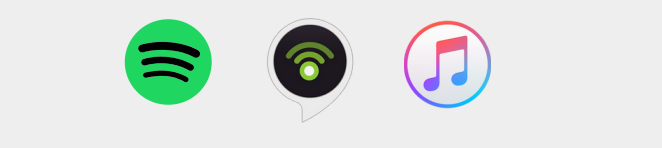
### Netanyahu to Meet Trump on 29 December

United States President Donald Trump will host Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House on 29 December, according to a government spokesperson in Tel Aviv. The announcement came a day after Mr Netanyahu said he expected to discuss the second phase of the ceasefire in Gaza with Mr Trump, as well as “opportunities for peace” in the region.



Mr Netanyahu added that the second phase of the ceasefire will be “more difficult”. Photo: AFP

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