

MEIWeekly.



US President Donald Trump intensified his threats against Iran this week, warning that he could soon mount an attack “with speed and violence” if American demands were not met. He said a “massive armada” was heading towards Iran and the nation should make a deal now. Iran warned of retaliation should it be attacked. Photo: AFP

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

READ: Once seen as oil exporters and labour hubs, the Gulf states are quietly building durable soft power in Asia — through renewable energy, humanitarian aid, and resilience projects. Read this MEI Perspective [here](#).

WHAT’S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

US Forces Weigh New Military Options Against Iran

Mr Trump was presented with an expanded set of options to further damage the Islamic Republic’s nuclear and missile facilities or weaken its Supreme Leader. The options went beyond what he previously considered and included the possibility of US raids on Iranian sites.

European Union Lists Irgc a Terrorist Group

The move brings the European Union (EU) in line with the US and Canada, which have already labelled Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (Irgc) a terrorist group. This decision comes after the group’s brutal and bloody crackdown on protesters in recent weeks.



The European Union will also impose sanctions, including asset freezes and travel bans, on 21 Iranian individuals and entities, a move meant to signal the bloc’s strong opposition to what was happening in the country. Photo: AFP

Netanyahu Vows to Cut Reliance on American Military Aid

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu blamed some Israeli troop deaths in Gaza on ammunition shortages linked to a pause in US arms deliveries during Biden’s term. He said that Israel had “come of age” and will aim to end the financial component of US military aid within a decade.

CALENDAR: MEI EVENTS

ICYMI: China’s Digital Silk Road in the Middle East

China’s technology footprint in the Middle East — particularly across the Gulf — is expanding rapidly, turning the region into a key testing ground for Beijing’s digital ambitions. This MEI webinar examined how firms such as Huawei and Alibaba are growing their presence through cloud services, artificial intelligence (AI) deployments, data-centre investments, and partnerships with regional governments and businesses. Missed the discussion? Watch the video or listen to the podcast [here](#).



The webinar examined Beijing’s strategic goals, including securing long-term connectivity and setting digital standards in the Middle East. Photo: AFP

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP A WATCH ON

Turkey Makes Last-Ditch Attempt to Mediate Tehran Crisis

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan proposed a video conference between US President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, a high-risk diplomatic move that may appeal to Washington but is likely to unsettle the Islamic Republic. Meanwhile, Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is set to visit Ankara for talks aimed at preventing a US attack, as Turkish officials press Tehran to offer concessions on its nuclear programme to avert a potentially devastating conflict.



Senior defence and intelligence officials from Israel and Saudi Arabia were also in Washington for talks on Iran this week, Axios reported on Thursday. Photo: AFP

Saudi Arabia Pulls Back on Major Projects, Including Neom

After months of signalling a more restrained approach to spending, Riyadh has begun making difficult trade-offs. The Kingdom has ordered reviews of its most ambitious developments, including projects in Neom, Jeddah, and Riyadh. Reports suggest that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), who chairs the Neom project, now envisions a development that is “far smaller” than initially conceived, reflecting a growing recognition of delays, cost overruns, and weaknesses in the project’s original design and execution.

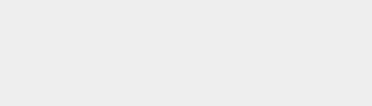


Saudi Arabia is also considering overhauls or delays to projects such as The Line, The Mukaab, and the 2029 Asian Winter Games. Photo: AFP

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