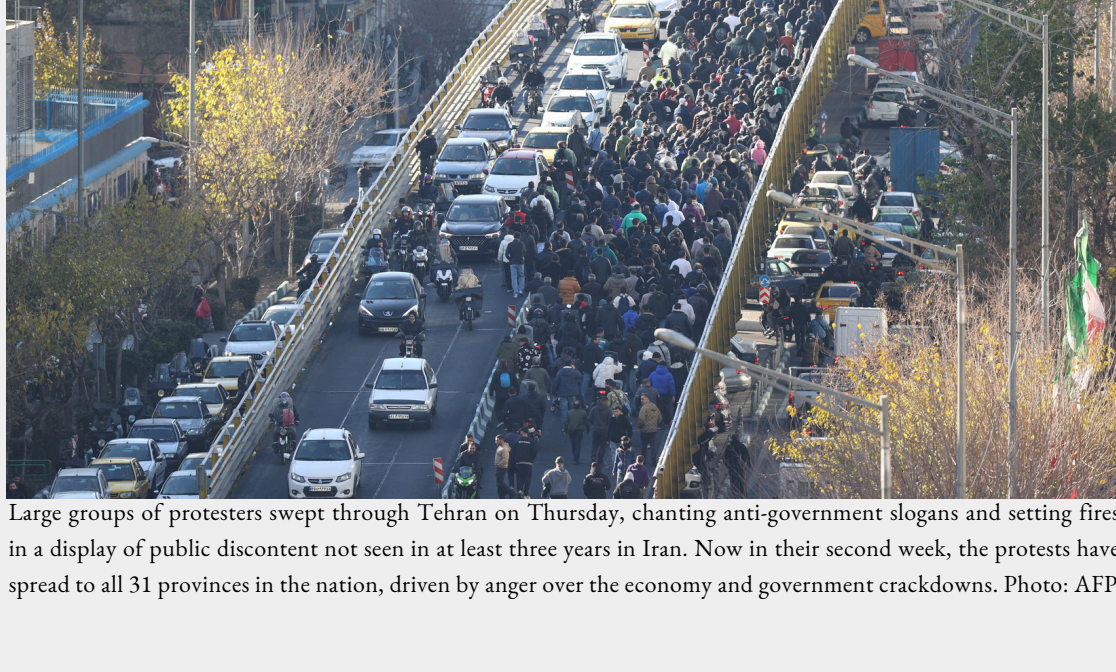


# MEIWeekly.



Large groups of protesters swept through Tehran on Thursday, chanting anti-government slogans and setting fires in a display of public discontent not seen in at least three years in Iran. Now in their second week, the protests have spread to all 31 provinces in the nation, driven by anger over the economy and government crackdowns. Photo: AFP

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

**READ:** Is Dubai heading towards another property crash? Early signs of overheating echo the 2008–09 crisis, making timely regulation and oversight crucial. Read the article [here](#).

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

### Deadly Mass Protests Enter Day 12 in Iran, Internet Cut Off

Security forces were reported to have killed at least 45 people since protests began 12 days ago as pressure on the Iranian regime increased. Authorities also cut off phone service and internet access in the capital and several parts of the country as protests were reaching a boiling point.

### Saudi Arabia Accuses UAE of Helping Yemeni Separatist Escape

Saudi intelligence determined that the Southern Transitional Council leader, Aidarous al-Zubaidi, fled Yemen on a boat to Somalia early Wednesday morning and that he took a plane from there to the Emirates. This claim deepened the rift between the regional powerhouses.



On Wednesday, a delegation from the Southern Transitional Council arrived in Riyadh after receiving an invitation for talks about their secession bid. However, Mr al-Zubaidi (pictured) was not among them, despite a Saudi demand that he attend. The delegation became unreachable as soon as they landed there, their colleagues said. Photo: AFP

### Syria Declares Ceasefire After Army-Militia Clash

After days of deadly clashes with Kurdish fighters, Syria’s defence ministry announced a ceasefire in several neighbourhoods of Aleppo. This violence came as a deal to merge the Kurds’ administration and military into the government stalled, with both sides trading blame.

## CALENDAR: MEI EVENTS

### China’s Digital Silk Road in the Middle East

Join MEI for this webinar to understand the growing role of Chinese tech firms in the Middle East — especially the Gulf — and why it has become a key arena for Beijing’s digital ambitions. Drawing on recent research, this online event will explore how companies such as Huawei and Alibaba have expanded their presence in the region’s digital ecosystems through cloud infrastructure, artificial intelligence applications, data-centre investments, and partnerships with local governments and firms. To sign up, click [here](#).



This webinar will also explore Beijing’s broader strategic considerations, including its interest in securing long-term connectivity and establishing its digital standards in the Middle East. Photo: AFP

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP A WATCH ON

### Bulgarian Diplomat to Head US-Proposed Gaza ‘Peace Board’

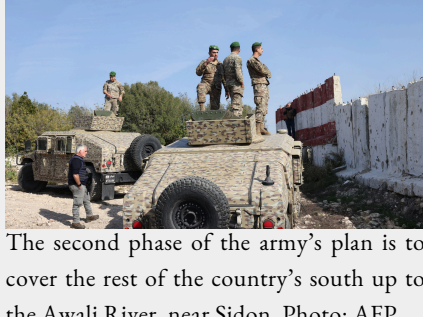
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that former United Nations (UN) Middle East envoy and Bulgarian diplomat, Mr Nickolay Mladenov (pictured), has been appointed director-general of US President Donald Trump’s Board of Peace, which will oversee the peace process in Gaza. This move represented a significant step forward for Mr Trump’s Middle East peace plan, with the full list of board members expected to be announced later this month.



Mr Mladenov was a former Bulgarian defence and Bulgarian diplomat, who served as the UN envoy to Iraq before being appointed its Mideast peace envoy from 2015 - 2020. Photo: AFP

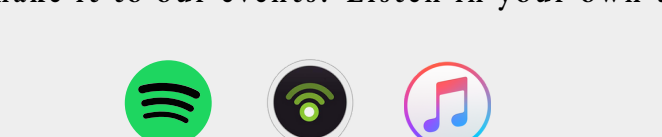
### Lebanon Says First Phase of Plan to Disarm Hezbollah Complete

Lebanon’s army announced the completion of the first phase of its plan to disarm Hezbollah in the south of the country. Israel described the move as encouraging but “far from sufficient”. Under heavy US pressure and amid concerns over potential Israeli strikes, Lebanon has pledged to disarm the Iran-backed militant group, which was severely weakened after more than a year of fighting, including two months of full-scale war that ended with a ceasefire in November 2024.



The second phase of the army’s plan is to cover the rest of the country’s south up to the Awali River, near Sidon. Photo: AFP

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