

MEIWeekly.



Iranian state media reported today that overnight American strikes hit an airport, a railway station in the port city of Bandar Abbas and two bridges in the southern area close to the Strait of Hormuz. The US said it launched a sixth consecutive night of strikes on the Islamic Republic “to further degrade Iranian military capabilities”. Photo: AFP

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

READ: [Heard@theSouq](#) explores the growing Saudi-UAE rivalry and how the widening strategic divide between them is reshaping Gulf politics, alliances, and regional cooperation. Head to your read [here](#).

READ: This article explores how Iran turned memes, AI-generated visuals, and digital storytelling into weapons of influence during its confrontation with the US and Israel. To read, click [here](#).

WHAT’S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

US Steps Up Iran Attacks as Tehran Hits Back at Gulf States

Amid escalating rhetoric from both sides, six consecutive days of back-and-forth attacks threatened to pull the region back into a total war. Tehran asked its allies in Yemen, the Houthis, to be prepared to close the oil route through the Red Sea if the US targeted Iranian energy infrastructure.

Israeli Government Passes Divisive Laws Before Elections

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu backed a series of laws undermining legal oversight of the government, benefiting allied media outlets and aiming to shore up ultra-Orthodox political support. This could extend to wholesale exemptions from military service for ultra-Orthodox men.



With the Israeli premier’s coalition trailing in the polls, analysts noted that the new legislation appears aimed at cementing his alliances in case he gets another shot at forming a government — either this time or in a future round. Photo: AFP

Trump U-Turns on Charging Hormuz Fee

US President Donald Trump announced a reversal of plans to charge a 20 per cent toll on cargo going through the Strait of Hormuz, saying that Middle Eastern countries will instead make investment and trade deals with Washington in exchange for safe passage through the key waterway.

CALENDAR: MEI EVENTS

ICYMI: Gulf States Amid the Iran War

The conflict between the US-Israel and Iran marked a turning point for Gulf security, with states across the region facing an unprecedented wave of missile and drone attacks from Tehran. This event brought together regional experts to examine how Gulf governments were managing immediate security challenges, protecting their populations, and responding to the economic disruptions caused by the conflict. Speakers also discussed the longer-term implications for Gulf states as they reassess their security partnerships, domestic reform priorities, and reliance on external powers for regional stability. To watch the event or listen to the podcast, click [here](#).



The UAE was hit the hardest in the conflict as the Islamic Republic targeted the country with over 2,800 missiles and drones. Photo: AFP

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP A WATCH ON

Pentagon Approves US\$2 Billion Weapons Sales to Riyadh

The US State Department said Wednesday it approved the sale of an estimated US\$1.96 billion in weapons to bolster Saudi Arabia’s air defences as the war ramps up in the Middle East. “This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a major non-Nato (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) ally that is a force for political stability and economic progress in the Gulf region”, the State Department said in a release.



This move comes as Riyadh appears to be on the brink of renewed war with Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthis. Photo: AFP

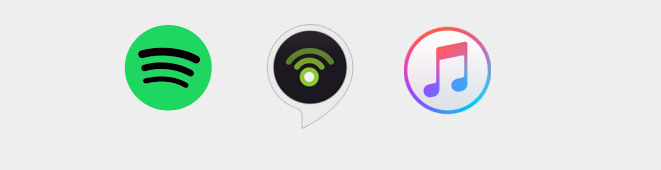
UAE Rewarded With Coveted AI Chips

Abu Dhabi gained expanded access from the US to coveted artificial-intelligence chips after aiding America in recent months by carrying out dozens of airstrikes against Iran, intercepting hundreds of missiles and keeping oil moving through the Strait of Hormuz. This move by Washington to give greater AI capabilities to the UAE caps a yearslong push by the Gulf state to obtain American technology to diversify its economy.



The UAE’s flagship AI firm, G42, can freely buy chips and has a plan to become a US company. Photo: AFP

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