



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume III, Issue 25 | June 21, 2021

Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003
www.delhipolicygroup.org



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW Volume III, Issue 25

ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on strategic and international issues of critical national interest. DPG is a non-partisan institution and is independently funded by a non-profit Trust. Over past decades, DPG has established itself in both domestic and international circles and is widely recognised today among the top security think tanks of India and of Asia's major powers.

Since 2016, in keeping with India's increasing global profile, DPG has expanded its focus areas to include India's regional and global role and its policies in the Indo-Pacific. In a realist environment, DPG remains mindful of the need to align India's ambitions with matching strategies and capabilities, from diplomatic initiatives to security policy and military modernisation.

At a time of disruptive change in the global order, DPG aims to deliver research based, relevant, reliable and realist policy perspectives to an actively engaged public, both at home and abroad. DPG is deeply committed to the growth of India's national power and purpose, the security and prosperity of the people of India and India's contributions to the global public good. We remain firmly anchored within these foundational principles which have defined DPG since its inception.

DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW

DPG West Asia Review contains major developments in West Asia of strategic relevance to India, compiled from open source media. To subscribe please [click here](#).

Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Sanket Joshi at sanket@dpg.org.in.

© 2021 by the Delhi Policy Group

Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre,
Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003.
www.delhipolicygroup.org

DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW
Volume III, Issue 25

Contents

Abstract	i
Bahrain.....	1
Egypt	2
Iraq	3
Iran.....	4
Israel.....	5
Jordan.....	7
Kuwait.....	8
Lebanon.....	9
Oman	10
Qatar	11
Saudi Arabia.....	12
Syria.....	13
Turkey.....	14
UAE	15
Yemen.....	16

Abstract

In an important development, 'Ebrahim Raisi'- Chief Justice of Iran has been elected as the country's next President. Prime Minister Modi congratulated the new Iranian President and stressed "further strengthening warm ties between India and Iran". United States on the other hand regretted that Iranians were not able to participate in a "free and fair electoral process", nonetheless Washington promised to continue talks on US re-joining the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett expressed deep concerns about President-elect Ebrahim Raisi, highlighting his past record of a "hangman who led death committees that executed thousands of innocent Iranian citizens through the years". Further, former deputy director of Mossad and current head of the Knesset's (Israeli Parliament) Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee Ben-Barak stressed that, "hardliner Raisi's victory is a proof of Iran's radicalization on nuclear, terror policies... and it poses a big challenge for the West and Israel".

India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) has released visuals of two men suspected to be involved in a blast near the Israeli Embassy in New Delhi in January this year. In another development, Israeli government has confirmed 'Naor Gilon' as Tel Aviv's next Ambassador to India. Importantly, India's Ministry of External Affairs expects close bilateral relations between New Delhi and Tel Aviv to continue under new Israeli government led by PM Naftali Bennett.

On the security front, India is tracking down the Malayali (hailing from Southern Indian state of Kerala) male cadres who joined the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Afghanistan. The exact number who joined the IS in Middle East is not known, however according to some reports this could be around 60 including women and children.

In terms of trade and investments, India has started exporting Geographical Indications (GI) certified 'Jalgaon Banana' (hailing from the Western Indian state of Maharashtra) to Dubai. In another development, Indian Ambassador to Egypt addressed 3P Egypt International Expo 2021 about "India – Egypt Business Promotion, Challenges, and Opportunities". Indian Ambassador stressed on the strategic location of Egypt, political stability and Cairo's liberal economic policies that has enabled Indian industry to invest more than USD 3.15 billion in Egypt.

India plays an important role in the food security of the Gulf countries. In FY21, India's agricultural exports (cereals, non-basmati rice, wheat, millets, maize, and

other coarse grains) have jumped 17.34 percent to USD 41.25 billion. Meanwhile Bahrain announced temporary suspension of new work permits to citizens from countries on its 'red list' (countries having high incidence of COVID-19) including India. On the other hand, as UAE eased travel restrictions imposed on passengers from India having a valid residence visa and fully vaccinated with UAE-approved COVID vaccines, Dubai's Emirates Airline will resume flights connecting India, South Africa and Nigeria to the city from June 23.

On the energy front, as the global demand for crude recovers, oil prices have risen reaching around USD72/barrel. Iraqi oil ministry expects oil prices to rise further touching USD80/barrel in the near time frame.

The JCPOA signatories concluded sixth round of Vienna talks on June 20. Enrique Mora, the European Union official who chaired the meeting stressed that, "we are closer to a deal, but still not quite there". The Russian Ambassador on the other hand underscored that, "there are few controversial points which require political decisions. Apparently diplomatic efforts to find common language have been almost fully exhausted. So the time has come for political decisions".

In a significant down scaling of its military presence, the United States is pulling out approximately eight Patriot anti-missile batteries from the Middle East countries that include Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System (Thaad) is also being removed from Saudi Arabia. This move comes amid Washington's global force posture review aimed at redeployment to confront the Chinese and Russian challenge.

As noted in the last week's West Asia Review, Turkey has signed a new USD 3.6 billion swap agreement with China, increasing the limit on their existing currency arrangement to USD 6 billion. This will deepen trade cooperation between Ankara and Beijing while further internationalising 'yuan' as Turkish traders are interested in dealing with their Chinese counterparts in 'yuan' as weakening of 'Lira' is becoming problematic for them. In a significant development, Turkish President Erdogan during his meeting with US President Biden at the NATO summit, made it clear that, Turkey will not change stance on the purchase of Russian S-400 missile defence system for which Washington has imposed sanctions on Ankara.

Links to major developments in West Asia of strategic relevance to India, compiled from open source media, can be found below.

Bahrain

[Bahrain Suspends New Work Permits for Citizens of India, Other 'Red List' Nations](#)

June 14, 2021, The Week

Weeks after suspending the entry of passengers from India and other nations on account of the COVID-19 situation, the Bahrain government has announced a temporary suspension of issuance of new work permits to citizens from countries on its 'red list' including India.

Egypt

[Indian Businesses Could Access Europe, West Asian & African Markets Through Egypt](#)

June 17, 2021, The Economic Times

Egypt is a politically stable country and has a liberal economy which has enabled Indian industry to invest more than \$ 3.15 billion in Egypt mentioned Ajit Gupte, Ambassador of India to Egypt in the virtual inaugural session themed “India – Egypt Business Promotion, Challenges, and Opportunities” of the 3P Egypt International Expo 2021 being held from June 15-16.

[Tallest Skyscraper in Africa Built by China Topped out in Egypt's New Capital](#)

June 19, 2021, Daily News Egypt

With a commanding view of the modern buildings sprouting up in the central business district (CBD) of Egypt's new administrative capital, guests from China and Egypt held a topping-out ceremony for the 385-meter-high Iconic Tower, which will be the tallest building in Africa upon completion.

Iraq

[Iraq Expects Oil Prices to Reach \\$80/barrel - State News Agency](#)

June 20, 2021, Reuters

Iraq expects oil prices to reach \$80 per barrel, the country's state news agency reported on Sunday (June 20), citing an oil ministry spokesman.

[Middle East Oil Prices Rise as Global Demand Recovers](#)

June 14, 2021, Oilprice.com

Demand outstripping supply has seen oil prices breach the \$70 per barrel mark and, contrary to several instances in May when intra-day trading stood above \$70 per barrel yet Brent settlements slid down eventually, the global benchmark is now comfortably above another threshold and reached around \$72/barrel.

[The US House of Representatives Votes to Repeal 2002 Iraq War Authorization](#)

June 17, 2021, NBC News

The House on Thursday (June 17) voted to repeal the 2002 war powers resolution that authorized the use of military force in Iraq, a reversal that Democrats have been trying to enact for years.

[Rocket Targets Iraq Base Hosting US Troops](#)

June 20, 2021, Arab News

At least one Katyusha rocket fell close to the perimeter of a military base (Ain al-Asad air base in western Anbar province) that hosts US troops in northern Iraq on Sunday (June 20), Iraq's military said.

[Iraq Estimates that \\$150 Billion of its Oil Money Has Been Stolen from the Country Since the US-led Invasion of 2003](#)

May 23, 2021, CNN

An estimated \$150 billion of stolen money has been smuggled out of Iraq in corrupt deals since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iraqi President Barham Salih said.

Iran

[World Reacts to Election of Iran's New Hardline President Ebrahim Raisi](#)

June 19, 2021, AL Jazeera

Ebrahim Raisi, Iran's hardline judiciary chief, has won a landslide victory in the country's presidential election, a vote that both propelled the supreme leader's protege into Tehran's highest civilian position and saw the lowest turnout in the Islamic republic's history.

[PM Modi Congratulates Iran's New President Ebrahim Raisi](#)

June 20, 2021, Mint

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Iran's new president Ebrahim Raisi and said that he looked forward to working with him to strengthen diplomatic ties between the two countries.

[Iran Nuclear Talks Make Progress in Vienna, Diplomats Say](#)

June 20, 2021, CNBC

Top diplomats said Sunday (June 20) that further progress had been made at talks between Iran and global powers to try to restore a landmark 2015 agreement to contain Iranian nuclear development. It was now up to the governments involved in the negotiations to make political decisions.

[Head of Knesset's Defense Panel: Iranian President Raisi Will be a 'Big Challenge' for Israel, West](#)

June 19, 2021, The Times of Israel

"Raisi's election as Iran's next president is conclusive evidence of [Supreme Leader Ali] Khamenei's decision to radicalize Iran's conduct on foreign, nuclear and terrorist policies," tweeted Ram Ben-Barak, a former Mossad deputy chief. "A big challenge has been placed at the door of the West and Israel."

Israel

[India's NIA Hunts Two Suspects for Blast near Israel Embassy, Releases Video](#)

June 15, 2021, Hindustan Times

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) released visuals of two men suspected to be involved in a blast near the Israel Embassy in Delhi in January this year.

[Naor Gilon is Next Israeli Ambassador to India](#)

June 20, 2021, The Tribune

Tel Aviv has confirmed the appointment of veteran diplomat Naor Gilon as the next Ambassador of Israel to India.

[Close Ties Expected to Continue between Israel & India Under New Israeli PM Naftali Bennett, officials say](#)

June 14, 2021, Moneycontrol

India and Israel had come increasingly closer both geo politically and economically under the outgoing Premier Benjamin Netanyahu, with an unprecedented convergence in foreign policy that is not expected to be weakened anytime soon, senior officials from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

[Karnataka Sets up 3 Centres of Excellence Under Indo-Israel Project](#)

June 17, 2021, Hindustan Times

The government of India and Karnataka jointly inaugurated three centres of excellence (CoE) in the southern state under the Indo-Israel Agricultural Project (IIAP).

[Israeli PM Bennett Warns against Nuclear Talks with Iran's 'Hangmen Regime'](#)

June 20, 2021, NBC News

Israel condemned the election of hardline judge Ebrahim Raisi as Iranian president, saying this would be a "regime of brutal hangmen" with which world powers should not negotiate a new nuclear deal.

[US Said to Boost Military Cooperation with Israel, Mideast Allies to Hinder Iran](#)

June 20, 2021, The Times of Israel

As it continues indirect talks with Iran on re-joining the 2015 nuclear accord, the United States has reportedly increased military coordination with Israel and with a number of moderate Middle Eastern countries in an effort to counter the threat posed to the region by the Islamic Republic.

[Clashes between Jews, Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem](#)

June 20, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

Jewish Israelis and Palestinians clashed in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem on Saturday night (June 19), amid continued tensions surrounding the planned eviction of dozens of Palestinian families from the neighborhood.

[Israel Ready to Establish Ties with Malaysia, Indonesia](#)

June 18, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Israel is willing to work towards establishing ties with Southeast Asia's Muslim majority nations, its ambassador to Singapore said.

Jordan

[Jordan's Unprecedented Palace Drama Moves to the Courtroom](#)

June 20, 2021, Associated Press

Jordan's version of a trial of the century gets under way Monday (June 21) when a relative of King Abdullah II and a former chief of the royal court are to be ushered into the defendants' cage at the state security court to face charges of sedition and incitement.

Kuwait

[Kuwait to Allow Vaccinated Foreigners Entry from August](#)

June 17, 2021, Arab News

Kuwait announced it would allow foreigners who have been fully vaccinated against the novel coronavirus to enter the country from August 1, after a months-long suspension.

Lebanon

[Lebanon's Hezbollah Hails Raisi's Election Win in Iran](#)

June 20, 2021, Arab News

The head of Lebanon's powerful Shiite movement Hezbollah congratulated ultraconservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi on winning Iran's presidential election, describing him as a "shield" against Israel and other "aggressors."

[Borrell: EU Aid Conditional to Reforms in Lebanon](#)

June 20, 2021, Middle East Monitor

European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that providing aid to Lebanon is conditional on carrying out economic reforms. "The crisis that Lebanon is going through is local and internal," Borrell said after his meeting with Lebanese President Michel Aoun in the capital Beirut.

Oman

[Yemen War: Omani Mediation and Reduced Air-strikes Increase Hope in Peace Talks](#)

June 10, 2021, Middle East Eye

With the Yemeni peace process crawling along, at best, Yemenis' hopes have been raised again by a visiting delegation from neighbouring Oman, a sultanate renowned for its mediating efforts.

Qatar

[Yemen's Houthis Ready for Peace Talks Hosted by Qatar](#)

June 17, 2021, Middle East Monitor

A member of the Supreme Political Council in the Houthi-led National Salvation Government has said the group is ready to take part in negotiations held by Qatar to help put an end to the six-year war against Yemen.

Saudi Arabia

[India Welcomes Saudi Arabia's Decision to Cancel Hajj 2021 due to Covid: Union Minister](#)

June 15, 2021, Mint

Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi has welcomed Saudi Arabia's decision to cancel Hajj this year amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and said the Indian government supports the move.

[India's Agriculture Exports Jump 17.34 Percent to \\$41.25 Billion in FY21](#)

June 10, 2021, Business Standard

India is seeing growth in the export of cereals, non-basmati rice, wheat, millets, maize, and other coarse grains. The largest markets for India's agricultural products are the US, China, Bangladesh, the UAE, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Nepal, Iran, and Malaysia.

[China-Arab States Expo in August to Deepen Economic Cooperation in post-COVID era](#)

June 18, 2021, Global Times

The 5th China-Arab States Expo will be held in Yinchuan, Northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region on August 19-22, focusing on deepening economic and trade cooperation in the post-COVID era, China's commerce ministry announced.

[Pentagon Pulls Missile Defense, other Systems from Saudi Arabia and other Middle East countries](#)

June 19, 2021, CNN

The Pentagon is pulling missile defense systems and other military hardware and personnel from Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Middle East, according to a defense official, as it realigns its mission and forces to confront China and Russia.

[Saudi Aramco Closes \\$12 Billion Pipeline Deal with China, UAE Backing](#)

June 19, 2021, Arabian Business

The consortium, led by U.S. firm EIG Global Energy Partners LLC, has now closed a deal to acquire a 49 percent equity stake in Aramco Oil Pipelines Co., a new subsidiary, according to an emailed statement.

Syria

[Search on for Remaining Malayali IS Cadre in Syria, Afghanistan](#)

June 13, 2021, The New Indian Express

Though the exact number of Malayalis who joined IS and did hijra (migration) to other countries is not known, it is estimated there could be 60 such people, including women and children.

[UN Agency Urges Renewal of NW Syria Cross-border Aid Operation](#)

June 20, 2021, Daily Sabah

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has called for a renewal of U.N. Security Council authorization for cross-border aid operations from Turkey to northwest Syria.

Turkey

[Erdogan Says he told President Biden Turkey to Keep Stance on S-400s](#)

June 17, 2021, AL Jazeera

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said he told his United States counterpart, Joe Biden, that Ankara will not change its stance on its Russian S-400 missile defences over which it has been sanctioned by Washington.

[China, Turkey to Boost Trade Volume in Local Currency](#)

June 21, 2021, China.org.cn

China and Turkey have demonstrated their determination to deepen their trade cooperation by signing a new swap agreement. A banking regulation source told Xinhua that Turkish tradespeople are interested in dealing with their Chinese counterparts in the yuan as the weakening of the lira had become problematic.

[Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran Hold Trilateral Meeting](#)

June 20, 2021, Middle East Monitor

A trilateral meeting between the foreign ministers of Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan was held in Antalya, Turkey on Sunday (June 20).

[Turkey Promoting Radical Islam among Yazidis in Northern Syria - Report](#)

June 01, 2021, Ahval

Turkey's top religious body, the Religious Affair Directorate (Diyanet), has built mosques in Yazidi villages to promote Islamization in the northern Syrian region of Afrin, Germany - based Society for Threatened Peoples International (STPI) said.

UAE

[India Starts Exporting GI-certified Jalgaon Banana to Dubai](#)

June 16, 2021, Mint

In a major boost to India's exports of Geographical Indications (GI) certified agricultural produce, a consignment of fibre and mineral rich 'Jalgaon Banana' has been shipped to Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

[UAE's Emirates Airline to Resume Flights from India to Dubai from June 23](#)

June 20, 2021, Business Standard

As Dubai eases travel curbs for passengers from India having valid residence visa, Emirates airline said it will resume flights connecting India, South Africa and Nigeria to the city from June 23.

Yemen

[Saudi Air-defences Intercept 17 Houthi Armed Drones](#)

June 20, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Saudi Arabian air defences late on Saturday (June 19) destroyed six armed drones launched by Yemen's Houthi movement towards the kingdom, bringing the total it intercepted during the day to 17.

[Dozens Killed in Northern Yemen as Battle for Strategic City of Marib Flares](#)

June 19, 2021, France 24

Renewed battles between government forces and Houthi rebels over the strategic city of Marib in northern Yemen have left 47 dead, including 16 pro-government forces, military sources said.



Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road
New Delhi - 110003
India

www.delhipolicygroup.org