



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



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Delhi Policy Group

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

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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](#).

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Abstract

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, issued a special video message marking 30 years of diplomatic relations with Israel. Underscoring that the age-old partnership has played a crucial role in the growth stories of the two nations, PM Modi called for setting new goals and achieving new milestones in the coming decades. On his part, Israeli PM, Naftali Bennett, lauded the "Gehri Dosti" (deep friendship) between the two countries while highlighting opportunities for "endless collaboration" in several areas including defence and economic cooperation.

India and Central Asian countries have decided to form a joint working group on Iran's 'Chabahar Port', to enhance the connectivity and free movement of goods and services. To bypass Pakistan, a direct container shipping route has been established between Chabahar and two Western Indian ports of Nhava Sheva and Kandla.

Amidst growing Chinese forays in the Indian Ocean, with a view to bolstering military presence, India will host a series of top security officials from Oman including its Navy Chief, Defence Secretary, and other important military delegates in February 2022.

In a disturbing development, Indian security officials believe Turkey is emerging as the 'New Dubai' for anti-India operations.

In a major boost to the Start-up ecosystem, India and UAE launched USD 150 million Venture Capital (VC) fund aiming to create 10 start-up unicorns by 2025.

As regards Vienna talks on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear program, "differences have emerged in the US negotiating team over their approach toward Tehran". Richard Nephew, Deputy Envoy for Iran, has resigned after advocating a tougher approach in talks. Underscoring the intense nature of negotiations held, Western diplomats have stressed that "everyone knows that we have reached the final stage of negotiations, what is now required is political decisions". Importantly, Brett McGurk, the White House's National Security Council Middle East Coordinator said that "we're in the ballpark of a possible deal... [but] there's also a very real chance that these talks could collapse very soon". Based on open-source intelligence, it appears that a major sticking point toward reaching an agreement is Iran's insistence on "US guarantees that its next President will not withdraw from the JCPOA, which is supposed to last until the end of 2030".

As the Houthi rebels continue their attacks on UAE, Abu Dhabi has reportedly asked Israel about the possibility of acquiring the 'Iron Dome Missile Defence System' (Rafael) which is effective against short-range rockets. Meanwhile, Israeli President, Isaac Herzog, arrived in UAE on January 30 for a landmark visit further strengthening the bilateral relations.

In a boost to Saudi Arabia-China defence cooperation, the Chinese Defence Minister and Saudi Deputy Defence Minister pledged to push forward "practical cooperation strengthening solidarity" between the two armies. Importantly, without any reference to the US, Beijing called for "joint opposition to hegemonic and bullying practices, to safeguard the interests of developing countries". In another development, China has reportedly "offloaded four million barrels of Iranian crude into the state reserve in the southern port city of Zhanjiang".

With regards to developments in Afghanistan, Qatar, Turkey and the Taliban have agreed on "several key issues" to operate Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport.

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

Bahrain

[Turkish Foreign Minister Meets Bahraini Counterpart in Manama](#)

January 30, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Mevlut Cavusoglu and his Bahraini counterpart had a meeting in the capital Manama, according to a diplomatic source. The two ministers discussed cooperation aimed at enhancing economic and trade relations. A meeting of the Joint Economic Commission between the two countries is planned to take place in March

Egypt

[Biden Administration Authorizes \\$2.5 Billion In Arms Sales To Egypt Despite Human Rights Concerns](#)

January 25, 2022, CNN

According to the announcement from the State Department, the administration has formally notified Congress of the intended sales of 12 C-130J Super Hercules aircraft and related equipment for \$2.2 billion and three SPS-48 Land-Based Radar and related equipment for \$355 million.

[US Cancels \\$130m Military Aid For Egypt Over Rights Concerns](#)

January 29, 2022, AL Jazeera

The Biden administration has announced that it is canceling \$130m in military aid to Egypt over human rights concerns, just days after the United States approved a massive \$2.5bn arms sale to the country.

[Egypt, UAE, Bahrain Discuss Regional Developments](#)

January 26, 2022, Middle East Monitor

In a statement by the Egyptian presidency, the meeting, which was also attended by the ruler of Dubai, discussed regional issues and "means to strengthen coordination and cooperation to promote the mechanisms of joint Arab action to confront the current challenges facing the region."

[Chinese Firm's Architecture Projects Strengthen Sino-Egyptian Friendship, Cooperation: Report](#)

January 30, 2022, CGTN

The architecture projects of the China State Construction Engineering Corporation (CSCEC) in Egypt have strengthened friendship and cooperation between China and Egypt, said a recent report issued by the Chinese firm CSCEC.

Iraq

[Rockets Hit Baghdad Airport Compound Near US Airbase](#)

January 28, 2022, AL Jazeera

At least three rockets have landed in the Baghdad International Airport compound and near an adjacent US airbase, damaging one disused civilian aeroplane, Iraqi police sources said.

Iran

[India-Central Asian Region To Form Joint Working Group on Chabahar Port](#)

January 29, 2022, The Economic Times

India and the Central Asian states have put Iran's Chabahar Port as the centrepiece of connectivity between South Asia's biggest market and the landlocked and resource rich region while cautioning against connectivity initiatives which were not transparent in nature.

[To Bypass Pak, India, Iran Launch 3rd Shipping Route to Chabahar](#)

January 24, 2022, The Tribune

A direct container shipping route has been established between Iran's southeastern port of Chabahar and two Western Indian ports of Nhava Sheva and Kandla. The first container service from this route will enter Iran's Shahid Beheshti port on February 16, Deputy Head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organisation (PMO) Jalil Eslami has said.

[China Puts 4m Barrels of Iranian Oil Into State Reserves](#)

January 21, 2022, Reuters

China has offloaded nearly four million barrels of Iranian crude oil into state reserve tanks in the southern port city of Zhanjiang over the past few weeks, a trade source and ship tracking specialist Vortexa Analytics said.

[Differences Splinter U.S. Team Negotiating with Iran on Nuclear Deal](#)

January 24, 2022, The Wall Street Journal

With talks to restore the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran reaching a critical phase, differences have emerged in the U.S. negotiating team over how tough to be with Tehran and when to walk away, according to people familiar with the negotiations.

[Time Running Out To Decide Whether Iran Can Make A Deal, Western Diplomats Say](#)

January 29, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

Negotiations for the US and Iran to return to the 2015 nuclear deal are nearing the point where a decision must be made or that agreement will no longer be salvageable, European diplomats said, as the negotiating teams returned to their capitals for consultations.

[Iran 'Will Consider' Direct Talks With US, Says Foreign Minister](#)

January 24, 2022, AL Jazeera

Tehran is willing to engage in direct talks with Washington if negotiations to revive the Iranian nuclear deal reach an advanced stage that requires such dialogue, Iran's foreign minister has said.

[Top Iranian Security Official Retracts Comments on Talks with US](#)

January 27, 2022, AL-Monitor

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani has said he will "never endorse direct negotiations with the United States," according to the hard-line daily Kayhan.

Israel

[30-years of India-Israel Friendship: PM Modi Says 'Time To Set New Goals' To Take Forward Ties](#)

January 29, 2022, Hindustan Times

Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised the decades-old relationship between India and Israel as he asserted that the cooperation between the two countries has played a key role in the growth stories of the two nations. He issued a special video message, marking 30 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel.

['Gehri Dosti' \(Deep Friendship\) Says Israeli PM Bennett as Israel and India Mark 30 Years of Diplomatic Ties](#)

January 30, 2022, The Economic Times

"Israel and India have a "gehri dosti", Deep Friendship. Today we honour 30 years of diplomatic relations between Israel and India. Thirty years of a wonderful partnership, a deep cultural connection, and military and economic cooperation," he said.

[Israel Will Not Commit To Any Agreement on Iran, Says PM Bennett](#)

January 29, 2022, Middle East Monitor

"The Israeli strategy doesn't depend on whether there's an agreement or not". "We will protect ourselves by ourselves. Even if there is an agreement, we're not committed to it. We will preserve our freedom to act."

[Israeli President Isaac Herzog in The UAE on First Visit](#)

January 30, 2022, AL Jazeera

Israeli President Isaac Herzog arrived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Sunday (January 30) on the first such visit, seeking to strengthen Gulf ties at a time of heightened regional tensions as world powers try to revive a nuclear deal with Iran.

[Israel Faces 3 Strategic Challenges: INSS](#)

January 26, 2022, Middle East Monitor

INSS explained that the challenges were "Iran and its nuclear activity, the Palestinian arena, and the domestic front."

[Israel Rejects Selling Iron Dome Defence System To UAE](#)

January 29, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Israeli security agencies have rejected selling the Iron Dome and David's Sling Weapons System to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Israel is afraid that selling this technology to the UAE means secrets could be passed to a third-party state.

[US, Israeli National Security Advisers Discuss State of Iran's Nuclear Program](#)

January 26, 2022, The Times of Israel

US NSA "Mr. Sullivan emphasized that while the United States remains committed to diplomacy as the best means for preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, Washington is preparing alternative options, in coordination with its partners, should diplomacy fail."

[Former IDF Chief Calls US Withdrawal From Iran Nuclear Deal 'a Strategic Mistake'](#)

January 28, 2022, The Times of Israel

According to former IDF Chief Gadi Eisenkot, top Israeli security officials were kept in the dark ahead of then-US president Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the 2015 accord, which curbed Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

[Israel Steps Up Scrutiny of Chinese Investments Under Pressure From US As It Seeks To Balance Ties](#)

January 30, 2022, South China Morning Post

Israel looks set to strengthen a mechanism it set up to vet Chinese investments for security concerns, amid mounting pressure from key ally the United States.

[Marking 30 Years of Ties, Israel and China Convene Joint Committee on Innovation](#)

January 24, 2022, The Times of Israel

The China-Israel Joint Committee on Innovation Cooperation met virtually, led by Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and China's Vice President Wang Qishan. The countries signed a three-year plan to regulate cooperation and government-to-government dialogue through 2024.

[President Biden 'No Different' from Trump for Palestinians: Fatah Official](#)

January 25, 2022, Middle East Monitor

A top Palestinian official criticised US President Joe Biden's policy on the Palestinian issue, saying he is "no different" from his predecessor Donald Trump.

Jordan

[India Aims to Enhance Trade, IT Cooperation with Jordan – Ambassador Anwar Haleem](#)

January 22, 2022, The Jordan Times

India's Ambassador to Jordan Anwar Haleem highlighted the "commonalities of ideas and principles" between Amman and New Delhi. Speaking on the occasion of Jordan's 60th National Day, he expressed hope regarding the Kingdom's upcoming decisions relating to investments and customs duties.

[King Abdullah Praises Jordan's Progress Despite Challenges In 60th National Day Letter](#)

January 30, 2022, The National News

Jordan has been a "land of achievement" despite recent economic difficulties, King Abdullah II said in a letter to the nation to mark his 60th National Day on Sunday (Jan 30). "Jordan has proven that it is the land of goodness, and the homeland of achievement and distinction, despite its limited resources," King Abdullah II said in his letter.

Kuwait

[Kuwait Wealth Fund Picks 1.02 Percent Stake in Maruti Suzuki](#)

January 26, 2022, The New Indian Express

Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), one of the world's oldest sovereign wealth funds, picked up a 1.02 percent stake in India's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki, Q3 FY22 shareholding pattern of the company revealed.

[US, 'Vital-Partner' Kuwait Sync Joint Interests](#)

January 29, 2022, Arab Times

Kuwait and the United States renewed their joint commitment to boosting stability and security within the region, as well as bolstering joint interests. This came in a joint statement following the fifth round of strategic dialogue between the US and Kuwait in Washington DC.

[Kuwaiti Paper Pushes Normalization with Israel, Criticizes Palestinians](#)

January 30, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

An editorial published over the weekend in the Kuwaiti daily Arab Times called for Gulf states to normalize relations with Israel, questioning why they supported the Palestinians despite the Palestinians repeatedly insulting the Gulf states.

Lebanon

[Lebanon Will Not 'Hand Over' Hezbollah Weapons: Foreign Minister](#)

January 29, 2022, AL Jazeera

"I am not going (to Kuwait) to hand over Hezbollah's weapons. I am not going to end Hezbollah's existence; it is out of the question in Lebanon. We are going for dialogue," Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib said, referring to a meeting aimed at mending ties between Beirut and Gulf Arab states.

[Gulf States Review Lebanon's Response To Proposal To Ease Row](#)

January 30, 2022, Arab News

Kuwait said that a Lebanese response to a list of suggested measures to ease a diplomatic rift with Gulf countries is currently under review.

Oman

[India To Host Slew of Oman's Defence Teams and Joint Exercises To Bolster Military Ties Amid China's Indian Ocean Forays](#)

January 30, 2022, The Economic Times

Eyeing to bolster its military presence amid China's rising ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region, New Delhi will be hosting a series of defence and military delegations from its oldest strategic partner in the Gulf -- Oman -- beginning with the visit of its Defence Secretary from Monday (Jan 31) followed by the Naval chief and other military delegates in February.

Qatar

[Qatar's Emir Set For First White House Meeting With President Biden](#)

January 30, 2022, AL Jazeera

Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani is set to visit the White House this week for his first in-person meeting with US President Joe Biden, as analysts say the Gulf country again finds itself uniquely situated to play a critical role in United States foreign policy.

Saudi Arabia

[New Horizons for A Historic India-Saudi Arabia Friendship: Amb. Dr. Saud Bin Mohammed Al Sati](#)

January 27, 2022, The Hindu

The camaraderie between Saudi Arabia and India rests on centuries of socio-economic, cultural, and civilizational interaction. However, the last decade has been particularly seminal in shaping the spectrum of strategic relations the two countries share. The transformative reforms in both countries have offered limitless possibilities in multiple domains.

[China, Saudi Arabia Set For Closer Military Ties As Sun Sets For US In Middle East](#)

January 27, 2022, South China Morning Post

Chinese Defence Minister in virtual meeting with Saudi side urges joint opposition to 'hegemonic and bullying practices', in apparent reference to the US. Wei Fenghe also hailed Saudi Arabia's 'strong support' for policies on Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang – all major friction points in US-China ties.

Syria

[Israel Said Holding Talks With Russia Over Syria Standoff, May Limit Air Campaign](#)

January 24, 2022, The Times of Israel

Israeli military officials are reportedly holding talks with Russian army officers to calm tensions after Moscow's Defense Ministry said that it held a joint air patrol with Syria along the latter's borders, including in the Golan Heights area.

[Assad Regime Announces Prosecuting US Officials](#)

January 29, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Bashar Al-Assad regime called on the US to withdraw its forces from Syrian territories, threatening that it would prosecute officials in the administration and US forces.

[Over 330 Killed Since ISIS Attacked Syria Prison: Monitor](#)

January 30, 2022, AL Arabiya

More than 330 people have been killed in heavy fighting since ISIS militants first attacked a prison in northeast Syria, a war monitor said.

[Islamic State Strikes From Shadows In Vulnerable Syria, Iraq](#)

January 30, 2022, Outlook

With a spectacular jail break in Syria and a deadly attack on an army barracks in Iraq, the Islamic State group was back in the headlines the past week, a reminder of a war that formally ended three years ago but continues to be fought mostly away from view.

Turkey

[Turkey Emerging as New Dubai in Anti-India Operations: Report](#)

January 30, 2022, The Tribune

Turkey is the new Dubai as far as influence operations against Kashmir are concerned, concur security officials who are now detecting attempts to expand its ambit to cover the Indian mainland Muslims as well as raise doubts about India's foreign policy.

[Qatar, Turkey, Taliban Agree on 'Key Issues' To Run Kabul Airport](#)

January 28, 2022, Daily Sabah

Qatar, Turkey and Afghanistan's Taliban-led interim government agreed on "several key issues" to operate the Kabul Hamid Karzai International Airport.

[President Erdogan Sacks Statistics Chief After Record Annual Inflation](#)

January 29, 2022, AL Jazeera

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has sacked the head of the state statistics agency, after data showed last year's inflation rate hit a 19-year high of 36.1 percent.

[President Erdogan Confirms Israeli President To Visit Turkey Next Month](#)

January 27, 2022, Middle East Monitor

"This visit could open a new chapter in relations between Turkey and Israel," said the Turkish leader. "We are ready to take steps in Israel's direction in all areas, including natural gas."

UAE

[New \\$150m UAE-India Fund Aims To Create 10 \\$1bn Start-Ups by 2025](#)

January 29, 2022, Arabian Business

India-UAE VC Fund will be funded by investors across UAE, India and wider GCC countries.

[Amid Attacks, UAE Quietly Asks Israel About Defense Systems Including Iron Dome: Sources](#)

January 25, 2022, Breaking Defence

The United Arab Emirates has quietly and unofficially asked Israel about acquiring missile defense systems to help protect it from Houthi missile attacks.

[UAE Intercepts Houthi Missile Attack as Israeli President Visits](#)

January 31, 2022, Reuters

The United Arab Emirates said it had intercepted a ballistic missile fired by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi movement as the UAE hosted Israel's President Isaac Herzog in a first such visit.

Yemen

[2,000 Children Recruited by Yemen's Houthis Died Fighting: UN](#)

January 30, 2022, AL Jazeera

Nearly 2,000 children recruited by Yemen's Houthi rebels have died on the battlefield, the United Nations says, and the group is sourcing key components for weapon systems from companies in the Middle East, Europe and Asia.



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