



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume IV, Issue 25 | June 20, 2022

Delhi Policy Group

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

www.delhipolicygroup.org



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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](#).

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

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Abstract

President Biden is scheduled to visit the Middle East (Israel, West Bank, and Saudi Arabia) between July 13-16, 2022. During Biden's visit, India, Israel, US, and UAE will hold the first virtual summit of "I2U2" (West Asia Quad). Discussions will center on food security, technology, trade, climate, and other areas of cooperation. The White House believes President Biden's visit to the region and I2U2 Summit will re-energize American alliances globally. Meanwhile, Eynat Shlein, Head of MASHAV- Israeli Agency for International Development Cooperation visited India to further deepen India-Israel partnership in the fields of agriculture and water.

US investment management company 'Blackstone' has piped Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) to the top position in Private Equity investments in India in 2021. Blackstone invested USD 4.9 billion in India, compared to USD 3.3 billion by PIF.

On the energy front, Russia has overtaken Saudi Arabia as India's second-biggest crude supplier in May 2022. Reportedly, Russian crude was bought at a discount of USD 30/barrel as the West continued to shun Russian gas for its "special military operation" in Ukraine. Amidst the EU's intent to completely wean itself off the Russian gas, Egypt, Israel, and the EU signed a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding for the export of natural gas to Europe from the Eastern Mediterranean region.

Meanwhile, as major central banks hiked interest rates heightening concerns over growth, crude prices fell to around USD 112/barrel. Even as OPEC+ agreed to increase crude production by 648,000 barrels a day in July and August 2022, reports highlighted OPEC's falling output in May, a sign that the group could struggle to cool oil markets. "Many OPEC members are reportedly producing at full capacity, with only Saudi Arabia and UAE believed to have sufficient spare capacity to boost production".

Ahead of President Biden's forthcoming visit to the Middle East, Israeli Defence Minister, Benny Gantz, called for a "US-led regional force buildup" against Iran. Gantz, however, did not make clear whether "force" referred to a joint military unit or more general capabilities. In the meantime, as Iran nuclear talks remained stalled, Washington imposed sanctions on a network of Iranian petrochemical producers and alleged front companies in China and the United Arab Emirates for

evading sanctions by supporting the sale of Iranian petrochemicals abroad. Iranian President, Ebrahim Raisi warned that the US sanctions undermine nuclear talks.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon appointed by UN Secretary-General has imposed life sentences on two members of 'Hezbollah' for their involvement in the 2005 bombing that killed former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Even as Hezbollah refused to cooperate, UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, and Saudi Arabia called upon Lebanon to respect the Hague courts' verdict.

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

Bahrain

[Report: Officials Concerned Over Israeli Travel to UAE, Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt](#)

June 19, 2022, The Times of Israel

As the threat of an Iranian attack remains high in Turkey, top Israeli officials are concerned about travel to the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Jordan, and Egypt.

[Leaders of Egypt, Bahrain, and Jordan Discuss US Regional Summit to Be Hosted by Saudi Arabia](#)

June 20, 2022, Arab News

The US regional summit in Jeddah, scheduled for next month, topped the agenda of a trilateral meeting between Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa and Jordan's King Abdullah in Sharm El-Sheikh.

Egypt

[EU Signs Gas Deal with Egypt and Israel to Curb Dependence on Russia](#)

June 15, 2022, Deutsche Welle

The European Union, Egypt and Israel signed a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding for the export of natural gas to European countries. The deal which was signed in Cairo will help reduce the bloc's energy dependence on Russia amid the Ukraine invasion.

[Russia 'important partner' for Egypt, President El-Sisi Tells St. Petersburg Forum](#)

June 18, 2022, Arab News

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has praised Egypt-Russia relations during a speech at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

[G7 Ambassadors on Food Security: G7 Stand to Support Egypt in Grain Crisis Caused by Russia](#)

June 14, 2022, US Embassy in Egypt

The price for wheat in world markets is at an all-time high, at 160% of pre-crisis levels. All signs point towards even harder challenges to come. According to the G7 Ambassadors, it is Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine that endangers the supply of grain to the world.

Iraq

[OPEC Oil Output Fell in May, Adding to Pressure on Cartel](#)

June 14, 2022, The Wall Street Journal

Oil production among the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) slumped in May, adding pressure on the cartel after it pledged to stabilise an undersupplied market by pumping more crude.

[Oil Prices Fall as Investors Worry Rate Hikes from Major Central Banks Could Slow Growth](#)

June 20, 2022, CNBC

Oil prices wobbled to around USD 110 a barrel as investors refocused on tight supplies, however, the sentiment was still fragile following a 6 per cent drop the previous day amid concerns about slowing global economic growth and fuel demand.

[Turkish Intelligence Eliminates so-called High-level PKK Member in Iraq](#)

June 19, 2022, Daily Sabah

Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT) has eliminated another high-ranking member of the PKK in Iraq's Sulaymaniyah, security sources said.

[Iraq's Lake Sawa Grows Increasingly Dry Amid Water Crisis](#)

June 13, 2022, The Arab Weekly

This year, for the first time in its centuries-long history, the lake Sawa has dried up. A combination of mismanagement by local investors, government neglect and climate change has ground down its azure shores to chunks of salt.

Iran

[US Targets Chinese, UAE Companies in New Iran Sanctions](#)

June 16, 2022, AL Jazeera

The United States has imposed sanctions on Chinese and Emirati companies, as well as a network of Iranian petrochemical producers, accusing them of helping to “evade sanctions” by supporting the sale of Iran’s petrochemical products abroad.

[Iran's President Slams US for Imposing New Sanctions, Says They Undermine Talks](#)

June 17, 2022, The Times of Israel

Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi criticised the United States for imposing new sanctions on petrochemical producers in the Islamic Republic, amid a deadlock in talks aimed at reviving a nuclear deal.

[Israel Destroyed Several Iranian Arms Convoys in Iraq](#)

June 14, 2022, Ashraq-AL Awsat

Israel has carried out numerous strikes against truck convoys smuggling Iranian weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon, revealed an Israeli source.

[Iran Responds to UAE's Concerns over Tehran's Nuclear Plans](#)

June 19, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Iran told the United Arab Emirates that Tehran gave a high priority to improving ties with its neighbours, Iranian state media reported, a day after the UAE voiced concern over Tehran's nuclear programme.

[Russian President Putin Defends War in Ukraine, Calls for Investment During St. Petersburg Economic Forum Address](#)

June 17, 2022, Deutsche Welle

Russian President Vladimir Putin defended the war in Ukraine during a combative Saint Petersburg speech, while also saying his country would continue to expand economic cooperation “with those who want to.”

Israel

[President Biden to Travel to Middle East in July, White House Says](#)

June 14, 2022, Politico

President Joe Biden will travel to the Middle East next month (July 13-16), making stops in Israel, the West Bank and then Saudi Arabia, where he'll seek to rebuild relations after vowing to make the kingdom a "pariah."

[Israel Calls For US-Led Regional Force Build-up Against Iran](#)

June 14, 2022, AL Arabiya

Israel and Arab countries that have shared concerns about Iran should build up a joint force under US aegis, the Israeli defence minister said ahead of a visit to the region by US President Joe Biden.

[I2U2 Grouping of India, Israel, UAE and US to Re-energise American Alliances Globally: The White House](#)

June 15, 2022, The Times of India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Joe Biden, Israeli PM Bennett, and UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed would attend the first-of-its-kind virtual summit of the I2U2 grouping next month for discussions on food security and other areas of cooperation.

[Israel Deepens Strategic Partnership with India in Agriculture and Water](#)

June 17, 2022, The Economic Times

Ambassador Eynat Shlein, Head of MASHAV- Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel, visited India with an aim to further strengthen Israel-India strategic partnership and development cooperation in the fields of agriculture and water.

[Israel, India Prepare to Resume Free Trade Agreement Talks](#)

June 13, 2022, Reuters

Israel and India are preparing to resume talks on a free trade agreement, Israel's Economy Ministry said, adding that an Indian delegation had arrived in Jerusalem to discuss framework rules and coordinate expectations for negotiations.

[Russia Seeking to Pass Resolution against Israel in UN Security Council](#)

June 19, 2022, Mehr News Agency (Iran)

The Zionist sources announced that Russia plans to take international action against Tel Aviv in the wake of recent Israeli attacks on Damascus International Airport, which have led to the suspension of operations there.

Jordan

[Saudi Crown Prince to Visit Egypt and Jordan Before Turkey](#)

June 19, 2022, Middle East Eye

A Saudi diplomat said that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman will begin a regional tour on Monday (June 20) in Egypt that is set to take him to Turkey to increase regional ties.

Kuwait

[Afghanistan's Flag Carrier to Resume India, China, Kuwait Flights](#)

June 10, 2022, The Times of India

Afghanistan's flag carrier, Ariana Afghan Airlines, announced that it will soon resume flights to India, China, and Kuwait.

Lebanon

[UN Chief Calls on Lebanon to Respect Hague Court's Verdict on Rafik Hariri Killing](#)

June 18, 2022, Arab News

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called on authorities in Beirut to respect the decision of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which imposed life sentences on two members of Hezbollah for involvement in the 2005 bombing that claimed the life of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

[Saudi Arabia Demands Hariri Killers' Arrest 'for the Sake of Justice'](#)

June 17, 2022, Arab News

Saudi Arabia welcomed the unanimous verdict handed down by a UN-backed court for Lebanon against two Hezbollah agents for their role in 2005 bombing that killed former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and called on the international community to help arrest the perpetrators "for the sake of justice."

Oman

[Higher Oil Prices, Fiscal Efforts to Generate Substantial Surplus for Oman: IMF](#)

June 19, 2022, Zawya (Refinitiv)

Favourable oil prices and continued fiscal consolidation efforts are expected to generate substantial fiscal and external surpluses for Oman, and support higher growth over the medium term, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Qatar

[Chinese Firms Eye Gas Field Stakes in Qatar's LNG Expansion](#)

June 19, 2022, Doha News

China's national oil firms are in "advanced talks" with Qatar to invest in the world's largest liquified natural gas (LNG) project, North Field East expansion, and potentially purchase its fuel, under long-term contracts.

[Qatar Signs Italy's Eni as Second Partner in LNG Expansion After Cementing Lead as Top Exporter](#)

June 19, 2022, S&P Global

Qatar Energy said June 19 it signed up Italy's Eni as its second partner in the world's largest LNG expansion program after the Gulf state cemented its lead as the largest global exporter of the fuel, with buyers chasing to replace supplies from Russia.

Saudi Arabia

[Russia Overtakes Saudi Arabia to Become India's 2nd Biggest Oil Supplier](#)

June 14, 2022, The Economic Times

Russia has overtaken Saudi Arabia to become India's second-biggest supplier of oil behind Iraq as refiners snap up Russian crude available at a deep discount following the war in Ukraine, industry data showed.

[Blackstone Pips Saudi PIF To Top Slot in Private Equity Investments in India in 2021](#)

June 16, 2022, Business Standard

US private equity giant Blackstone overtook Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund Public Investment Fund to claim the top slot among private equity and sovereign funds in terms of investment in India in 2021.

[China's May Oil Imports from Russia Soar 55% To a Record, Surpass Saudi Supply](#)

June 20, 2022, The Economic Times

China's crude oil imports from Russia soared 55% from a year earlier to a record level in May, displacing Saudi Arabia as the top supplier, as refiners cashed in on discounted supplies amid sanctions on Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine.

[Palestinian Officials Concerned Over Warming Israeli-Saudi Ties](#)

June 17, 2022, Israel Hayom

Palestinian Authority officials in Ramallah are wary of warming ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia, following various reports on recent developments in the diplomatic arena.

[Saudi-Russia Relations 'as Good as The Weather in Riyadh', Saudi Energy Minister Says as Biden Visit Confirmed](#)

June 16, 2022, The New Arab

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said Russia-Saudi relations were 'as good as the weather in Riyadh', two days after US President Joe Biden confirmed he would be heading to the Gulf kingdom.

[What Do Saudis Want from Biden's Visit?](#)

June 16, 2022, Arab News

After nearly a year and a half when the Saudi-US relationship reached what could be described as rock bottom, Joe Biden – who in the heat of his election campaign pledged to turn the Kingdom into a “pariah” – is making a state visit in response to an invitation from King Salman.

Syria

[U.S. Secretly Reviews Israel's Plans for Strikes Against Iranian Targets in Syria](#)

June 16, 2022, The Wall Street Journal

Israel secretly coordinates with the U.S. on many of the airstrikes it carries out in Syria as the allies face a battlefield crowded with militant groups, Iranian-backed militias and foreign militaries, according to current and former U.S. officials.

[Moscow's Provocations in Syria Risk Conflict With US, Military Officials Warn](#)

June 18, 2022, AL Arabiya

Russia's forces carried out a number of operations against the US-led coalition in Syria this month, raising concerns that they may result in a direct conflict between US and Russian forces in Syria.

Türkiye

[FM Lapid Set to Visit Turkey amid Efforts to Thwart Iranian Attacks on Israelis There](#)

June 19, 2022, The Times of Israel

Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid is slated to depart for a brief trip to Turkey amid serious concerns that Iran is plotting to harm Israeli travellers in the nation.

['NATO Allies Working Actively to Address Turkey's Concerns'](#)

June 17, 2022, Daily Sabah

NATO allies take Turkey's "legitimate concerns" related to the fight against terrorism seriously in the context of Sweden's and Finland's membership applications, the security bloc's chief said, assuring that alliance members are working "actively to find a solution."

[Russia, Iran Won't Endorse Turkish Military Operation in Syria](#)

June 17, 2022, AL-Monitor

Turkey failed to garner Russian and Iranian backing for a fresh military intervention against Syrian Kurdish forces at the meeting of the Astana platform this week.

[President Erdogan Says Saudi Crown Prince to Visit, as Ties Warm](#)

June 17, 2022, Middle East Monitor

It will be the Crown Prince's first visit to Turkey since the killing of Saudi journalist, Jamal Khashoggi in the Kingdom's consulate in Istanbul.

UAE

[UAE Suspends Exports and Re-Exports of Indian Wheat for Four Months](#)

June 16, 2022, Business Standard

To stop Indian wheat from being re-sold, the UAE government has ordered a suspension of exports and re-exports of wheat and wheat flour originating from India for a period of four months.

[Kotak Mahindra Bank, UAE's ADIA To Invest USD 590 Million in Indian Office Spaces](#)

June 20, 2022, The New Indian Express

Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) along with an arm of Kotak Mahindra Bank will invest USD 590 million in Indian office spaces, both the entities announced.

[UAE Sets Out Vision for Space Travel to Be Shared with The World](#)

June 11, 2022, The National News

The Emirates was recently selected to lead the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, with Omran Sharaf, the Emirati engineer who guided its successful Mars mission, serving as its director for 2022 and next year.

Yemen

[Ansarullah Chief: Yemeni Forces Possess Indigenous Missiles Impervious to US Interception](#)

June 08, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

The leader of Yemen's popular 'Ansarullah' (Houthi) resistance movement says the country's armed forces are currently in possession of home-grown ballistic missiles that sophisticated US-made surface-to-air missile systems cannot intercept or shoot down.



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