



Delhi Policy Group

# DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume II, Issue 11 | March 16, 2020



# DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW

## Volume 2, Issue 11

### ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group is among India's oldest independent think tanks with its primary focus on international and strategic issues of critical national interest. Over the past decades, the Delhi Policy Group has established itself in both domestic and international circles, particularly in the area of national security.

In keeping with India's increasing global profile as a leading power and the accompanying dynamism of India's foreign and security policy, the Delhi Policy Group has expanded its focus areas to include India's broader regional and global role; India's initiatives to strengthen its strategic periphery; India's political, security and connectivity challenges and policies across the Indo-Pacific; and the strategic partnerships that advance India's rise. To support these goals, the DPG undertakes research, publishes policy reports and organises conferences on strategic and geo-political, geo-economic, and defence and security issues.

### 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](mailto:sanket@dpg.org.in).

© 2020 by the Delhi Policy Group

#### Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor,  
India Habitat Centre,  
Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003.  
[www.delhipolicygroup.org](http://www.delhipolicygroup.org)

## Contents

Bahrain.....	1
Egypt.....	2
Iraq.....	3
Iran.....	4
Israel.....	6
Jordan.....	8
Kuwait.....	9
Lebanon.....	10
Oman.....	11
Qatar.....	12
Saudi Arabia.....	13
Syria.....	14
Turkey.....	15
UAE.....	16
Yemen.....	17

## Bahrain

### [Bahrain Accuses Iran Of 'Biological Aggression' Over Covid-2019](#)

March 13, 2020, Al Jazeera

Bahrain accused Iran on Thursday of "biological aggression" by covering up the spread of the coronavirus and failing to stamp the passports of Bahraini travellers. Many of the recorded infections throughout the Gulf region are linked to travel to Iran, which hosts several important shrines and pilgrimage sites for Shia Muslims.

## Egypt

### [Egypt Shuts Schools, Universities for Two Weeks as Coronavirus Cases Increase](#)

March 15, 2020, Haaretz

Egypt said it will close schools and universities for two weeks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus as the number of cases rises, reaching 110 on Saturday with two deaths.

### [Egyptian Army Officers Said To Be Infected With Coronavirus: Report](#)

March 15, 2020, Middle East Eye

Egyptian media sources said that several army officers have been infected with the new coronavirus, Covid-19, but the Egyptian government has not announced it.

## Iraq

### ['Repeated Violations': Iraqi President Condemns US Air Strikes](#)

March 13, 2020, Al Jazeera

Iraq has condemned overnight US air strikes on Friday, with its military saying they killed six people and describing them as violation of sovereignty and a targeted aggression against the nation's regular armed forces.

### [U.S. Planning To Move Some Troops Out of Iraq](#)

March 16, 2020, NBC News

The U.S. military is planning to reposition hundreds of troops in Iraq, including moving some out of the country, according to three U.S. defense officials. The consolidation of forces will include removing U.S. troops from joint bases at al-Qaim near the Syrian border, Qayyarah Airfield West near Mosul and possibly K-1 Air Base in Kirkuk.

### [Iraq's Karbala Imposes Curfew To Curb Coronavirus](#)

March 15, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Authorities in Iraq's southern city of Karbala have declared a three-day curfew as part of effort to stem the spread of coronavirus.

### [British Soldier Killed in Missile Attack On Iraq's Camp Taji Was Female Lance Corporal Brodie Gillon, 26](#)

March 12, 2020, Daily Mail

The British servicewoman killed in a missile attack on Camp Taji in Iraq has named by the The Ministry of Defence Lance Corporal Brodie Gillon, 26, along with two American troops, was killed when 15 small rockets hit the military camp to the north of capital Baghdad on Wednesday.

### [US Launches Airstrikes In Iraq After Female Reservist Named As First Briton Killed In Combat Fighting IS](#)

March 13, 2020, The Telegraph

The US has launched airstrikes in Iraq after a British army medic was killed in a missile attack on a military base.

## Iran

### [Khamenei Calls Coronavirus 'Possible Biological Attack', Asks Guards To Contain It](#)

March 12, 2020, Bloomberg News

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the country's coronavirus outbreak could be part of a biological attack on the Islamic Republic, as he called on the armed forces to bolster the government's fight against the disease, according to a statement published by the semi-official Fars News agency.

### [Iran Postpones 2nd Round of Polls Over Coronavirus](#)

March 15, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Iran has postponed the second round of the country's parliamentary elections as part of its fight against coronavirus, Anadolu Agency reports.

### [U.S. Sanctions 'severely Hamper' Iran Coronavirus Fight, Rouhani Says](#)

March 14, 2020, Reuters

President Hassan Rouhani said Iran's fight against the coronavirus was being "severely hampered" by U.S. sanctions, as state television reported that the death toll from the illness rose on Saturday to 611, up nearly 100 from a day earlier.

### [U.S. To Keep Two Aircraft Carriers To 'deter Iran', Says Gen. McKenzie](#)

March 15, 2020, Tehran Times

The top U.S. military commander in the Middle East General Frank McKenzie says the U.S. military plans to keep two aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf in order to deter Iran from taking retaliatory action for an earlier attack against Iraqi forces.

### [Iran Reports 113 New Virus Deaths As Containment Concerns Mount](#)

March 16, 2020, Al Jazeera

The official leading Iran's response to the new coronavirus acknowledged on Sunday the pandemic could overwhelm health facilities in his country, which is battling the worst outbreak in the Middle East while under heavy US sanctions.

### [Coronavirus: 120 Indians From Iran To Reach Jaisalmer Today, To Be Quarantined At Army Facility](#)

March 13, 2020, India Today

Air India flight, with 150 Indians being evacuated from coronavirus-hit Iran, will reach Jaisalmer in Rajasthan on Friday. All the 120 Indians who are being

evacuated from Iran will be quarantined at an Army facility created in Jaisalmer, a defence spokesperson said on Thursday.

#### [Top Iranian Cleric Okays Buying Future Israeli Coronavirus Vaccine](#)

March 12, 2020, The Times of Israel

A prominent Iranian cleric has said it is permissible to use a future coronavirus vaccine developed by Israel if "there is no substitute."

#### [Coronavirus Makes Iran More Dangerous: U.S. General Says After Attack in Iraq Kills U.S. and British Troops](#)

March 13, 2020, Haaretz

U.S. Marine General Kenneth McKenzie, the head of Central Command said he believes Iran is significantly underreporting the number of its coronavirus victims.

#### [Satellite Images Show Iran Has Built Mass Graves Amid Coronavirus Outbreak](#)

March 12, 2020, The Guardian

Satellite images of mass graves in the city of Qom suggest Iran's coronavirus epidemic is even more serious than the authorities are admitting.

#### [Coronavirus: Iran Asks For IMF Help For First Time In Six Decades As Disease Ravages Country And Region](#)

March 13, 2020, The Independent

Iran has asked for a \$5bn bailout from the International Monetary Fund to alleviate the devastating impact of coronavirus, which has killed at least 429 Iranians as it shakes fragile Middle Eastern health systems and economies already burdened by war, sanctions and corruption.



## Israel

### [Israel Will Use Anti-terrorist Tracking Tech To Fight Coronavirus Outbreak](#)

March 16, 2020, Engadget

Israel's attempt to curb the coronavirus outbreak might be the next to jeopardize privacy. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has outlined plans to use anti-terrorism tracking technology to locate people in contact with those carrying the virus. He wasn't specific about the tech besides referencing "digital means" similar to those from Taiwan, but Israel's Shin Bet domestic security service confirmed to Reuters that it was looking at wielding its methods.

### [US-Israeli Group Launches \\$21.4 Million Water-energy Initiative](#)

March 16, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

BGN Technologies, the technology transfer company of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU), in coordination with Northwestern University, have announced the launch of a US-Israel consortium run by both universities with the aim of developing new technologies to be used to solve global water challenges.

### [Israeli Virologist Urges World Leaders To Calm Public, Slams 'Unnecessary Panic'](#)

March 15, 2020, Times of Israel

A leading Israeli virologist on Sunday urged world leaders to calm their citizens about the coronavirus pandemic, saying people were being whipped into unnecessary panic. Prof. Jihad Bishara, the director of the Infectious Disease Unit at Petah Tikva's Beilinson Hospital, said that some of the steps being taken in Israel and abroad were very important, but the virus is not airborne, most people who are infected will recover without even knowing they were sick, the at-risk groups are now known, and the global panic is unnecessary and exaggerated.

### [Benny Gantz, With Thin Majority, Wins Chance to Form Israeli Government](#)

March 15, 2020, The New York Times

Benny Gantz, the centrist former army chief battling to depose Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, on Sunday won the endorsements of a narrow majority of lawmakers, earning him a fresh chance to form a government and break Israel's yearlong political deadlock.

## [Israeli-made Oral Vaccine For Coronavirus On Track, But Testing Will Take Months](#)

March 11, 2020, The Times of Israel

An effective Israeli-developed vaccine for coronavirus is on track to be ready for testing within "a few weeks," though it won't be available for months because of the lengthy and sometimes bureaucratic testing and approval process, a member of the development team said Tuesday.

## [Israel Closes Schools, Universities As PM Netanyahu Issues Dire Coronavirus Warning](#)

March 12, 2020, The Times of Israel

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Thursday that Israel would be closing schools and universities effective Friday as part of measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus, calling the pandemic "a global event unlike anything" the country had ever seen.

## Jordan

### [Jordan Confirms 12 Cases of Covid-19 – Health Ministry](#)

March 15, 2020, The Jordan Times

The Jordanian government on Sunday announced that 12 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in the Kingdom. The confirmed cases include five Jordanian citizens, six French citizens, and an Iraqi national.

### [Jordan Bars Entry From Lebanon, West Bank, Israel, Iraq, Egypt Due To Coronavirus](#)

March 10, 2020, The Daily Star

Jordan Tuesday banned travel to Lebanon to protect the kingdom from coronavirus, the health minister said. It also closed border crossings with Israel and the Israeli-occupied West Bank and its seaports to shipping from Egypt as well as barred overland passenger traffic from Iraq. The government has also banned travel to Syria and from Monday will bar entry to travellers from France, Germany and Spain.

## Kuwait

### [Coronavirus: Recovered cases rise to 7 in Kuwait](#)

March 14, 2020, Egypt Today

Two more coronavirus cases have recovered from the infectious disease in Kuwait, taking the number of the recovered cases across the Gulf country to seven, said Kuwait's Minister of Health Basil al Sabah on Saturday.

### [Air India Cancels All Flights To Kuwait](#)

March 13, 2020, India Today

Air India on Thursday decided to cancel all its flights to Kuwait till April 30 and curtail services to various other countries, including Spain, France and Sri Lanka.

## Lebanon

### [Lebanon Declares National Emergency](#)

March 15, 2020, Arab News

Lebanese President Michel Aoun addressed the nation in a televised speech, in which he called on people to stay at home.

### [Lebanon To Default On Debt Payments For First Time As Crisis Deepens](#)

March 07, 2020, BBC News

Lebanon is to default on a foreign debt payment for the first time in its history as the country struggles with a major financial crisis. Prime Minister Hassan Diab said Lebanon would not be making a bond payment of \$1.2bn (£900m) due on Monday.

## Oman

### [Coronavirus: Indian Expats In Oman Strongly Advised Against Travelling Abroad](#)

March 14, 2020, Times of Oman

Indian citizens in Oman and the rest of the world, have been asked not to travel overseas to avoid being infected by the novel coronavirus. An advisory issued by the Government of India, and circulated by the Indian Embassy in Oman, says that although Indian nationals can travel abroad in case of an emergency, those who do fly to COVID-19 affected countries will be kept under quarantine.

### [Oman Announces End To Single-use Plastic Bags By 2021](#)

March 15, 2020, The National

Oman on Sunday became the latest country to announce a ban on single-use plastic shopping bags, with the government saying they will be phased out by the end of the year.

## Qatar

### [Qatar Overcomes Gulf Crisis Despite 1,000-day Blockade](#)

March 14, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Doha continues to flourish and overcome economic difficulties despite a blockade that has been underway for more than 1,000 days. "At the end of February 2020, the unfair besiege completed 1,000 days, it was an era of failure, confusion, and moral downfall for the countries of the blockade," Qatar's Ambassador to Turkey, Salem bin Mubarak Al Shafi told Anadolu Agency. "But for Qatar, it was 1,000 days of pride and steadfastness."

### [Qatar To Stop All Incoming Flights For 2 Weeks, Covid-19 Cases Cross 400](#)

March 16, 2020, The Week

Qatar on Sunday announced that it would suspend all incoming flights for a period of two weeks from Wednesday (March 18) as the number of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases in the country soared to 401.

## Saudi Arabia

### [Saudi Arabia Widens Crackdown, Detains 298 Public Officials](#)

March 15, 2020, Middle East Eye

Saudi Arabia on Sunday announced the detention of hundreds of government officials, including military and security officers, on charges involving bribery and exploiting public office, and said investigators would bring charges against them.

### [Saudi Arabia Suspends Government Work](#)

March 15, 2020, Arab News

Saudi Arabia has temporarily suspended government work and ordered public-sector workers to stay home for 16 days in the Kingdom's latest measures against the spread of coronavirus.

### [Saudi Arabia Extends Travel Bans To Pakistan And India, Suspends Flights](#)

March 12, 2020, Gulf News

Saudi Arabia has announced to suspend flights to several countries including Pakistan and India to prevent coronavirus spread, after announcing 24 new cases overnight to bring its total to 45, state media reported on Thursday.

### [Saudi Arabia Strikes Back At Russia In Key Oil Market](#)

March 20, 2020, Oilprice.com

The world's top oil exporter Saudi Arabia is going after Russia's oil market share in Europe with deeply discounted Arab Light crude at up to three times the usual volumes.



## Syria

### [Brutal War In Syria Enters 10th Year As Assad Regime Consolidates Power](#)

March 15, 2020, France 24 News

Syria's brutal conflict enters its 10th year Sunday with President Bashar al-Assad's regime consolidating its hold over a war-wracked country with a decimated economy where foreign powers flex their muscle.

### [More Than 4.8 Million Children Born Into War In Syria: UN](#)

March 16, 2020, Al Jazeera

More than 4.8 million children have been born into war since Syria's brutal conflict erupted nine years ago, the UN children's agency has said, adding that thousands of others were killed or wounded in the conflict.

### [Russia, Turkey Begin Joint Patrols Along Syria's M4 Highway](#)

March 16, 2020, Al Jazeera

The patrols are part of a ceasefire deal reached by Ankara and Moscow to halt an escalation of violence in Idlib province.

### [In Powerful Testimony, Syrian Defector Warns US That Assad Will Kill More](#)

March 12, 2020, ABC News

A ceasefire was reached last week to halt the offensive of Syrian strongman Bashar al Assad into the country's last rebel stronghold, but U.S. officials and Syrian activists warn that the violence is far from over and that Assad, along with allies Russia and Iran, still believes he can reconquer the country by force.

## Turkey

### [Number of Coronavirus Cases In Turkey Increases To 18](#)

March 16, 2020, Daily Sabah

The number of coronavirus cases in Turkey has risen to 18, Presidential Communications Director Fahrettin Altun said late Sunday.

### [Turkey Says Idlib Ceasefire Details Largely Agreed On With Russia](#)

March 13, 2020, Al Jazeera

Turkish and Russian officials have largely agreed on details of a ceasefire deal in Syria's war-battered Idlib province, Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said on Thursday, the third day of discussions between the two countries.

### [Turkey Can Get Patriot Missiles After It Returns Russian Defence System](#)

March 12, 2020, Middle East Monitor

US Department of Defence spokesperson, Jonathan Hoffman, said that Turkey can only receive the American made Patriot air defence system after it returns the Russian S-400 defence system.

### [Turkey To Shut Schools To Prevent Spread Of Coronavirus, Kalin Says](#)

March 12, 2020, Daily Sabah

Elementary and secondary schools in Turkey will go on an early spring break for a week on March 16, while universities will be closed for three weeks to prevent the spread of coronavirus, Presidential Spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said Thursday.

### [Turkey's Erdogan To Discuss Migrant Issues With EU in Brussels](#)

March 08, 2020, Al Jazeera

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said he will hold talks in Brussels as he called on Greece to "open the gates" for refugees at Turkey's border trying to get into Europe.

### [Turkey Claims Killing 21 Syrian Troops In Retaliation For Death Of Two Soldiers](#)

March 06, 2020, The Guardian

The Turkish military has killed 21 Syrian troops after two Turkish soldiers were killed in Idlib earlier, the state news agency reported on Friday, citing the Turkish defence ministry.

## UAE

### [UAE, Saudi Central Banks Roll Out \\$40 Billion Stimulus For Coronavirus-hit Economies](#)

March 15, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The central banks of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, the two largest Arab economies, on Saturday announced stimulus plans worth a combined \$40 billion to ease the impact of the coronavirus outbreak in their respective countries.

## Yemen

### [Yemen's Houthis Suspend International Flights Over Covid-19 Concerns](#)

March 15, 2020, Xinhua Net

Yemen's Houthi militia authorities on Saturday announced the suspension of international flights for two weeks over concerns about COVID-19.

### [Coronavirus: In Yemen, Cholera Kills But Coronavirus Inspires Hysteria](#)

March 15, 2020, Middle East Eye

Despite not having any identified cases of coronavirus, the global epidemic has panicked Yemen's population far more than the fatal diseases that have proliferated during the country's years-long war. More than 1,000 people were killed and hundreds of thousands affected by cholera, diphtheria, measles and dengue fever in 2019, according to the World Health Organisation.

### [Yemen's Houthis Advance In Marib, Saudi Border Areas](#)

March 12, 2020, Al-Monitor

Houthi rebels in Yemen this week secured crucial areas of oil-rich Marib province – the main stronghold of the internationally recognized government of exiled President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi.

### [UN Blasts 'new And Irresponsible' Offensive In Northern Yemen](#)

March 12, 2020, The National

The United Nations peace envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths on Thursday criticised a rebel offensive in Al Jawf province as the "most alarming military escalation" currently occurring in the country's gruelling civil war.



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

[www.delhipolicygroup.org](http://www.delhipolicygroup.org)