



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume III, Issue 15 | April 12, 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 15

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 15

Contents

Abstract	i
Bahrain.....	1
Egypt	2
Iraq	3
Iran.....	4
Israel.....	6
Jordan.....	7
Kuwait.....	8
Lebanon.....	9
Oman	10
Qatar	11
Saudi Arabia.....	12
Syria.....	13
Turkey.....	14
UAE	15
Yemen.....	16

Abstract

In a boost to the already strong India-Bahrain partnership, Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar co-chaired the third 'High Joint Commission' with Bahrain Foreign Minister in New Delhi. "Both leaders agreed to expand bilateral cooperation in energy, infrastructure, health, defence, and digital". Further, Delhi and Manama exchanged assessments on regional situation, while reaffirming close and long-standing partnership. In another development, India and Qatar signed a MoU for better coordination and cooperation in crackdown on international narcotic cartels.

On the energy front, Indian officials re-iterated New Delhi's intent to resume crude oil import from Iran once the US sanctions on Tehran are eased. On the issue of the crude prices, OPEC and allies have agreed to gradually increase their production over the next three months after the US asked Saudi Arabia to keep energy prices affordable. Considering New Delhi's intent to diversify crude imports, it must be noted that, India has emerged as the top buyer of the US crude in the first quarter of this calendar year from being second biggest, last year. Further, a US Congressional report highlights that, the "Chabahar port in Iran is likely to be operational by May as India has increased the speed of development of this strategically important port". Meanwhile India's Larsen and Turbo (L&T) has secured an order to set up a 1.5 gigawatt (GW) solar plant in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It will be one of the largest solar plant in the world.

In a trade related development, Israel's Head of Mission in Dubai stressed that, "India-Israel-UAE trilateral trade could reach USD110 billion by 2030". In another development, Lulu Group has imported 400 tons of Kashmiri apples into the UAE, in line with Prime Minister Modi's call to support Kashmiri apple farmers. In a significant achievement, Keralite businessman and the Chairman of Lulu Group, M.A. Yusuf Ali has been awarded the Abu Dhabi Government's highest civilian award.

On the security front, a deliberately planned explosion at Iran's 'Natanz' uranium enrichment site (April 11), caused a major power failure. This comes in the immediate aftermath of Iran's national nuclear technology day in which Tehran tested new advanced uranium centrifuges. Further, major powers and Iran concluded the first week of talks on the 'Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action' in Vienna. During which, the United States and Iran agreed to establish two working groups to try and get both countries back into compliance with the 2015 Iran

nuclear deal. "The two working groups will try to synchronize Washington's lifting of sanctions and Iran's limiting of uranium enrichment". However, the US sees a possible 'impasse' in terms of removing sanctions if Tehran sticks to a demand that all sanctions since 2017 be removed by the Biden administration.

In a related development, the naval attacks between Israel and Iran escalated after an attack on Iranian cargo vessel 'MV Saviz' at the Red Sea close to the Eritrean coast, near Yemen. "Losing a ship could be a blow to Iran's efforts to project power into the Red Sea and the on-going war in Yemen". Considering the growing regional tensions and talks in Vienna, US Secretary of Defence Austin visited Tel Aviv where he reaffirmed America's "Ironclad" commitment to Israel. The Israeli defence minister voiced hope that, "Israel's security would be safeguarded under any renewed Iranian nuclear deal that Washington reaches". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, warned that, "Israel would not be bound by the nuclear deal between world powers and Iran that would enable the Islamic Republic to develop nuclear weapons". Further, Mossad Chief Yossi Cohen would be travelling to Washington in the coming days to meet senior 'White House' officials to present "formal evidence of Iran's lies that conceals important elements about its nuclear program".

The war in Yemen shows no signs of abating with 70 dead in the strategically important city of Marib. The Iran-backed Houthi rebels have been trying to seize oil-rich Marib, the Yemeni government's last significant pocket in the north. In another development, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has revealed in its report that, thus far, Israel has carried out 29 air-strikes on Syria in 2021.

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

Bahrain

[India, Bahrain Agree to Bolster Defence and Security Cooperation](#)

April 07, 2021, Hindustan Times

India and Bahrain on Wednesday (April 07) agreed to strengthen bilateral defence and security cooperation, including through regular consultations in maritime security, combating piracy and counter-terrorism.

Egypt

[Suez Canal to Seek Over \\$1bn Compensation for Losses Caused by Stuck Ship](#)

April 02, 2021, Business Standard

Egypt's Suez Canal Authority (SCA) said that it will seek over \$1 billion in compensation for the losses caused by the massive container ship which had blocked the vital waterway since March 23.

[Egypt to Produce 80 Million Doses of China's Sinovac Vaccine Annually](#)

April 10, 2021, CGTN

Egypt announced that it is to manufacture up to 80 million doses of China's Sinovac Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine annually.

Iraq

[U.S. Iraq Agree on Eventual Withdrawal of U.S. Combat Troops](#)

April 08, 2021, NBC News

The United States and Iraq said that they have agreed on the eventual withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq and that the two governments would hold talks to work out the timing.

[US Eyes Tactical Withdrawal from Middle East to Focus on China](#)

April 10, 2021, The Arab Weekly

Experts say that the United States views China as a top strategic threat and therefore the Americans can reduce their presence in parts of the Middle East, even if such a move could be to the benefit of Iran.

[Iran's Competing Power Centres are Creating Havoc in Iraq](#)

March 17, 2021, Middle East Eye

Four Iranian intelligence agencies are giving contradictory commands to Tehran's Iraqi proxies, leaving armed factions scratching their heads.

Iran

[Blackout Hits Iranian Nuclear Site in What Appears to be Israeli Sabotage](#)

April 11, 2021, The New York Times

A power failure that appeared to have been caused by a deliberately planned explosion struck Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment site on Sunday (April 11), in what Iranian officials called an act of sabotage that they suggested had been carried out by Israel.

[Iran Tests Newest Advanced Nuclear Centrifuges](#)

April 10, 2021, AL Jazeera

Iran began feeding gas to cascades of new, advanced centrifuges and unveiled dozens of "achievements" to mark its national nuclear technology day in an effort to show its nuclear programme is peaceful.

[Iran and U.S. Agree on Path Back to Nuclear Deal](#)

April 06, 2021, The New York Times

The United States and Iran agreed through intermediaries on Tuesday (April 06) to establish two working groups to try to get both countries back into compliance with the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

[US Sees Possible 'impasse' in Clash with Iran on Sanctions](#)

April 10, 2021, Mint

US and Iranian officials clashed over what sanctions the United States should lift to resume compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal, with Washington predicting an impasse if Tehran sticks to a demand that all sanctions since 2017 be removed.

[India to Resume Buying Oil from Iran Once US Sanctions Ease](#)

April 08, 2021, The Economic Times

India will look to resume buying crude oil from Iran the moment US sanctions are eased, helping it diversify its import basket, a senior government official said. India stopped importing oil from Iran in mid-2019 following sanctions on the Persian Gulf nation by the Trump administration.

[Iran's Chabahar Port Likely Ready by May as India Speeds up Work: US Report](#)

April 09, 2021, Business Standard

After a brief halt, India accelerated the work on Chabahar Port early this year and the strategic Iranian port is expected to be operational by next month, a Congressional report has said.

[Report Outlines How Iran Smuggles Arms to Hamas in Gaza Strip](#)

April 09, 2021, AL-Monitor

Israeli military expert Amir Bohbot revealed in a report published by Israel's Walla News website said that in 2006, Iran opened a route to smuggle missiles and ammunition to Hamas in the Gaza Strip through Yemen and Sudan, thousands of kilometers from the Israeli coast.

Israel

[India, UAE and Israel's Trilateral Trade Could Reach USD 110 bn by 2030: Top Diplomats](#)

April 05, 2021, The Economic Times

The comments were made at an event organised by the International Federation of Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce (IFIICC) to discuss the on-going business collaborations being pursued through IFIICC's leadership across sectors.

[Israel Says it Will Work Closely Together with US on Iran](#)

April 11, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Israel's defence minister pledged to cooperate with the United States on Iran, voicing hope that Israeli security would be safeguarded under any renewed Iranian nuclear deal that Washington reaches. "Israel views the United States as a full partner across all operational theatres, not the least Iran," Benny Gantz said after hosting visiting US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

[Undeclared Naval War Intensifies between Israel, Iran](#)

April 10, 2021, The Arab Weekly

The assault on the 'MV Saviz' appears to have caused the most-extensive damage yet in this shadow war, seemingly between Iran and Israel – and one that could further escalate regional tensions. Attacks and counter-attacks between the two nations could spin out of control.

[Mossad Chief said Heading to Washington in Bid to Block US Return to Iran Deal](#)

April 08, 2021, The Times of Israel

Mossad chief Yossi Cohen will travel to Washington in the coming days for meetings with top officials in the White House and the American intelligence community. Cohen will present evidence that Israel says shows Iran is lying and hiding details about its nuclear program from the world, in a bid to prevent the US from re-entering the 2015 nuclear deal in its original form.

[US Deflection of Israel's Concerns on Iran Troubling](#)

April 11, 2021, Israel Hayom

President Obama's echo chamber is coming back in the service of President Joe Biden to put Israel on the defensive and validate another awful nuclear deal with Iran.

Jordan

[How Jordan's Royal Drama Could Threaten Middle East Stability, as U.S. Offers Support](#)

April 05, 2021, NBC News

Jordan's monarchy is in turmoil after 15 people, including a senior royal, were arrested over the weekend in connection with what the country's government called a "malicious plot" against the throne.

[UN Rights Office Concerned About Arrests in Jordan](#)

April 10, 2021, Middle East Monitor

The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Office on Friday voiced its concerns about the arrests made following the alleged attempted coup in Jordan, news agencies reported. Spokesperson for the office Marta Hurtado said it was unclear whether Jordan's Prince Hamzah, the key suspect, remains under house arrest.

Kuwait

[Kuwait Raises May Crude Oil official Selling Prices for Asia](#)

April 09, 2021, The Economic Times

Kuwait has set the May official selling price (OSP) for Kuwait Export Crude (KEC) at \$1.35 per barrel above the average of DME Oman and Platts Dubai quotes for Asian refiners, up 45 cents from the previous month, a pricing document showed.

[Kuwait Aims to Boost Ties with Turkey, Sheikh Sabah Says](#)

April 09, 2021, Daily Sabah

Kuwait's ruler has reaffirmed his country's determination to enhance ties with Ankara in a letter he sent to Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Lebanon

[Act Before it is Too Late, Arab League Envoy Tells Lebanon](#)

April 09, 2021, Arab News

Arab League Assistant Secretary-General Hossam Zaki has called for “patience, political will and more communication” to break Lebanon’s political deadlock.

Oman

[4 Nations May Sign Peace Deals with Israel Soon: official](#)

March 18, 2021, Anadolu Agency

Israeli Intelligence Minister Eli Cohen said he expects three more Arab countries and an African country to sign peace deals with Israel soon. In an interview with the Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth, Cohen said the countries that are the closest to signing normalization deals with Israel are Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Niger.

Qatar

[India, Qatar Join Hands to Ward off Narco Challenge](#)

April 05, 2021, The Times of India

The recent case of a young couple jailed in Qatar on drugs-related charges and now exonerated through efforts over two years by the Union ministry of External Affairs and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has led to India and Qatar initiating the process of signing a memorandum of understanding for better coordination and cooperation in crackdown on international narco cartels.

[Boycott Threats Loom over Qatar Football World Cup and Beijing Olympics](#)

April 02, 2021, Axios

The hosts of the two biggest global sporting events on the 2022 calendar, Qatar and China are facing boycott threats.

Saudi Arabia

[OPEC and Allies to Boost Production after US Calls Saudi Arabia](#)

April 01, 2021, CNN Business

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allied producers have agreed to gradually increase their output over the next three months. The move follows a sharp increase in oil prices, and a call from the United States to keep energy affordable.

[India Becomes Largest Buyer of US Crude in First Quarter of Calendar Year 2021](#)

April 11, 2021, The Hindu Business Line

India has emerged as the top buyer of US crude in the first quarter of calendar year 2021 from second-biggest buyer last year as the world's third largest oil consumer looks at alternate sources of crude amidst a spat with Saudi Arabia, the world's largest producer, to lift output curbs, and rein in prices.

[Democrats Push President Biden to Take Harder Line on Saudi Arabia](#)

April 06, 2021, The New York Times

US Lawmakers from the Democratic Party have continued to press for harsher action and a wholesale rethinking of the American stance toward the kingdom.

[L&T Secures Order to Set up 1.5 GW Solar Plant in Saudi Arabia](#)

April 09, 2021, The Economic Times

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) said its renewable energy arm has secured an order to set up a 1.5 gigawatt (GW) solar plant in Riyadh Province, Saudi Arabia.

Syria

[Syria Blames Israel for Missile Attacks near Damascus](#)

April 08, 2021, AL Jazeera

A missile attack near the Syrian capital of Damascus has wounded four soldiers, according to Syria's state media which blamed Israel for the attack. Syria's state news agency SANA, quoting an unidentified military official, said Syrian air defences were able to shoot down most of the missiles before they hit their targets.

[Israel Carried out 29 Air-strikes on Syria in 2021](#)

April 10, 2021, Asharq AL-Awsat

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) has revealed in its report that Israel carried out 29 strikes on Syria in 2021 since the beginning of the year.

Turkey

[Turkey Condemns Deadly Maoist Attack in India](#)

April 04, 2021, Anadolu Agency

"We are saddened to learn that many Indian security personnel were killed and many left injured after a terrorist act targeting security forces in the state of Chhattisgarh in India," the Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

[Turkey Demands Apology after Italian PM Draghi Calls Erdogan a Dictator](#)

April 09, 2021, Outlook India

Turkey demanded an apology from Italy's premier for having called President Tayyip Erdogan a "dictator," a comment that added fuel to a dispute over a perceived seating snub involving a top European Union official and deepened an EU-Turkey rift at a time when the two sides had hoped for rapprochement.

[Turkey Summons Chinese Ambassador over Embassy's Tweet](#)

April 07, 2021, TRT World

The Turkish Foreign Ministry has summoned the Chinese ambassador to Ankara over the Chinese embassy's social media posts that caused discomfort. In a Twitter post, the embassy tagged head of opposition IYI (Good) Party Meral Aksener and Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavas, and said: "The Chinese side resolutely opposes and strongly condemns any challenge by any person or power to China's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

UAE

[Lulu Group Imports 400 Tons of Kashmiri Apples into UAE](#)

March 23, 2021, Greater Kashmir

The Lulu group owned by multi-billionaire Keralite businessman M.A. Yusuf Ali has, heeding the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to support the Kashmiri apple farmers, imported around 400 tons of Kashmiri apples to the Middle East.

[Keralite Businessman M A Yusuf Ali Gets Abu Dhabi's Highest Civilian Honour](#)

April 10, 2021, Kerala Kaumudi

Expatriate businessman and Lulu Group chairman MA Yousafzai has been awarded the Abu Dhabi Government's highest civilian award. Yusuf Ali received the Abu Dhabi Award in recognition of his contribution to the Abu Dhabi Commerce and Industry sector and his outstanding support to the humanitarian cause.

Yemen

[70 Dead in Fighting over Yemen's Marib](#)

April 11, 2021, The Economic Times

Fierce fighting for Yemen's strategic city of Marib has killed 70 pro-government and Houthi rebel fighters over the past 24 hours. The Huthis have been trying to seize oil-rich Marib, the government's last significant pocket of territory in the north, since February.

[Saudi-led Coalition Intercepts Houthi Drones](#)

April 11, 2021, Middle East Monitor

The Saudi-led military coalition battling Yemen's Houthi movement intercepted and destroyed drones launched by the Iran-aligned group towards Khamis Mushait and Jazan in southern Saudi Arabia.



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org