



Delhi Policy Group
Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



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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

Given the continuing spike in COVID-19 cases in India, Reliance Industries has sought special permission to fly a team of experts from the Israeli medical technology company 'Breath of Health' (BOH) to operationalise the firm's 'swift COVID-19 breath testing system'. Reliance had earlier signed a USD15 million deal with BOH in January 2021 to distribute this system. "The equipment has already reached India, its operationalisation will help in fight against the pandemic". It has been stressed that, BOH swift COVID-19 breath testing system identifies COVID-19 at a success rate of over 95 percent. Preliminary results from clinical trials in Israel have shown a success rate of 98 percent compared to the standard PCR test.

In terms of India-West Asia trade relations, head of Iran's trade promotion organisation and Indian Ambassador to Tehran discussed removal of trade barriers and expansion of bilateral relations. Both sides noted the importance of resuming talks on 'preferential trade agreement', while taking necessary measures to bring back petrochemical, industrial, and steel commodities into the basket of Iranian exports to India. Meanwhile in first-of-its-kind success story of trilateral cooperation between India-UAE-Israel, Israeli firm 'Ecoppia' will produce innovative robotic solar cleaning technology in India for a landmark project in the United Arab Emirates. This deal has been signed with the support of IFIICC (International Federation of Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce).

On the aviation front, Qatar Airways CEO has confirmed that, "about four years back Qatar Airways had approached Mr Ratan Tata (for jointly bidding for Air India). However, at that time he was not interested as they were already partners with Vistara and Air Asia. If Tata would have agreed to partner with us, we would have bid for Air India at that time", he added.

Pakistan PM Imran Khan and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman met in Riyadh on May 08. The joint statement released by Pak Foreign Office stressed that, "the two sides emphasised the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve their outstanding issues, especially the Jammu and Kashmir issue, to ensure peace and stability in the region". The two sides also agreed to establish Saudi-Pakistan Supreme Coordination Council, co-chaired by Pak PM and Saudi Crown Prince. In another development, Indian Petroleum Minister thanked Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar for supplying liquid medical oxygen (LMO) that will help New Delhi in its battle against virulent second wave of COVID-19.

Meanwhile Indian state oil refiners have reversed steep cuts in oil imports from Saudi Arabia, and placed orders for regular purchases in June owing to price cuts by Riyadh.

On the US-Iran relations, as the fourth round of talks resumed in Vienna the US officials stressed that, Washington will not make any new major concession regarding sanctions and that the fate of Iran nuclear deal was in the hands of Tehran. In the light of this, head of Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Mojtaba Zolnouri warned that, "Iran will further restrict IAEA access to country's nuclear sites if no progress is made in Vienna talks by May 24". He added that, "so far Vienna talks have failed to produce any concrete result and have become draining". In the backdrop of next month's parliamentary elections, Iranian hardliners have stepped up pressure on Rouhani government and begun to sow seeds of suspicion over efficacy of Vienna nuclear talks. In another development, the US Navy seized arms shipment of thousands of assault weapons, machine guns and sniper rifles hidden aboard a ship in the Arabian Sea likely headed for Houthi rebels in Yemen. According to the initial investigation by the US Navy, the vessel came from Iran.

The clashes between Israeli police and Palestinians have intensified in Jerusalem over the past week. More than 200 Palestinian protesters were injured in clashes in Jerusalem's Old City late Friday (May 07) as tensions flared over the planned evictions of several Palestinian families from a nearby Arab neighbourhood of 'Sheikh Jarrah'. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Turkey, and Jordan have strongly rejected Israeli measures to evict Palestinian families. The United States has also expressed "serious concerns" about violence in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has failed to secure majority to form government, President Rivlin has now invited opposition leader Yair Lapid to form government in Israel.

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

Bahrain

[India Gets 54 Tonnes of Oxygen from Bahrain](#)

May 05, 2021, The Economic Times

India received 54 tonnes of oxygen from Bahrain as part of Operation Samudra Setu-II launched by Indian Navy to transport oxygen and associated medical supplies from friendly foreign nations.

Egypt

[India Buys 300,000 Doses of Remdesivir from Egypt](#)

May 08, 2021, Egypt Independent

India has bought 300,000 doses of the Remdesivir drug from Egypt's Eva Pharma company for drugs and medical supplies, as it grapples with its surging coronavirus pandemic. Indian Ambassador Ajit Gupte and Executive Director of Eva Pharma Riyadh Armanious will sign the agreement on Monday (May 10).

[Egypt to Manufacture 60 Million Doses of China's Sinovac Vaccine](#)

May 07, 2021, Egypt Today

Egypt will manufacture up to 60 million doses of China's Sinovac vaccine by next month according to the Head of the Central Department of Preventive Medicine at the Ministry of Health.

Iraq

[Drone Attack on Iraqi Base Hosting US Troops](#)

May 08, 2021, Arab News

A drone strike early on Saturday (May 8) targeted a military base in Iraq that hosts US troops, causing only minor damage and no casualties, Iraq's military and the US-led coalition said.

[Iraq: Armed Factions Distance Themselves from Iran Worried about Talks in Vienna](#)

May 06, 2021, Middle East Eye

As Iran and the United States move closer during nuclear deal talks in Vienna, Iraqi armed factions are seeking to distance themselves from Tehran fearing that they will be used as a bargaining chip.

[Iraq Says It Hosted Secret Talks between Iran, Saudi Arabia](#)

May 05, 2021, Daily Sabah

Iraq has recently hosted more than one round of dialogues between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the country's President Barham Salih announced.

Iran

[Iran to Restrict IAEA Access by May 24 if No Progress Made in Vienna Talks, MP Warns](#)

May 08, 2021, Tehran Times

The lawmaker, Mojtaba Zolnouri, who is the head of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said the nuclear talks in Vienna have so far failed to produce any concrete result and they have become "draining."

[United States Says Fate of Nuclear Pact up to Iran as Talks Resume](#)

May 07, 2021, The Economic Times

The Biden administration is signalling that Iran shouldn't expect major new concessions from the United States as a new round of indirect nuclear talks is set to resume.

[Iran's Leader Khamenei Calls Israel 'Not a Country, but a Terrorist Base'](#)

May 07, 2021, Hindustan Times

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called Israel "not a country, but a terrorist base" during a speech on Al-Quds Day, an annual show of solidarity with the Palestinians.

[Iran's Hard-liners Step up Attacks on Rouhani Government](#)

May 04, 2021, The Washington Post

Iranian Hard-liners wary of engagement with the West have landed the harshest blows, leveraging their control of Iran's airwaves to discredit President Hassan Rouhani's government and the more moderate wing of Iranian politics it represents.

[Iran, India Discuss Removing Trade Barriers, Expanding Ties](#)

May 08, 2021, Tehran Times

The officials of the two countries noted that the two sides should resume discussion on the preferential trade agreement and exchange the list of commodities that are going to be included in this agreement. They also noted the necessary measures that should be taken to bring back petrochemical, industrial, and steel commodities into the basket of Iranian exports to India.

Israel

[Reliance Seeks Nod to Fly in Israeli Experts for Training and Installation of Rapid Covid-19 Identification Equipment](#)

May 07, 2021, The Economic Times

Reliance has sought special permission to fly an Israeli team of experts to India to train and install a rapid COVID-19 identification solution it acquired from an Israeli start-up for USD 15 million.

[Israel's Ecoppia Producing Robotic Solar Cleaning Tech in India](#)

May 06, 2021, Mint

In a first of its kind trilateral venture, an Israel-based company, Ecoppia, is producing an innovative robotic solar cleaning technology in India for a landmark project in the United Arab Emirates.

[Israeli Opposition Leader Yair Lapid Gains Chance to Form Government, Oust Benjamin Netanyahu](#)

May 05, 2021, The Washington Post

Yair Lapid, a former news anchor and leader of Israel's centrist opposition, was picked to negotiate a new governing coalition, opening the possibility of Israel getting its first government not led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in more than a decade.

[Head of Israel's Mossad, Yossi Cohen, Visits Bahrain to Discuss Mideast Security](#)

May 07, 2021, The Economic Times

The trip came amid heightened tensions in the region over Iran and followed Israel's recent deal to normalise relations with the island kingdom.

[Palestinians and Israeli Police Clash in Jerusalem over Planned Arab Evictions](#)

May 08, 2021, The Washington Post

More than 200 protesters were injured in clashes with police in Jerusalem's Old City late Friday as tensions flared over the planned evictions of several Palestinian families from a nearby Arab neighborhood, according to emergency agencies.

[Israel and South Korea to Sign Free Trade Pact](#)

May 09, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Israel will sign a free trade agreement with South Korea this week, marking the first such arrangement with an Asian market, Israel's economy ministry said.

Jordan

[Jordan Summons Israeli Envoy over Escalation in Jerusalem](#)

May 09, 2021, Anadolu Agency

Jordan summoned the charge d'affaires of Israel's Embassy in Amman to protest Tel Aviv's continued escalation and attacks against Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem.

Kuwait

[Kuwait Sends 215 MT of Oxygen, Ready to Supply 1,400 MT in all, Says Envoy](#)

May 07, 2021, Hindustan Times

Kuwait has shipped 215 tonnes of liquid oxygen on four ships that are expected to begin arriving in India from Saturday (May 08), and stands ready to provide up to 1,400 tonnes over the next three weeks to help address a severe shortage across the country.

Lebanon

[Saudi Arabia Drugs Haul Exposes Syria and Lebanon's Booming Illicit Trade](#)

May 09, 2021, Financial Times

In the past year, Saudi customs agents have found 54m captagon pills - an amphetamine popular with fighters across the Middle East as well as wealthy young men in the Gulf - in grapes, apples and potatoes shipped from Lebanon to the Red Sea port of Jeddah.

Oman

[Oman Condemns Attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem](#)

May 09, 2021, Gulf News

Oman's Foreign Ministry has condemned the attack of Israeli forces in the courtyards of the Al Aqsa Mosque. The statement by Oman's FM said that Oman rejects the policies and procedures that result in the displacement of Palestinian people from their homes in the city of Jerusalem.

Qatar

[Qatar Airways Had Approached Tata Group to Jointly Bid for Air India 4 Years Ago](#)

May 05, 2021, Moneycontrol

Qatar Airways had reached out to Tata Group about four years ago when the first attempt by the government to privatize national carrier Air India.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Arabia Calls for Dialogue between India and Pakistan to Resolve Their Issues](#)

May 09, 2021, The Economic Times

Saudi Arabia has emphasised the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve their outstanding matters, including the Kashmir issue.

[India Ramps up Oil Imports from Saudi Arabia After Price Cut](#)

May 07, 2021, Oilprice.com

India's state-owned refiners are ordering their regular volumes of Saudi crude oil for June after the Kingdom reduced its prices for the world's third-largest importer.

[Oil for Oxygen: Covid-hit India Welcomes Saudi Medical Aid, Boosts Oil Imports](#)

May 08, 2021, Moneycontrol

Indian oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan thanked Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern oil producers for supplying liquid medical oxygen (LMO) to help the country in its battle with the COVID-19 crisis.

[Saudi Arabia Wants to See "Verifiable Deeds" from Talks with Iran, Says Official](#)

May 07, 2021, The Economic Times

A Saudi foreign ministry official said that talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran aim to reduce regional tensions, but added it was too early to judge the outcome and Riyadh wanted to see "verifiable deeds".

[Saudi Arabia, UAE and Oman Reject Israeli Measures to Evacuate Palestinian Homes in Jerusalem](#)

May 08, 2021, Arab News

Saudi Arabia denounced Israeli plans to evict Palestinian families from their homes in Jerusalem amid soaring violence in the city.

[Saudi Removes 'Muslims only' Signs from Highway to Madinah](#)

May 05, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Saudi Arabian authorities appeared to have replaced the "Muslims only" phrase from traffic signs leading to the Prophet's Mosque in Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, Islam's second holiest site after Makkah.

Syria

[Major Fire Hits Oil Refinery in Syria's Homs](#)

May 09, 2021, AL Jazeera

Syrian firefighters extinguished a major blaze that engulfed areas of its main Homs refinery in the west of the nation. The fire started in a distillation unit because of a leak in a pumping station, state media reported without elaborating.

Turkey

[Turkey President Erdogan calls Israel a 'Terror State' over Palestinian Clashes at Al-Aqsa](#)

May 09, 2021, Deccan Herald

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan called Israel a "terror state" after Israeli police fired rubber bullets and stun grenades towards rock-hurling Palestinian youth at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque.

UAE

[India Sets up Control Room to Ensure Trade Continuity amid Coronavirus Spike](#)

April 26, 2021, Arabian Business

Following the current surge of coronavirus cases across India, a control room has been set up to ensure the continuity and smooth conduct of international trade with India. The Control Room, which was developed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), has the role of monitoring and resolving problems.

Yemen

[US Navy Seizes Weapons in Arabian Sea Likely Bound for Yemen from Iran](#)

May 09, 2021, Arab News

The US Navy announced it seized an arms shipment of thousands of assault weapons, machine guns and sniper rifles hidden aboard a ship in the Arabian Sea, apparently bound for Yemen to support the country's Houthi rebels.



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