



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

Over the past few months, India has urged the OPEC (Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) to ease global output cuts to rein in the surging oil prices. In reply to Indian concerns, Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to India stressed "Riyadh's commitment to meet India's requirements of petroleum products". He also highlighted that, "Saudi Arabia in 2020 made investments worth USD2.81 billion in India and is looking at a greater momentum in bilateral economic ties in areas like petroleum, renewable energy, IT, and artificial intelligence". Further, India continues to receive medical equipment and supplies from West Asia in its fight against the second wave of COVID-19. Saudi Arabia sent 60 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen (LMO), while Turkey delivered 50 tonnes of relief material, including five oxygen generators. Iran delivered 300 ventilators to India.

In the backdrop of the recent Israel-Palestine conflict, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) adopted a resolution to set up a commission of enquiry into the latest violence in Gaza, and also of abuses in the Palestinian territories and inside Israel. India abstained on this resolution while New Delhi dropped the often used phrase "just Palestinian cause" in its statement at UNHRC.

The war-torn Syria concluded its Presidential election with incumbent President 'Bashar al-Assad' securing a fourth term in office with 95.1 percent votes. In a joint statement, the US, UK, France, Germany, and Italy stressed that, Syrian election was neither "free nor fair". Further, they "denounced the Assad regime's decision to hold an election outside of the framework described in UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and supported the voices of all Syrians, including civil society organisations and the Syrian opposition, who have condemned the electoral process as illegitimate". Meanwhile Iran's Ministry of Interior has confirmed names of seven candidates for the upcoming Presidential election scheduled to be held on June 18. Reportedly, 'Ebrahim Raisi' – the head of Iranian judiciary is most likely to succeed Hassan Rouhani as Iran's next President. The other candidates contesting include Mohsen Rezaei (former head of IRGC), Saeed Jalili (former chief nuclear negotiator), Abdolnaser Hemmati (Central Bank governor), Amirhossein Ghazizadeh-Hashemi (Member of Parliament), Alireza Zakani (Member of Parliament), and Mohsen Mehralizadeh (Former Vice President).

On US-Iran relations, fifth round of talks began in Vienna with the goal of bringing United States back into the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). To buttress Iranian position, Chinese President Xi Jinping re-iterated Beijing's

support for Iran's "reasonable demands" regarding the nuclear deal. Further, in a boost to Vienna talks, Iran and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have agreed to extend the agreement for monitoring Iran's nuclear activities by one month. However, the IAEA has confirmed that, Iran's uranium enrichment is now at the level of "countries making bombs" and Tehran's nuclear programme can no longer be returned to where it stood when the landmark 2015 deal (JCPOA) was signed with P5+1.

In a major development, the US intelligence agencies are showing a growing concern at the sale of F-35 aircrafts to the UAE amid deepening of relations between Abu Dhabi and Beijing. The Biden administration's decision to sell F-35 to the UAE is likely to be influenced by three parameters – maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge, ensuring the non-transfer of F-35 and drone technology to China, and restrictions on the equipment's use in the on-going conflicts in Yemen and Libya.

US Secretary of State Blinken visited the Middle East to shore up the ceasefire between Israel and HAMAS that ended 11 days of bloody violence. Secretary Blinken acknowledged that "any resumption of peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians remained far off". The US pledged new aid to rebuild the Gaza strip including USD5.5m in disaster relief and nearly USD33m for the UN Palestinian aid agency. "Qatar has also announced USD500 million in support for the reconstruction of Gaza". Meanwhile reports have revealed that, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Hamas and Hezbollah set up a joint military operations center in Beirut during 11 days of conflict between HAMAS and Israel.

In a significant development, a diverse group of Israeli political parties opposed to Benjamin Netanyahu forming government have claimed to have the votes to form a unity government in Israel. Reportedly Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid would share power in a rotation agreement. PM Netanyahu warned that, "the proposed unity government aimed at replacing him would be a danger to the country's security".

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

Bahrain

[Bahrain Suspends Entry for Travellers from India, Four Other Countries](#)

May 24, 2021, Mint

Amid surge in COVID-19 cases, Bahrain's Civil Aviation Affairs has announced the suspension of entry for travellers arriving from red list countries, namely - India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Egypt

[China Eyes Deeper Friendship with Egypt in New Era: Chinese Ambassador](#)

May 30, 2021, China.org.cn

"China and Egypt have always supported each other over the past 65 years, and as COVID-19 is sweeping the world, the two countries are ushering in a chapter of friendship in the new era," Chinese Ambassador to Egypt Liao Liqiang said.

[Israel, Egypt Meet in Effort to Solidify Gaza Truce](#)

May 30, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hosted Egypt's intelligence chief and sent Israel's foreign minister to Cairo, amid efforts to build on a ceasefire reached between Israel and Hamas a week ago that ended the worst violence in years.

Iraq

[US Condemns Violent Security Crackdown on Iraqi Protesters](#)

May 27, 2021, AL Jazeera

The United States is outraged that peaceful Iraqi demonstrators demanding reform met threats and “brutal violence”, State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

[Iran-backed Militias Turn to Drone Attacks, Alarming U.S. Forces in Iraq](#)

May 29, 2021, The Washington Post

U.S. military officials in Iraq have grown increasingly alarmed over attacks by Iran-backed militias using drones to evade detection systems around military bases and diplomatic facilities.

Iran

[Iran's Astan-e Quds Delivers 300 Ventilators to India](#)

May 29, 2021, Tehran Times

Ali Chegini, Iran's ambassador to New Delhi, said that "despite being imposed the most severe sanctions, Iran has fortunately reached a good stage in the production of high-tech medical equipment, and today could donate 300 high-quality ventilators to India."

[Iran Approves 7 Candidates for June Presidential Elections](#)

May 25, 2021, Arab News

Iran's Ministry of Interior has confirmed seven candidates to run in June's presidential elections. The list of approved candidates by the Guardian Council, which is an unelected entity responsible for vetting candidates, includes judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi, who is said to be seen as the most likely to succeed the incumbent President Hassan Rouhani.

[Round Five of Iran Nuclear Talks Opens in Vienna](#)

May 25, 2021, Voice of America

Talks between Iran and the world powers still adhering to the 2015 nuclear deal resumed in Vienna with the goal of bringing the United States back into the agreement.

[China Backs Iran's 'Reasonable Demands' on Nuclear Deal](#)

May 24, 2021, Anadolu Agency

Beijing supports Tehran's "reasonable demands" regarding the Iran nuclear deal, China's president said. Xi Jinping extended the assurance during a phone call with his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani.

[IAEA Chief: Iran's Uranium Enrichment now at Levels of 'Countries Making Bombs'](#)

May 26, 2021, The Times of Israel

The head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog has said Iran is enriching uranium to levels that only countries seeking to make atomic weapons reach, and that the Islamic Republic's nuclear program can no longer be returned to where it stood when a landmark 2015 deal was struck with world powers.

[UN, Iran Agree to Extend Nuclear Monitoring](#)

May 24, 2021, Voice of America

Iran and the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog have agreed to extend an agreement for monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities for one month.

[Iran's Quds Force Chief: Zionists Should Rebuy Homes in Europe before Prices Rise](#)

May 29, 2021, The Times of Israel

"I advise all Zionists to go back and repurchase the houses they have sold in Europe, the US and elsewhere to come to the Palestinian territories before the houses become more expensive than today," IRGC Quds Force Chief - Esmail Ghaani said.

[Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah Coordinated Gaza Fighting in Joint War Room – Report](#)

May 29, 2021, The Times of Israel

Ibrahim Al-Amine, editor of the pro-Hezbollah Lebanese daily Al-Akhbar, told Hezbollah's Al-Manar network over the weekend that during the 11-days of fighting in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, officers from the IRGC, Hamas and Hezbollah set up a joint military operations center in Beirut.

[Hamas Ascribes Victory against Israel to Iran's Support](#)

May 26, 2021, Tehran Times

Hamas has said the Palestinians were "victorious" in the latest confrontation with Israel thanks to the support provided by Iran.

Israel

[India Abstains on UNHRC Resolution Proposing Probe in Gaza Violence](#)

May 28, 2021, The Indian Express

India abstained on a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council proposing to set up a 'Commission of Inquiry' into violations surrounding the latest violence in Gaza, but also of "systematic" abuses in Palestinian territories and inside Israel.

[Arab League Welcomes UN Commission to Probe Israel's Violations](#)

May 30, 2021, Middle East Monitor

The Arab League welcomed the UN Human Rights Council's resolution to create an international commission to investigate Israel's violations against the Palestinians.

[Israeli Opposition Parties Reach Agreement to Oust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#)

May 31, 2021, The Washington Post

A diverse coalition of Israeli opposition parties said that they have the votes to form a unity government to unseat Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving leader and its dominant political figure for more than a decade.

[Israel Coalition Government a Threat to Security, Warns Netanyahu](#)

May 31, 2021, BBC News

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned that a proposed new unity government would be "a danger for the security" of the country. He urged right-wing politicians not to support a deal after ultra-nationalist leader Naftali Bennett said he would share power with a centrist party.

[Blinken Claims Progress in Effort to Boost Israel-Hamas Truce](#)

May 26, 2021, AL Jazeera

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has wrapped up a two-day visit to the Middle East, winning diplomatic support and hundreds of millions of dollars of pledges from Arab countries as he moved to shore up the ceasefire that ended an 11-day conflict between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian group which rules the Gaza Strip.

[Blinken Warns Israel that Evicting Palestinians from East Jerusalem Could 'Spark Tension, Conflict](#)

May 29, 2021, Business Insider

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that he warned Israeli leaders future evictions of Palestinians from East Jerusalem could exacerbate tensions and catalyze further conflict in the region.

Jordan

[Jordan Picks up Regional Diplomacy following Blinken, Bin Zayed visits](#)

May 28, 2021, AL-Monitor

Jordan has been stepping up its regional diplomacy after receiving both US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Abu Dhabi's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed, in Amman.

Kuwait

[Indian Ambassador Discusses Return of Indians in Oil Sector of Kuwait](#)

May 26, 2021, Gulf News

The Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, Sibi George, met with the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil, Dr. Nimer Al Sabah, to discuss the quick return of Indian nationals working in the oil sector and their families.

[Kuwait Reiterates Support for India as it Tackles COVID-19](#)

May 29, 2021, Kuwait Times

Kuwait will continue to provide assistance and support to India as it tackles a "worsening situation" as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said.

Lebanon

[Pope to Hold Crisis Summit with Lebanon's Christian Heads](#)

May 30, 2021, Reuters

Pope Francis, who has promised to visit Lebanon if fractious politicians agree on a new government, said that he would meet its Christian leaders to discuss the country's worst crisis since its civil war that ended in 1990.

Oman

[Oman Oil Minister Sees no Competition between Murban Futures, DME Oman](#)

May 26, 2021, S&P Global

Far from being competitors, Abu Dhabi's new Murban crude futures contract and the Dubai Mercantile Exchange's Oman marker could co-exist and lead to more efficient price discovery in the Middle East market, Omani oil minister Mohammed al-Rumhy said.

[Protests Spread Across once-quiet Oman as Economy Flounders](#)

May 25, 2021, Associated Press

Protests over mass layoffs and Oman's poor economy spread to cities across the sultanate, underscoring the financial challenge ahead for this nation a decade on from its Arab Spring protests.

Qatar

[Qatar Airways Keen to Partner when India's IndiGo Goes Long Haul](#)

May 05, 2021, Zawya

Qatar Airways is training its sights on India's huge aviation market. Al Baker, CEO of Qatar Airways said the Gulf Carrier is ready to partner with IndiGo when the latter decides to go long haul.

[Qatar Pivots to LNG-Hungry China in Strategy Shift](#)

May 12, 2021, Reuters

Qatar is in talks to make Chinese firms partners in its liquefied natural gas expansion project, the world's largest, in a shift from the Gulf state's reliance on western majors for technology and global outreach.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Arabia Committed to Meet India's Crude Oil Requirement: Saudi Ambassador](#)

May 30, 2021, Business Standard

Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter said it is committed to meet India's requirements of petroleum products, an affirmation that came in the wake of the country pitching for easing global output cuts to rein in surging oil prices.

[India Thanks Saudi Arabia for Liquid Medical Oxygen Consignment](#)

May 29, 2021, Arab News

India has thanked Saudi Arabia for sending 60 tons of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) to help the country's fight against coronavirus.

[Saudi Arabia Implements Cyber-security Framework](#)

May 30, 2021, Arab News

Saudi Arabia's Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) Saturday announced the implementation of a regulatory framework to beef up cybersecurity in the Kingdom.

Syria

[Syria's President Bashar al-Assad wins Fourth Term in office with 95.1 Percent of Votes](#)

May 28, 2021, AL Arabiya

Syria's President Bashar al-Assad won a fourth term in office with 95.1 percent of votes in an election that will extend his rule over a country ruined by war but which opponents and the West say was marked by fraud.

[Joint Statement by the Secretary of State of the United States of America, the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, and the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, and Italy on Syrian Presidential Election](#)

May 25, 2021, U.S. Department of State

Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States of America wish to make clear that Syria's May 26 presidential election will neither be free nor fair.

Turkey

[Turkey Invokes Mahatma Gandhi and Rumi as it Delivers Covid-19 aid to India](#)

May 28, 2021, Hindustan Times

Turkey invoked Mahatma Gandhi and Sufi poet Jalaluddin Rumi as it delivered 50 tonnes of relief material, including five oxygen generators, to support India's response to a devastating second wave of coronavirus infections.

[Turkey, US Discuss Fight against Terrorism, Regional Issues](#)

May 28, 2021, Daily Sabah

Turkey Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Önal and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman discussed regional issues, including Afghanistan and Syria. They confirmed the strategic nature of Turkey-U.S. relations, exchanged views on regional issues and underlined the importance of the fight against terrorism".

[Erdogan Calls on U.S. Executives for Better Ties with Turkey](#)

May 26, 2021, Reuters

President Erdogan said U.S.-Turkey ties would nonetheless enter a "new era" after his face-to-face meeting with President Joe Biden set for June 14, their first since last year's U.S. election.

UAE

[US Concerned over F-35 Sale to UAE Due to China Relations](#)

May 28, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

US intelligence agencies have expressed concern regarding the sale of the highly sophisticated F-35 fighter jet to the United Arab Emirates due to their ties to China.

[UAE and Israel Press ahead with Ties after Gaza Ceasefire](#)

May 27, 2021, The Indian Express

Israel's top diplomat to the United Arab Emirates attended a ceremony in Dubai on the grounds of the Arabian Peninsula's first permanent exhibition to commemorate the Holocaust. Hours earlier, he had attended an event establishing a joint venture between an Israeli and Emirati company.

[Chinese Man Who Questioned State Media Reporting Freed After Arrest in Dubai](#)

May 27, 2021, Radio Free Asia

Authorities in Dubai have released a Chinese national who fled his home country after questioning official media reports of border clashes between Chinese and Indian soldiers, only to be arrested while transiting the United Arab Emirates airport.

Yemen

[Saudi-led Coalition Says it Destroyed Drone Launched by Houthis](#)

May 30, 2021, AL Jazeera

The Saudi-led military coalition battling the Houthi rebels in Yemen says it destroyed an explosive-laden drone headed towards the city of Khamis Mushait launched by the Yemeni rebels.



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