



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume III, Issue 23 | June 8, 2021

Delhi Policy Group

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

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



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

## DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW Volume III, Issue 23

### 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](mailto: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](http://www.delhipolicygroup.org)

DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW  
Volume III, Issue 23

Contents

Abstract .....	i
Bahrain.....	1
Egypt .....	2
Iraq .....	3
Iran.....	4
Israel.....	5
Jordan.....	7
Kuwait.....	8
Lebanon.....	9
Oman .....	10
Qatar .....	11
Saudi Arabia.....	12
Syria.....	13
Turkey.....	14
UAE .....	15
Yemen.....	16

## Abstract

India-UAE relations have strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end Indian Ambassador to Abu Dhabi highlighted the “continuous flow of goods between the two countries, despite the restrictions imposed by lockdown”, including “creation of a food security corridor”. Indian Ambassador further shared that, in the financial year that ended on March 2021, India received USD81.7 billion foreign direct investment (FDI) of which USD3.5 billion investments came through ‘Abu Dhabi Investment Authority’ (ADIA) and ‘Mubadala Investment Company’. Meanwhile Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar will visit Kuwait this week to further boost bilateral relations with the gulf nation.

On India-Saudi Arabia relations, Riyadh has recognised the “Covishield” COVID-19 vaccine as an equivalent of the AstraZeneca dose. In another development, Saudi Arabia has increased oil prices of its key Arab Light grade for July shipments to Asia, as the crude prices surged above USD70/barrel and OPEC forecasted global demand to heavily outstrip supply over the rest of the year. Meanwhile Indian Minister for Minority Affairs has stressed that, “there is no clarity yet if the annual haj pilgrimage will be possible this year, the decision regarding the same will depend on the Saudi Arabian government”.

On the security front, India defended its decision to abstain in a vote at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that led to the setting up of an inquiry into rights violations during the recent Israel-Hamas conflict. New Delhi stressed that, this was not a new position and it has acted in a similar manner in the past also. In another development, Turkish Parliament speaker Mustafa Sentop during his visit to Pakistan said, “the world is silent on Israel and India’s war crimes in Palestine and Kashmir”. Further, Turkish diplomat and current President of the UN General Assembly ‘Volkan Bozkir’ during his visit to Pakistan stressed that, “it is Islamabad’s duty to bring Kashmir issue to the UN platform more strongly”. Bozkir also endorsed Pakistan’s attempts to link the Kashmir issue to Palestine. New Delhi expressed strong opposition to these unwarranted references to the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Vienna talks on reviving JCPOA 2015 concluded its fifth round on June 02. The European Union envoy coordinating talks shared that, “next round will be the one in which we will finally get a deal”. Although other senior diplomats highlighted that, “the most difficult decisions lie ahead”. Iranian President Rouhani stressed that, “main issues with the US on 2015 nuclear deal have been

resolved and there are only a few minor issues left, on which we will negotiate and produce results". In another development, Iran's largest naval ship the Kharg sank after catching fire in the Gulf of Oman. No further explanation was given regarding this incident.

On the US-Israel relations, Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz met US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Importantly, Gantz spoke about "the need to promote regional stability by halting Iranian aggression, while strengthening the alliance of moderates and protecting Israel's QME (qualitative military edge)". Israel would reportedly seek USD1 billion from the US to replenish the 'Iron Dome Air Defence System'.

Israeli Member of Knesset (parliament) Yair Lapid has informed the country's President that his alliance has the numbers to form the government. The new Israeli government will include political parties such as Yesh Atid (17), Kahol Lavan (8), Israel Beiteinu (7), Labor (7), Yamina (7), New Hope (6), Meretz (6), and Ra'am (4), ousting Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud) from power. The leader of Yamina Party 'Naftali Bennett' will serve as the prime minister first in a rotation agreement, followed by Yair Lapid. The Knesset's vote of confidence on Bennett-Lapid government is likely to take place on June 14. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned that, "under Bennett Israel would surrender to American demands to return to an agreement with Iran that would endanger Israel's future". Earlier PM Netanyahu had stressed that his country would "risk friction with the US to neutralize Iran's nuclear capabilities". Amid power tussle in Tel Aviv, Israel has elected 'Isaac Herzog' as country's next President.

In an important development, the "Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has told the UN Security Council that its experts investigated 77 allegations against Syria, and concluded that in 17 cases chemical weapons were likely or definitely used". Meanwhile a war monitor has revealed that 500,000 people have died in a decade long civil war in Syria.

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

## Bahrain

### [Bahrain Offers Pfizer-BioNTech Boosters to Those Previously Vaccinated with Chinese Shot](#)

June 03, 2021, Voice of America

Just six months after receiving two shots of China's Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine, some people in Bahrain are being offered booster doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The decision to mix vaccines comes as the Gulf state is experiencing a wave of virus infections despite having a very high per capita vaccination rate.

## Egypt

### [Reconstruction Begins in Gaza Strip as Egyptian Crews Remove Rubble](#)

June 06, 2021, Egypt Independent

Egyptian equipment and technical crews began removing rubble in the Gaza Strip, beginning the process of reconstruction following clashes with Israeli forces.

### [Egypt Turns to China for Water Advice amid Nile Dam Crisis](#)

June 04, 2021, AL-Monitor

Egypt is looking to benefit from China's expertise in managing water resources amid concerns about its share of the Nile water amid the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam crisis.

## Iraq

### [Two Drones Shot Down above Iraq Base Housing US Troops: Iraqi Military](#)

June 06, 2021, AL Jazeera

The US military's C-RAM defence system was activated to shoot down the drones above the Ain al-Asad airbase, located in Iraq's western desert, the Iraqi military said.

### [Russia Eyes Arms Sales to Iraq including S-400 Air-Defence System](#)

June 04, 2021, Defence News

Russian media reports are claiming Iraq is interested in purchasing S-400 and S-300 air defense systems as well as Sukhoi Su-57 fighter jets, but experts say Moscow is facing competition due to increased cooperation between Iraq and two regional powers: the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

### [US, Iraq Agree to Redeploy Coalition Forces](#)

June 06, 2021, Asharq AL-Awsat

Iraq's Joint Operations Command announced the first technical meeting between the US and Iraqi military leadership to discuss the redeployment plan of the coalition forces.



## Iran

### [Oil Demand Rebound to Prevail over Potential Iran, India Headwinds](#)

June 01, 2021, Reuters

Oil prices will see a gradual uptick this year as economies shake off pandemic blues and weather headwinds from the coronavirus crisis in India and a potential return of Iranian supply.

### [Iran's Biggest Navy Ship Sinks after Fire in Gulf of Oman](#)

June 02, 2021, Reuters

Iran's largest navy ship the Kharg sank on Wednesday (June 02) after catching fire in the Gulf of Oman, but the crew were safely rescued.

### [EU official Sees Iran Nuclear Deal at Next Round of Talks](#)

June 03, 2021, Reuters

"I am sure that the next round will be the one in which we will finally get a deal," Enrique Mora, chief coordinator of the Vienna talks, told reporters as the fifth round of indirect U.S.-Iranian negotiations wrapped up on Wednesday (June 02).

### [Iran's Main Issues with US on 2015 Nuclear Deal, 'resolved': Hassan Rouhani](#)

June 03, 2021, Hindustan Times

"Our main issues with the United States in these (Vienna) negotiations have been resolved, and there are only a few minor issues left, on which we will negotiate and produce results," Rouhani said, at a televised cabinet meeting.

### [Iran's Presidential Candidates Clash amid Disqualification Row](#)

June 05, 2021, AL Jazeera

Seven candidates qualified to run in Iran's June 18 presidential election have gone head-to-head in a televised debate, as controversy over the disqualification of other hopefuls persists.

### [Rare Iranian Oil Cargo Reaches U.S. Shores](#)

May 31, 2021, Oilprice.com

The first Iranian oil shipment in years reached the U.S. shores in March as per the data released by EIA. The data showed that more than 1 million barrels of Iranian crude reached the United States two months ago, which took place a month after United States authorities seized a tanker carrying Iranian crude.

## Israel

### [India Defends Decision to Abstain During UNHRC Vote on Israel-Hamas Conflict](#)

June 04, 2021, Hindustan Times

India defended its abstention in a vote at the UN Human Rights Council that led to the setting up of an inquiry into rights violations during the Israel-Hamas conflict, saying it had also acted in a similar manner in the past.

### [Israel will Ask US for \\$1bn to 'replenish' Iron Dome](#)

June 02, 2021, AL Jazeera

Israel's defence minister Benny Gantz will travel to Washington to request a \$1bn replenishment of the close United States ally's Iron Dome air defence system, US Senator Lindsey Graham and Israeli officials have said.

### [Defence Minister Gantz Tells US officials Military Option Necessary for Iran](#)

April 06, 2021, Israel Hayom

In his meetings with the US officials, Gantz emphasized the need to consolidate military options vis-à-vis Iran and increase oversight of Iran's nuclear armament.

### [Netanyahu: Israel Would Risk 'Friction' with US over Iran](#)

June 01, 2021, ABC News

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he's prepared to risk tension with the U.S. if that is what it takes to neutralize Iran's nuclear capabilities.

### [Have Numbers to Form New Government, Yair Lapid Tells Israel's President](#)

June 03, 2021, CNBC

Yair Lapid has told Israeli President that his alliance has the numbers to form the government. It will include Yesh Atid, Kahol Lavan, Israel Beiteinu, Labor, Yamina, New Hope, Meretz, and Ra'am parties. Naftali Bennett will serve as the prime minister first, he said.

### [Netanyahu Warns Bennett Gov't won't be Able to Withstand US Pressure](#)

June 06, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that if he is replaced by Yamina leader Naftali Bennett, Israel would surrender to American demands to return to an agreement with Iran that would endanger Israel's future.

---

[Shin Bet Head in Rare Warning: Stop Violent Discourse Now, Someone will Get Hurt](#)

June 05, 2021, The Times of Israel

In an extraordinary statement, the head of the Shin Bet internal security service Nadav Argaman warned of rising incitement and hate speech on social media, and the danger that it will spark political violence, as the coalition that aims to oust incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appears increasingly likely to be sworn in.

## Jordan

### [Jordan's King Welcomes U.S. Move to Reopen Consulate in Jerusalem](#)

May 26, 2021, Reuters

Jordan's King Abdullah told U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken that he welcomed the administration's move to reopen the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem.

## Kuwait

### [India's External Affairs Minister Jaishankar to Visit Kuwait this Week](#)

June 04, 2021, WION

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar will visit Kuwait this week, as the country steps in to help India amid the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

## Lebanon

### [France Opens Probe into Personal Wealth of Lebanon's Central Bank Chief](#)

June 06, 2021, France 24

France has opened a probe into the personal wealth of Riad Salameh, central bank chief in crisis-hit Lebanon.

## Oman

### [Oman Delegation Visits Sanaa for Talks with Yemeni Rebels](#)

June 06, 2021, Middle East Monitor

An Omani delegation arrived in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, on Saturday (June 05) for talks with Houthi rebel leaders on peace-making in the war-torn country.

## Qatar

### [Qatar 'funnelled millions of dollars' to Al-Qaeda affiliate Terrorists in Syria: British Media](#)

June 05, 2021, Arab News

Nine Syrians are accusing several Qatari figures and institutes of funding terrorist fighters in Syria in a case filed at a UK court. Qatar National Bank and Doha Bank are accused of facilitating the transactions.

### [Hamas Threatens to Renew Fighting if Qatari Funds Don't Enter Gaza Next Week](#)

June 04, 2021, The Times of Israel

If Israel does not allow the passage of Qatari funds to the Gaza Strip, Hamas will escalate the situation on the border with Israel, sources in the terror group told Lebanese media.



## Saudi Arabia

### [Saudi Arabia Increases Oil Prices for India, other Asian Countries](#)

June 04, 2021, Mint

Saudi Arabia increased oil prices for customers in its main market of Asia by more than expected after crude surged above \$70 a barrel and OPEC forecast that global demand would heavily outstrip supply over the rest of the year.

### [Saudi Arabia Approves Covishield Vaccine](#)

June 06, 2021, The Siasat Daily

In a major relief to thousands of non-resident Indians (NRI) in Saudi Arabia, the Indian embassy in Riyadh announced that the gulf nation has recognised "Covishield" COVID-19 vaccine as an equivalent of the AstraZeneca dose.

### [Haj 2021 Will Depend on Saudi Arabia's Decision, Says Union Minister Naqvi](#)

June 05, 2021, Hindustan Times

The Union minister for minority affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said there is no clarity yet if the annual haj pilgrimage will be possible this year, the decision will depend on the Saudi Arabia government.

## Syria

### [17 Instances of Chemical Weapons used in Syria: Watchdog](#)

June 04, 2021, AL Jazeera

The international chemical weapons watchdog - OPCW has told the United Nations Security Council its experts investigated 77 allegations against Syria, and concluded in 17 cases chemical weapons were likely or definitely used.

### [US Oil Company's Syria Operations Canned by Biden Administration](#)

May 27, 2021, Middle East Eye

President Joe Biden's administration has maintained the US is not in Syria to 'keep the oil', as former President Trump once put it.

### [Decade of Syria War Killed Nearly 500,000 People](#)

June 01, 2021, Asharq AL-Awsat

A decade of war in Syria has left nearly half a million people dead, a war monitor said in a new toll that includes 100,000 recently confirmed deaths.

### [Russia Expands Military Facilities in Syria](#)

May 12, 2021, Voice of America

Russia is expanding its navy base at the Syrian port of Tartus and planning to construct a floating dock to boost the port's ship repair facilities, according to Russian military officials.

## Turkey

### [Turkey's Erdogan Unveils New Natural Gas Discovery in Black Sea](#)

June 04, 2021, Bloomberg

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the discovery of new natural gas deposits in the Black Sea, where Turkey plans to start production in 2023.

### [World Silent on Israeli, Indian War Crimes: Speaker Turkish Parliament](#)

June 03, 2021, The News International

The Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT) Prof Dr. Mustafa Sentop said, "Israel and India are killing innocents, getting involved in war crimes, crimes against humanity in Palestine and Kashmir, but the world is still silent. War crimes are being committed against innocent children, women and people of all ages in Kashmir".

### [UNGA Chief 'saddened' by India's Reactions to his Kashmir Statements](#)

June 02, 2021, Greater Kashmir

UN General Assembly President Volkan Bozkir (Turkish diplomat) is "saddened" by India's reaction to his statements on Kashmir, according to his Deputy Spokesperson Amy Quantrill, who has asserted that they were taken out of context.

### [Turkey, Pakistan Should Guide Islamic World: Parliament Speaker](#)

June 01, 2021, Daily Sabah

Turkey and Pakistan should lead the Islamic world together, Turkey's Parliament Speaker Mustafa Sentop said, indicating that real Islam must be explained amid rising Islamophobia.

### [Pakistan, Turkey Agree to Boost Inter-parliamentary Ties](#)

June 02, 2021, The Nation

Pakistan and Turkey agreed to strengthen inter-Parliamentary relations through enhanced cooperation. The agreement was reached during a meeting between the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Mustafa Sentop and Speaker Asad Qaiser on side-lines of the Parliamentary Assembly of ECO countries (PAECO) conference.

## UAE

### [India-UAE Ties Strengthened During Covid-19 Pandemic: Indian Ambassador](#)

June 02, 2021, Khaleej Times

Ties between the UAE and India have strengthened during the pandemic and it is reflected in the continued support both countries are providing each other, said Pavan Kapoor, Indian Ambassador to the UAE.

### [UAE-China to Deepen Collaboration in Knowledge-based Sectors, Minister Says](#)

June 05, 2021, The National

The UAE will deepen ties with China and further collaborate in knowledge-based sectors that offer potential opportunities in renewable energy, life sciences and agricultural technology under its new strategy to expand industrial output.

## Yemen

### [U.S. and UK Envoys Urge Yemen Peace after Blast Kills at least 17](#)

June 06, 2021, Yahoo News

U.S. and British diplomats urged Houthi forces to end an offensive in northern Yemen on Sunday (June 06) after at least 17 people were killed in an explosion which the Saudi-backed government blamed on a Houthi missile strike.



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

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