



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

In an important development, 'Yasir Al-Rumayyan', Chairman of Saudi Aramco and Governor of Public Investment Fund (PIF) has joined the board of India's 'Reliance Industries' (RIL) as an independent director. "In 2019, Reliance Industries had announced its interest to sell 20 percent stake in company's flagship chemicals and refining business to Saudi Aramco in a deal valued at USD 15 billion". This deal could materialize this year. Mukesh Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Industries (RIL) welcomed the development, announcing he "looked forward to welcoming Saudi Aramco as a strategic partner in Reliance's O2C (oil to chemical) business".

Considering the growing strategic partnership between Turkey and Pakistan, India-Greece relations are becoming politically important. Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Greece on June 26. In a joint statement following the visit both countries "recognized the threats posed by radicalization, violent extremism, including cross-border terrorism".

On the energy front, the rising crude prices are adding significant inflationary pressure on India. In a virtual meeting with OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) Secretary General, the Indian petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan reiterated calls to phase out crude production cuts. OPEC Secretary General on the other hand stressed that, "as the global economic outlook was improving the OPEC+ alliance will continue to meet monthly to review market conditions and adjust production levels accordingly". OPEC+ is scheduled to meet on July 1 to decide output quotas for August and beyond. In a significant development, India's energy import from the Middle East is indicating a declining trend; as a result, India's oil imports from the Middle East fell to a 25-month low in May 2021.

On the trade and economy front, Indian Ambassador to UAE addressed 39th Annual International Conference of ICAI (Institute of Chartered Accountants of India) in Dubai. Reiterating strong confidence in India's economic recovery he stressed that, "UAE-India special partnership shall emerge even stronger and well-prepared for post-Covid world".

On the security front, four suspects have been arrested from the Indian Union Territory of Ladakh for the blast outside Israeli Embassy in New Delhi. In another development, Qatar's special envoy for counter-terrorism and conflict resolution, Mutlaq bin Majed al-Qahtani spoke about his belief that, "India was engaging with Taliban as the group is seen as a "key component" in any future Afghan

government". Meanwhile in an address to the UN Security Council, Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar stressed that, intra-afghan talks have not resulted in reduction of violence in Afghanistan and that any political settlement in the country must "preserve the constitutional democratic framework".

In continuation of India's defence outreach in the region, Indian Navy's 'INS Trikand' participated in maiden "IN-EUNAVFOR" a joint naval exercise involving anti-piracy mission with warships from Italy, Spain, and France in the Gulf of Aden on June 18-19.

As the drone attacks on US troops in Iraq continued unabated, Washington launched air-strikes on three targets used by Iran-backed militants on Iraq-Syria border. Pentagon spokesperson stressed that "given the ongoing series of attacks by Iran-backed groups targeting US interests in Iraq, the president (Biden) directed further military action to disrupt and deter such attacks". Further, the United States and Israel are reportedly increasing cooperation to combat the threat of Iranian drones while discussing the idea of establishing a "no-fly zone" for Iran's UAV's in the Middle East. Reacting to US concerns, Chief Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami remarked, "Iran is in possession of drone with 7,000 km range".

On the US return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the US Secretary of State Blinken reiterated that, Washington still has "serious differences" with Tehran, which is putting US return at risk unless Iran makes concessions at the Vienna talks. On its part, "Iran still believes a deal is possible if the US decides to abandon Trump's failed legacy, making it clear that Tehran will not negotiate forever". Meanwhile, Iran refused to give images and files related to its nuclear sites to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as the monitoring agreement between the two-sides expired. Further, Iran denied reports about sabotage operation against one of the buildings of country's Atomic Energy Organization (IAEO). Despite Tehran's denial, several reports in the West point toward major damage at the site.

A report published by Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs and the Uighur Human Rights Project shows that "Muslim-majority countries across the Middle East and Asia have cooperated with China over the years for surveillance, detention and repatriation of Uighurs".

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

Bahrain

[Israeli Foreign Minister Lapid Set for First Meetings with Top US, Bahraini Diplomats in Rome](#)

June 27, 2021, The Times of Israel

Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid will hold his first meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Rome on Sunday (June 27), and then meet with Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif al-Zayani, marking the first meeting between the new Israeli government and a cabinet minister from the Gulf countries.

Egypt

[China Thanks Egypt for Support at UN Human Rights Council](#)

June 26, 2021, CGTN

Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China and Egypt have always supported each other firmly on issues concerning each other's core interests, and China appreciates Egypt's participation in a joint statement supporting Beijing at the 47th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

[Egyptian President Sisi Makes First Iraq Visit by Egyptian Leader in Decades](#)

June 27, 2021, Reuters

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi arrived in Baghdad on Sunday (June 27), marking the first visit by an Egyptian head of state to Iraq since Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990.

Iraq

[US Airstrikes Target Iran-backed Militia Groups in Iraq, Syria](#)

June 27, 2021, The Times of Israel

The Pentagon announced Sunday (June 27) it had conducted targeted airstrikes against “facilities used by Iran-backed militia groups” on the Iraq-Syria border, which it said were authorized by US President Joe Biden following ongoing attacks on US interests.

[India Cuts Middle East Oil Imports as it Seeks to Diversify Energy Sources](#)

June 24, 2021, Khaleej Times

India, the world’s third-biggest oil importer, has significantly reduced its imports from the Middle East as part of a drive to diversify crude sources. The share of Middle Eastern crude in India’s oil imports fell to a 25-month low in May, tanker data provided by trade sources showed, as refiners tapped alternatives in response to the government’s call to diversify supplies.

[Iraq Fully Cancels Pre-paid Oil Deal with China's Zhenhua, Sells Crude to Other Customers](#)

June 23, 2021, S&P Global

Iraq has scrapped a \$2 billion pre-paid oil supply agreement with China's state-owned Zhenhua Oil Co. and sold the crude earmarked for the deal to other customers, as Baghdad seeks to take advantage of rising prices.

[Iraq: Explosive Drones Hit Erbil as Hashd al-Shaabi Parades near Baghdad](#)

June 26, 2021, Middle East Eye

Three explosive-laden drones have hit a building near northern Iraq's capital city Erbil, where the United States has a consulate, Iraqi Kurdish officials said.

Iran

[India Arrests Four Suspects in Iran-Linked January Bombing Outside Israeli Embassy in New Delhi](#)

June 24, 2021, The Algemeiner

Indian police have arrested four suspects in a January bombing outside the Israeli embassy in New Delhi.

[Iran, India to Exchange Knowledge on Rotavirus Vaccine Development](#)

June 21, 2021, Tehran Times

The Pasteur Institute of Iran and Indian Bharat Biotech inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to transfer technical knowledge of the rotavirus vaccine.

[Iran Won't Give Nuclear Sites' Data to IAEA as Monitoring Deal Expires: Parliament Speaker](#)

June 27, 2021, Press TV (Iran)

The speaker of Iran's Parliament says Tehran will not hand the images and files related to its nuclear sites and facilities over to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) following the expiration of the country's monitoring agreement with the agency.

[Iran Says Nuclear Deal Salvageable But Will Not Negotiate Forever](#)

June 27, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Iran said it believes a reinstatement of its 2015 nuclear deal with major world powers is possible but warned that Tehran "will not negotiate forever".

[US, France Warn Iran Time Running out to Revive Nuclear Deal](#)

June 25, 2021, AL Jazeera

The United States and France have warned Iran that time is running out to return to a nuclear deal, voicing fears that Tehran's sensitive atomic activities could advance if talks drag on. Secretary of State Blinken warned that the US still had "serious differences" with Iran.

[US Blocks Dozens of News Websites linked to Iran, Alleges Disinformation](#)

June 23, 2021, Mint

The United States government has seized dozens of US website domains connected to Iran including 'presstv.com', linked to what the US says are disinformation efforts.

[Iran Nuclear Centrifuge Facility Substantially Damaged in Attack - Sources](#)

June 24, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

A sabotage operation against one of the buildings of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization (IAEO) caused major damage – despite Iranian denials.

[Vienna Talks Highly Likely to be Completed in Next Round: Russian Diplomat](#)

June 26, 2021, Tehran Times

Russian Ambassador Mikhail Ulyanov tweeted, "Chances to complete the Vienna Talks on JCPOA successfully during the seventh round seem to be high but you never know for sure in advance. The negotiators aim at fulfilling their tasks without delay. However, the quality of an outcome document comes first."

[Iran in Possession of Drones with 7,000 Km Range, Says IRGC Chief](#)

June 27, 2021, Press TV (Iran)

Chief Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami has hailed Iran's achievements in different fields, saying the country is in possession of drones that have a range of 7,000 kilometers.

Israel

[Iran Nuclear Site Hit Wednesday \(June 23\) was on List of Targets Israel Gave US – Report](#)

June 24, 2021, The Times of Israel

The Iranian centrifuge production site said to be targeted in a drone attack was reportedly on a list of targets that Israel presented to the Trump administration last year.

[Israel to Reinstate Indoor Mask Mandate Next Week as COVID-19 Cases Keep Rising](#)

June 24, 2021, The Times of Israel

Coronavirus czar Nachman Ash announced that the indoor mask mandate, obligating people to cover their mouths and noses to prevent infections, will return early next week in an effort to stem the rise in COVID-19 cases.

[Lapid to Blinken: Mistakes were made in US-Israel Relationship, We'll Fix Them](#)

June 27, 2021, The Times of Israel

Bipartisan support for Israel in the United States was harmed during the Benjamin Netanyahu years, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid told US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Rome.

[Israel and US Said to Increase Cooperation to Combat Iranian Drones](#)

June 23, 2021, The Times of Israel

The United States and Israel reportedly held talks earlier this month on cooperation against unmanned Iranian drones, with which the Islamic Republic is believed to be arming Shiite militias and terrorist organizations in the region.

[Israel Votes to Condemn China Abuses against Uyghur Muslims](#)

June 23, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Israel signed a statement presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) urging China to allow independent observers access to its western Xinjiang region, where UN experts say nearly a million Uyghurs and other minorities have been unlawfully detained in camps.

Jordan

[Royal Drama Unfolds in Jordan's Court, but a Prince at the Center of It is Absent](#)

June 26, 2021, The New York Times

Two prominent figures are on trial in Jordan accused of plotting to destabilize the kingdom. One is an adviser to Saudi Arabia's leader, and the Saudis have been trying to disrupt the trial.

[ACC Calls for Increasing Chinese investments in Jordan](#)

June 20, 2021, Zawya

The Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) Council called for increasing Chinese investments in Jordan as the Kingdom offers several opportunities in many economic sectors.

Kuwait

[Kuwaiti Amb. Al-Baker Affirms Importance of Kuwait-Chinese Strategic Partnership](#)

June 22, 2021, Zawya

Kuwait's Permanent Envoy to the Arab League Ambassador Ahmad Al-Baker affirmed Kuwait's interest in creating Kuwaiti-Chinese strategic partnership during his speech in the 17th session of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum.

Lebanon

[Several Injured in Lebanon Protests over Plunging Currency](#)

June 27, 2021, AL Jazeera

Several protesters were injured in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli on Saturday (June 26) in demonstrations held amid escalating tensions over the government's decision to further slash the tumbling currency's value.

Oman

[COVID-19: Oman Monitoring Spread of India, UK Variants](#)

June 14, 2021, Khaleej Times

Oman's Ministry of Health said it is monitoring the spread of the Indian, UK, and South African variant of the coronavirus in the wake of rising new infections in Oman. The number of COVID-19 infections have been on the rise.

Qatar

[Qatar Envoy Says Indian officials Met 'Taliban'](#)

June 23, 2021, The Indian Express

Even as a senior diplomat from Qatar has said that there has been a “quiet visit” by Indian officials “to speak with the Taliban”, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar underlined the intra-Afghan talks have not resulted in a reduction of violence in Afghanistan.

[Enforcement Directorate \(ED\) Freezes INR 88 Lakh Assets of Indian Man on Qatar Government's Request](#)

June 18, 2021, The Economic Times

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has frozen Rs 88 lakh worth assets of an Indian man, working in a leading retail store chain of Qatar, under the anti-money laundering law acting on a legal request made by the Gulf nation, the central probe agency said.

[Qatar Chairs 17th Session of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum at Ranking officials Level](#)

June 27, 2021, Gulf Times

Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the Arab League Ambassador Ibrahim bin Abdulaziz Al Sahlawi chaired the Arab side in the 17th session of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF). The Chinese side was chaired by Director-General of the Department of West Asian and North African Affairs of the Chinese Foreign Ministry Wang Di.

Saudi Arabia

[Indian Petroleum Minister Renews Call for OPEC to Phase out Production Cuts](#)

June 24, 2021, S&P Global

In a virtual meeting with OPEC Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo on June 24, Indian oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who has sparred with Saudi counterpart Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman over supplies of crude, flagged his country's concerns over increasing oil prices, which were adding significant inflationary pressure.

[RIL-Saudi Aramco Deal to Close this Year: Mukesh Ambani](#)

June 24, 2021, Mint

Mukesh Ambani, chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) said he expects the company's deal with Saudi Aramco to materialise this year. Meanwhile, Yasir Al-Rumayyan, chairman of Saudi Aramco and the Governor of the Public Investment Fund, joined the board of Reliance as an independent director.

[Saudi Arabia, India Sign MoU to Promote Yoga](#)

June 21, 2021, Arab News

Saudi Arabia signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with India to increase cooperation to promote yoga in Saudi Arabia. The MoU was signed between the Saudi Ministry of Sports' Leaders Development Institute and the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga affiliated with India's Ministry of Ayush.

[Muslim-majority Countries Cooperated with Beijing to Surveil, Detain, Repatriate Uighurs: Report](#)

June 26, 2021, The Times of India

The Muslim-majority countries across the Middle East and Asia have cooperated with Beijing to surveil, detain, and repatriate Uighurs to China.

[Saudi Arabia Presses IAEA over Inspections of Iran's Nuclear Sites](#)

June 22, 2021, The Times of Israel

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud urged the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency to institute a "rapid and comprehensive inspection of all Iranian nuclear sites."

[Saudi Arabia Agrees to Restart Pakistan Oil Deal to Curb Iranian Influence: Report](#)

June 21, 2021, Middle East Eye

Saudi Arabia has agreed to restart oil aid to Pakistan in an effort to steer Islamabad away from Iranian influence.

Syria

[Syria Denounces US, Israeli Allegations on Golan Heights](#)

June 27, 2021, Press TV (Iran)

The Syrian foreign ministry has lambasted recent statements by the United States and Israel on the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights, stressing that Syria's sovereignty over the region is firm and supported by international legitimacy resolutions.

[U.S. and Allies Increase Pressure on Russia to Keep Humanitarian Aid Route into Syria Open](#)

June 24, 2021, NBC News

The U.S. and its allies ramped up the pressure on Russia to allow the continued operation of a critical humanitarian aid route into Syria weeks ahead of a critical deadline.

Turkey

[No Justification for Terror: India, Greece Message](#)

June 28, 2021, The New Indian Express

"Both countries recognised the threat posed by radicalisation, violent extremism, as well as terrorism, including cross-border terrorism. They emphasised that there can be no justification for these in any form or manifestation," a joint India-Greece statement stated.

[Erdogan Takes First Step in Controversial Istanbul Canal Project](#)

June 26, 2021, AL Jazeera

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has taken the first step in the construction of a canal on the western edge of Istanbul, amid concerns over the environmental and economic effects of the project.

[Istanbul Canal: A Megaproject with Strategic Implications](#)

June 16, 2021, The Armenian Weekly

Istanbul Canal, the largest ever construction project undertaken by the governing AKP, will be established on the European side of Istanbul and link the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. It will be 50 Km long, around 150 meters wide and 25 meters deep. The project also includes the construction of new seaports, bridges, businesses, touristic districts and artificial lakes, etc.

UAE

[UAE Ban on Entry from India Unchanged, Federal Aviation Notice Says](#)

June 28, 2021, The Economic Times

A United Arab Emirates ban on entry from India, South Africa and Nigeria remains in place, the federal aviation authority said on Sunday (June 28), after Dubai had announced it would ease entry restrictions from those countries.

[Indian Economy Expected to Rebound Stronger: Indian Ambassador to UAE](#)

June 26, 2021, Khaleej Times

The Indian economy is expected to rebound stronger with the potential for rebuilding on a scale not seen for a long time, said Pavan Kapoor, Ambassador of India to the UAE, at the 39th Annual International Conference of ICAI in Dubai.

[Yair Lapid to be First-ever Israeli Minister to Visit UAE Next Week](#)

June 21, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid plans to visit the United Arab Emirates next week, making him the first Israeli minister on an official visit to the country, which made peace with Israel last year.

Yemen

[More Than 100 Killed in Yemen as Fighting over Oil-rich Marib Region Continues](#)

June 27, 2021, France 24

Clashes between Houthi rebels and Yemeni government fighters killed at least 111 in Marib in three days, pro-government sources said, following a renewed offensive by Houthi insurgents.

[In a First, Indian Navy Participates in IN-EUNAVFOR Naval Exercise in Gulf of Aden](#)

June 18, 2021, India Today

For the first time, the Indian Navy is participating in joint drills with the European Union Naval Force, comprising warships from the French, Spanish and Italian navies, being held in the Gulf of Aden.



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