



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



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Delhi Policy Group

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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](#).

Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Sanket Joshi at sanket@dpg.org.in.

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Abstract

On July 07, Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met Iranian President-elect Ebrahim Raisi and foreign minister Javad Zarif in Tehran. Dr. Jaishankar handed over a personal message from Prime Minister Modi to Iranian President-elect. Discussions with foreign minister Zarif, covered regional and global issues which included the situation in Afghanistan. EAM Jaishankar accepted Iran's invitation to attend the swearing-in ceremony of President-elect Raisi.

In a boost to India's growing trade in West Asia (Middle East), Geographical Indications (GI) certified 'Fazli' mango from the Eastern Indian state of West Bengal, and flowers from Tamil Nadu have been exported to UAE (Dubai) and the United States. Meanwhile Saudi Arabian company Alfanar acquired wind turbine maker Senvion India from Senvion GmbH.

The OPEC+ meeting held on July 05 failed to develop a consensus on increase in crude output after UAE's refusal to accept OPEC's proposal of increasing oil output in stages by a total of two million barrels per day from August through December 2021 and to extend remaining cuts until the end of 2022 instead of letting them expire as planned next April. On the back of global economic recovery, UAE wants to increase its crude production, while Saudi Arabia is cautious about increasing oil supply as it could put downward pressure on crude prices.

On the security front, Indian navy stressed its intent to maintain a strong naval presence in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman to protect Indian-flagged merchant vessels and oil tankers. For this, Indian Navy "under 'Operation Sankalp' will continue to deploy a frontline warship, or a frigate with a marine commando intervention team". Considering the vulnerability of maritime trade route in the region, Indian Navy had earlier despatched destroyer INS Chennai and patrol vessel INS Sunayna to the Gulf of Oman.

In light of the growing political and strategic proximity between Turkey and Pakistan, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias stressed that, "India, Greece, and UAE should establish a trilateral dialogue even as Athens is working to develop a strategic partnership with New Delhi". Further, he expressed concerns about "Turkey increasingly playing the religious card in order to advance its geopolitical agenda which is a worrying trend". Turkey-Pakistan relations continue to be on an upward trajectory as Pakistan's President conferred the Nishan-e-Imtiaz, a

military medal, on the Turkish commander Gen. Umit Dundar. Islamabad is reportedly in "discussion with Ankara to procure Turkish armed drones, including the 'Bayraktar TB-2' extensively used by Azerbaijan forces in their conflict with Armenia". Meanwhile Turkish drone 'Akinci' has set a new national aviation record after flying at an altitude of 38,039 feet (11,594 meters). Importantly, reports highlighted Turkey's emergence as "one of the biggest competitors of Russian attack drones and armoured vehicles".

Israel-Iran confrontation is widening across different sectors including cyber. Iran's railroad system reportedly came under a cyber-attack with hackers posting fake messages regarding alleged train delays or cancellations on display boards at stations across the country. Iranian Ministry of Roads and Urban Development was also hit with a cyber-attack resulting in their sites becoming unavailable. Meanwhile, Tehran blamed Israel for June 23 attack on a building in Karaj that belongs to the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran as Tel Aviv's latest measure to thwart Vienna talks about the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has "extended a cross-border aid operation from Turkey into Syria after Russia agreed to a compromise with the United States, ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid to Syrians for up to next 12 months". Commenting on the Syrian issue, India's Permanent Representative to the UN reaffirmed New Delhi's commitment to a "Syrian-led and Syrian-owned UN-facilitated political process, to help bring long term security in the region". Further, India showed "deep concern with the involvement of external actors in Syria which is making the situation worse". In another development, psychoanalysis test of four students arrested from Indian Union Territory of Ladakh (Kargil) in connection with a blast near the Israel Embassy in New Delhi showed that two of them were telling "partial truth" about the incident. "Indian authorities have claimed that all four accused were in Delhi on the day of the blast".

Rocket and drone attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria show no signs of abating. On July 7, at least 14 rockets targeted Ain-al-Asad airbase in Iraq wounding two American servicemen. Considering the growing threat of such attacks, Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and Lockheed Martin have announced the signing of a MoU for joint collaboration in fielding an integrated air-and missile-defence (IAMD) systems.

On US-Iran relations, Tehran informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about its enriched uranium metal production. Iran told IAEA that, "uranium

metal was being produced to develop fuel for a research reactor”; however, uranium metal could also be used to make the core of a nuclear bomb. The United States described this as an “unfortunate step backwards” by Iran. Meanwhile, the Biden administration sanctioned 34 companies with links to the Chinese military and policy towards the Uyghur minority including those involved with allowing exports to Russia and Iran.

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

Bahrain

[GI-certified Consignment of Fazli Mangoes from Malda Exported to Bahrain](#)

July 11, 2021, The Telegraph

Fazli mango growers are set to get new connoisseurs as a GI-certified consignment of the variety was exported to Bahrain from Bengal's Malda district.

Egypt

[Egypt's FM Meets Indian Representative at UN as Diplomats Brief Security Council Members Ahead of GERD Session](#)

July 07, 2021, Egypt Today

Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry met with the Indian Permanent Representative to the United Nations to present Egypt's position on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) hours before the Security Council session on Thursday (July 08).

Iraq

[Rockets Fired at US Embassy in Iraq After Series of Attacks](#)

July 08, 2021, AL Jazeera

American diplomats and troops in Iraq and Syria were targeted in three rocket and drone attacks in the past 24 hours, US and Iraq officials said on Wednesday (July 07), including at least 14 rockets hitting an Iraqi air-base hosting US forces, wounding two American service members.

[Biden Under Pressure to Respond to Escalating Attacks on U.S. Troops in Iraq and Syria](#)

July 10, 2021, Politico

A series of Iranian-backed militia attacks against Americans in Iraq and Syria is piling new pressure on President Joe Biden, with some Republicans criticizing his approach as insufficient and ineffective.

Iran

[EAM Jaishankar Hands PM Modi's Message to Iran President-elect, Discusses Afghanistan with Counterpart](#)

July 07, 2021, The Indian Express

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar handed over a personal message from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Iran's President-elect Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran as he made a stopover at the Iranian capital on his way to Russia.

[India Accepts Iran's Invitation for Swearing-in of President-elect Ebrahim Raisi](#)

July 09, 2021, India Today

India has accepted Iran's invitation for the swearing-in ceremony of President-elect Ebrahim Raisi. The invitation was extended at a meeting between Raisi and India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

[US Sanctions 34 Companies with Links to China's Uyghur Policy, Ties with Iran, Russia](#)

July 09, 2021, WION

The Biden administration imposed sanctions against 34 companies and entities linked to China's military and policy towards the Uyghur minority including those involved with allowing exports to Russia and Iran.

[Iran Takes Steps to Make Enriched Uranium Metal; U.S., European Powers Dismayed](#)

July 07, 2021, Reuters

Iran has begun the process of producing enriched uranium metal, the U.N. atomic watchdog said, a move that could help it develop a nuclear weapon and that three European powers said threatened talks to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

[Iran Says Israel Attacked Karaj Site to Thwart Nuclear Talks](#)

July 06, 2021, AL Jazeera

Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiei said Israel was behind the June 23 attack on a building in Karaj that belongs to the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran.

[Hack Causes 'chaos' on Iran Trains, Posts Supreme Leader's Number for Complaints](#)

July 09, 2021, The Times of Israel

Iran's railroad system came under cyberattack on Friday (July 09), a semi-official news agency reported, with hackers posting fake messages about alleged train delays or cancellations on display boards at stations across the country.

[Iran's Transportation Ministry Hit by Another Cyberattack](#)

July 11, 2021, Israel Hayom

Computer systems of the staff of Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development were the subject of the attack which resulted in the ministry's portal and sub-portal sites becoming unavailable.

[Explosion Hits Northern Tehran on Heels of Cyberattack on Iran's Railway Grid](#)

July 10, 2021, Israel Hayom

A blast took place near a compound housing the Islamic republic's state broadcasting company, Tehran police insist the explosion caused no harm.

[Iran Cheers U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan – but Fears What Could Follow](#)

July 10, 2021, The Washington Post

As Western forces exit Afghanistan, Iran is watching with alarm. The resolution of one long-standing aim, the withdrawal of U.S. troops, is unleashing a separate challenge: what to do about the Taliban, another long-time problem for Iran, swiftly regaining power and territory next door.

Israel

[Israeli Settlements Amount to 'war crime': UN Expert](#)

July 09, 2021, AL Jazeera

A top UN rights expert has called for Israeli settlements to be classified as war crimes, urging the international community to demand accountability for a practice it has long deemed illegal.

[Israel Aerospace Industries Signs MoU with Lockheed Martin for Alliance on Air-Defense](#)

July 06, 2021, Jewish News Syndicate

Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and Lockheed Martin announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for joint collaboration in the field of integrated air-and missile-defense (IAMD) systems.

[Israel Embassy Blast Case: Psychoanalysis Test Finds Accused Were Telling 'partial truth'](#)

July 11, 2021, The Hindu

Results of the psychoanalysis test of four students arrested from Ladakh in connection with a blast near the Israel Embassy in New Delhi in January 2021 found that two of them were telling "partial truth", said a senior police officer.

[Israel Signs Seizure Order for Hamas Cryptocurrency Accounts](#)

July 09, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Israel has approved the seizure of cryptocurrency accounts used by Hamas to raise money from international donors.

Jordan

[Israel Doubles Water Supply to Jordan: Source Says PM Met King](#)

July 09, 2021, Reuters

Israel will this year double its supply of water to Jordan and encourage Amman to export more to the Palestinians, Israeli officials said after a source said that the new Israeli prime minister had secretly met the Jordanian king.

Kuwait

[US Secretary of State, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Discuss Bilateral Ties, Regional Issues in Phone Call](#)

July 09, 2021, Saudi Gazette

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held talks with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah over the telephone. They discussed regional security and other issues important to the bilateral relationship.

Lebanon

[Lebanon Few Days Away from Social Explosion: PM Diab](#)

July 06, 2021, WION

As Lebanon battles economic meltdown amid a raging political crisis, caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab said that the country is days away from a "social explosion". "The Lebanese are facing this dark fate alone," Diab told ambassadors during a meeting in Beirut.

Oman

[India to Maintain Warships in Gulf Zone to Aid Merchant Ships](#)

July 05, 2021, The Times of India

India will continue to maintain a naval presence in the troubled Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, which is aimed at protecting and reassuring Indian-flagged merchant vessels and oil tankers transiting through the region.

[Oman's Sultan Visits Saudi Arabia on First Overseas Trip](#)

July 11, 2021, AL Jazeera

Oman's Sultan visited Saudi Arabia on Sunday (July 11) on his first official overseas trip since assuming power last year, with talks expected to focus on the Yemen war and economic and investment cooperation as Muscat looks to shore up its finances.

[Oman FM: We Will Not be Third Gulf State to Normalize Ties with Israel](#)

July 10, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

Oman will not be the third country to normalize ties with Israel, Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi told the London-based Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper.

Qatar

[Air Bubble Arrangement between India and Qatar Extended for July 2021](#)

July 01, 2021, Moneycontrol

The Air Bubble Arrangement between India and Qatar extended for July 2021. The flights have resumed under this arrangement.

[Qatar Receives New Saudi Ambassador as the Two Mend Relations](#)

June 21, 2021, Reuters

Qatar's foreign minister received the new Saudi ambassador to Doha, the first to be reinstated by Arab states after they agreed to end a dispute with Qatar earlier this year.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi-UAE Rivalry Takes Shape Amid OPEC+ Spat and Competing Hubs](#)

July 07, 2021, AL Jazeera

The United Arab Emirates' refusal to agree to a Saudi-backed plan to boost oil output is the latest in an emerging rivalry playing out between the two traditional Gulf allies as both countries seek to diversify their economies and manage a long-term transition away from the petroleum industry.

[Saudi Arabia Amends Trade Rules to Target UAE and Israel](#)

July 08, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Saudi Arabia has announced an amendment to rules governing imports from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, in what is being seen as a bid to challenge the UAE's status as the region's trade and business hub. The rule change will mean that goods made in free zones within the UAE or with Israeli involvement will be affected adversely.

[Saudi Arabia's Khalid bin Salman Meeting Top US Officials](#)

July 06, 2021, AL Jazeera

Saudi Arabia's Deputy Defence Minister Khalid bin Salman is meeting with top Biden administration officials in the United States, just months after a US intelligence report linked his brother, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

[Iran's Nuclear Activity is Concerning, Says Saudi Official](#)

July 09, 2021, Reuters

The Saudi official said Iran's moves to produce uranium enriched to 60 percent fissile purity and uranium metal to 20 percent "represent an increasing threat" to regional security and non-proliferation of weapons.

[Saudi Arabia's Alfanar Buys Wind Turbine Maker Senvion India](#)

July 09, 2021, Mint

Attracted by India's green economy, Saudi Arabia's Alfanar has acquired wind turbine maker Senvion India from Senvion GmbH.

[Saudi Arabia Funds New Digital News Platform in U.S., Launches White House Lobbying Effort](#)

July 08, 2021, CNBC

Saudi Arabia is funding a yet-to-be-announced digital news platform, which will have a studio in Washington, D.C., as the kingdom begins a new lobbying effort aimed at the White House and the US Congress.

Syria

[Not in Favour of Military Action, Committed to Syria-led Political Process: India at UN](#)

July 10, 2021, Hindustan Times

After voting in favour of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Syrian Humanitarian Resolution, India reaffirmed its commitment to a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned UN-facilitated political process, to help bring long term security in the conflict-ridden region.

[U.S. Strikes Deal with Russia to Continue U.N. Syria Aid Access](#)

July 10, 2021, Reuters

The U.N. Security Council extended a cross-border aid operation into Syria from Turkey after Russia agreed to a compromise with the United States, ensuring the delivery of humanitarian help to millions of Syrians for up to 12 months.

Turkey

[Turkey Emerging as One of the 'Biggest Competitors' of Russian Attack Drones, Armored Vehicles](#)

July 05, 2021, Eurasian Times

Turkey is one of the main competitors of Russia in the manufacture of armored vehicles for the foreign market, Igor Zarakhovich, chief designer of the Russian company AO Remdizel (JSC), said in an interview with Sputnik.

[Turkey's Landmark Drone Akıncı Sets Altitude Record](#)

July 08, 2021, Daily Sabah

Turkey's latest cutting-edge combat drone has set a new national aviation record, the head of the country's top defense body said. The unmanned combat aerial vehicle (UCAV) Akıncı flew at an altitude of 38,039 feet (11,594 meters), Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB) Chairperson Ismail Demir said.

[Albania is Set to Purchase Turkish Armed Drones](#)

July 02, 2021, TRT World

Turkish armed drone 'Bayraktar TB-2' continues to gain attention. After Poland, Ukraine, Qatar and Azerbaijan buying it, Albania has set aside a budget to purchase their share of the sophisticated armed drones from Ankara.

[Greek FM Nikos Dendias Says India, Greece, UAE to Establish Trilateral Dialogue: Hits out at Turkey](#)

July 09, 2021, WION

Greece's Foreign minister Nikos Dendias has said that India, Greece, and UAE will soon establish a trilateral dialogue even as Athens is working to "develop a Strategic Partnership" with New Delhi.

[Pakistan Eyes Drones & Deeper Ties with Turkey, Concerns in Delhi of Possible Triad with China](#)

July 07, 2021, The Print

Pakistan is seeking armed drones from Turkey and is looking to deepen the already strong bilateral cooperation, especially in the defence arena, even as both countries align on key issues including Kashmir and Afghanistan.

['Turkey to Not Remain Silent About Israel's Atrocities in Palestine'](#)

July 11, 2021, Middle East Monitor

It will not be possible to establish lasting peace and stability in the region as long as Israel's policies continue, the Turkish president said, noting that Turkey did not and will not remain silent against the Israeli oppression against the Palestinians.

UAE

[Tamil Nadu Exports GI Certified Madurai Malli and Other Flowers to USA and Dubai](#)

July 08, 2021, Republic World

Tamil Nadu exported the Geographical Indication (GI) tag certified Madurai Malli and other natural flowers like button rose, lily, chamanthi, and marigold to the United States and UAE (Dubai).

[Khadi Goes Global! KVIC Registers Trademark in Bhutan, UAE](#)

July 10, 2021, Business Today

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) had registered 'Khadi' trademark in Bhutan and UAE, taking the number of countries in which it has such registrations to nine.

Yemen

[Yemen: Pro-government Forces Advance Towards Key City](#)

July 06, 2021, Middle East Eye

Fierce battles raged on several fronts in Yemen's al-Bayda province, a day after al-Zaher district was overrun by pro-government forces as they pushed to recapture the capital of the central province from the Houthis.



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