



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](#).

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

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Abstract

Union Commerce and Industry Minister, Piyush Goyal inaugurated India Pavilion at 'Dubai Expo 2020'. In his address Prime Minister Narendra Modi stressed "Expo 2020 as a testimony to the resilience of mankind against once-in-a-century pandemic... it will strengthen deep and historical relations with the UAE". He called on the world to "explore the countless avenues of economic and cultural cooperation with India" to drive the next phase of global growth. Importantly, UAE has "committed to invest USD 75 billion in India from its sovereign wealth funds". In line with this, Abu Dhabi and New Delhi held 9th Meeting of the 'India-UAE High Level Joint Task Force on Investments'. The two sides appreciated discussions on India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), reviewed efforts to amend the bilateral Investment Treaty, and new opportunities for trade and investments. In another development, India's Reliance Industries (RIL) has incorporated a wholly-owned subsidiary 'Reliance International Limited' (RINL) in Abu Dhabi global market to trade crude oil, petroleum products, petrochemicals and agricultural commodities.

Boosting India's defence cooperation with Oman, Indian Navy signed an agreement for the exchange of white shipping information and to boost maritime security cooperation with Oman. In terms of defence procurement, India has purchased four Heron drones from Israel instead of earlier plans to lease them; these drones are likely to arrive by the end of 2021.

Kuwait's national assembly condemned recent communal violence in India's North Eastern state of Assam, Using these incidents, anti-India forces are reportedly making concerted efforts to discredit India's credibility and damage trade interests in the Gulf. According to reports, Twitter trend #BoycottIndianProducts in Arabic was the handiwork of 'Muslim Brotherhood' leaders in Egypt with troll handles in Qatar, Turkey and Pakistan. Earlier, similar Twitter trends were used to target Saudi Arabia, as the growing nexus between Turkey, Pakistan and Qatar aims to challenge Saudi Arabia's leadership in the Islamic world.

On the energy front, Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has predicted that "India will struggle to move away from gasoline and diesel-powered cars/vehicles over the next 25 years". "Diesel and gasoline will make up 58 percent of India's oil demand in the next 25 years, from 51 percent now". Further, OPEC Secretary General warned consumers (nation-states) about future

“energy shortages unless the world boosts investment in new oil-and-gas development”.

As the crude prices touched USD 80/barrel, US National Security Advisor held talks with Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. OPEC is scheduled to hold a meeting on Monday (October 04) to debate how much oil is to be released into the markets. Meanwhile, Qatar Petroleum has signed a new deal with China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNNOC) to supply LNG to China over the next 15 years.

On US-Iran relations, Washington has reached out to China over reducing oil purchases from Iran. The United States also sanctioned a “major” Hezbollah financial network based in the Arabian Peninsula in coordination with Qatar. On its part, Tehran has asked the US to unfreeze USD 10 billion of Iran’s frozen funds as a sign of goodwill and as an indication of America’s seriousness toward Vienna talks and return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Amidst raging civil war in Syria, Russian President Putin and his Turkish counterpart Erdogan held talks in Sochi for “strengthening bilateral ties and addressing regional security issues”. Moscow and Ankara are planning to work together in the fields of “space exploration and the production of warships, submarines and aircraft engines”. In another development, senior Al-Qaeda leader, ‘Salim Abu-Ahmad’ has been killed in a US airstrike in Syria. Meanwhile, India warned the UN about terrorist groups such as ISIS and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham gaining ground in Syria while reiterating that “there can be no military solution to the longstanding conflict in Syria”.

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 in Bahrain for Landmark Visit](#)

September 30, 2021, AL Jazeera

Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid flew to Manama, becoming the highest-level Israeli official to visit Bahrain since the countries established formal relations last year as part of the Abraham Accords.

[Bahrain to Double VAT to 10 Per Cent: Reports](#)

September 26, 2021, Arab News

Bahrain plans to increase value-added tax to 10 per cent in a bid to curb budget deficits and boost state revenue.

Egypt

[U.S. NSA Sullivan Discusses Rights in Visit To Egypt, Official Says](#)

September 29, 2021, Reuters

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan discussed securing "tangible and lasting improvements" in human rights with Egypt's President and other top officials during a visit to Cairo, a senior U.S. official said.

[Egypt Signals Progress in Normalization of Ties with Turkey](#)

October 02, 2021, Daily Sabah

Turkey and Egypt are making progress toward the normalization of ties, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said.

[Egypt Receives 1.6 Million Pfizer Vaccine Doses From US](#)

October 01, 2021, Egypt Independent

The Chargé d'Affairs of the US Ambassador to Cairo Nicole Champagne and Egypt's Assistant Minister of Health Mohamed Hassany welcomed the arrival of the first shipment of 1.6 million Pfizer coronavirus vaccine of doses to Cairo, the first shipment of several to come.

Iraq

[China Likens US Hunt for Covid-19 Origins to 'Lies' Over WMDs in Iraq, Slams New World Health Organization Probe](#)

October 01, 2021, South China Morning Post

The US is up to its "old tricks", a Chinese Communist Party mouthpiece said, as it compared US pressure over investigating the origins of Covid-19 to its claims of Iraq having weapons of mass destruction. It also questioned the independence of a new World Health Organization team set up to trace the source of novel pathogens.

[Iraqis to Elect New Parliament Amid Deep Crisis, Apathy](#)

October 03, 2021, WION

War-scarred Iraq holds parliamentary elections on October 10, a year early to appease an anti-government protest movement, in a nation that remains mired in corruption and economic crisis.

[Trump Admin Sought To Play Down Troop Injuries in Iraq: Official](#)

September 09, 2021, AL Jazeera

A former Pentagon spokeswoman has said the White House under former President Donald Trump had pressured the military to downplay injuries sustained by 110 US troops following a 2020 Iranian missile attack on a base in Iraq.

Iran

[U.S. Has Reached Out To China About Cutting Oil Imports From Iran, Officials Say](#)

September 29, 2021, Reuters

The United States has reached out to China diplomatically about reducing its purchases of Iranian crude oil, U.S. and European officials said.

[Iran Asked U.S. To Unfreeze \\$10 Billion To Show Goodwill, Iran Official Says](#)

October 03, 2021, Reuters

Iran's foreign minister said that U.S. officials tried to discuss restarting nuclear talks last month, but he insisted Washington must first release \$10 billion of Tehran's frozen funds as a sign of goodwill.

[Iran Begins War Games Near Tense Azerbaijan Border, Citing 'Zionist' Presence](#)

October 01, 2021, The Times of Israel

Iran's national army began exercises near its border with Azerbaijan, putting on a display of military capabilities near a neighbour it is increasingly sceptical of for its ties to the West and Israel.

[Captain Alok Mishra Named MD of India Ports Global That Runs Iran's Chabahar Port](#)

September 29, 2021, The Hindu BusinessLine

The government of India has picked Captain Alok Mishra as the managing director of India Ports Global Ltd, the state-owned entity tasked with developing and running the strategically important and India-funded Chabahar port in Iran.

Israel

[India Buys Four Israeli Herons, to Upgrade Them with Missiles as Army, IAF, Navy Ramp Up Drone Inventory](#)

September 28, 2021, News 18

Defence sources said a contract to this effect has been signed and that the drones should arrive by the end of this year. The initial plan was to lease the four drones from Israel, India later decided to buy them instead.

[Israeli PM Denounces Iran, Ignores Palestinians in UN Speech](#)

September 28, 2021, Associated Press

Israel's new Prime Minister appealed to the international community to stand together against Iran, accusing Tehran of marching toward the development of a nuclear weapon and threatening to act alone if the world does not take action.

['Full of Lies': Iran Bashes Israeli PM's UN Speech](#)

September 28, 2021, AL Jazeera

Iran has responded to Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's speech at the UN General Assembly, accusing him of trying to propagate "Iran-phobia" and cleanse Israel's actions across the region.

[Head of Israeli Military Intelligence: Iran Not Getting The Bomb Any Time Soon](#)

October 02, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

Despite enriching uranium at a level not seen before, Iran still has a long way to go before acquiring a nuclear bomb, according to Israel's Military Intelligence head Maj. Gen. Tamir Hayman.

[Former Israeli PM Olmert Says Israel Does Not Have the Capacity To Strike Iran Nuclear Sites](#)

September 28, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Israel does not have conventional military capabilities that enable it to strike and permanently eliminate the Iranian nuclear project, as it did in Iraq in 1981 and Syria in 2007, former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said.

[Secretary of State Blinken: 'Sheikh Jarrah Could Lead to War, Situation Not Ready For Peace'](#)

October 02, 2021, Middle East Monitor

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed his concerns about the expulsion of Palestinian families from East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah and increasing tension at Al-Aqsa Mosque, fearing that this could lead to a new war.

[Hamas Chief Ismail Haniyeh Holds Call with Taliban Foreign Minister](#)

October 03, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh spoke over the phone with the Taliban government's acting Foreign Minister Amir Muttaqi. Haniyeh voiced hope that the Taliban movement "could have a role in supporting their brothers in Palestine to liberate Jerusalem." Muttaqi, for his part, expressed his pride in the struggle of the Palestinian people and their steadfastness in Jerusalem.

[Iran's Advances Spur Debate in Israel on "Nuclear Ambiguity" Policy](#)

September 29, 2021, The Axios

Israel has never acknowledged that it has a military nuclear program, and claims it "won't be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons to the Middle East." But a new report is sparking an unprecedented public debate among politicians and experts about whether Israel's nuclear posture needs to change to deter Iran.

Jordan

[Jordan's King Abdullah Receives First Call from Syria's Assad Since Start of Conflict](#)

October 24, 2021, Reuters

Jordan's King Abdullah received a phone call from Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the royal palace said in what officials said was the first such communication since the start of the conflict in Syria a decade ago.

[Jordan Fully Reopens Border Crossing With Syria, Seeks Trade Boost](#)

September 30, 2021, Reuters

Jordan fully reopened its main border crossing with Syria in a move to boost the countries' struggling economies and reinforce a push by Arab states to reintegrate Syria after shunning it during its civil war.

[Pandora Papers: Secret Wealth and Dealings of World Leaders Exposed](#)

October 03, 2021, BBC News

Some 35 current and former leaders and more than 300 public officials are featured in the files from offshore companies, dubbed the Pandora Papers. They reveal the King of Jordan secretly amassed £70m of UK and US property.

Kuwait

[Kuwait Lawmakers Condemn 'Atrocities' Against India's Muslims](#)

September 30, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Members of the Kuwaiti National Assembly have condemned the atrocities committed by the Indian authorities and Hindu extremist groups against the Muslim community.

Lebanon

[UN Urges Lebanon to Implement Reforms as Extreme Poverty Grows](#)

October 01, 2021, AL Jazeera

The United Nations has sounded the alarm on Lebanon's spiralling economic meltdown, calling on the country's leadership to urgently implement reforms as extreme poverty deepens and starvation becomes a "growing reality" for thousands of people.

[Israel Investigating After Lebanon's Hezbollah Says it Shot Down Israeli Drone](#)

September 30, 2021, Reuters

Israel said it was investigating an incident after Lebanon's Hezbollah group said it had shot down an Israeli drone in the south of Lebanon.

[Cash-strapped Lebanon Names Team for IMF Talks](#)

September 30, 2021, Arab News

Lebanon has formed a new government delegation to resume talks with the International Monetary Fund aimed at rescuing the country from an economic meltdown.

Oman

[India, Oman Ink Pact to Boost Maritime Security Cooperation](#)

September 27, 2021, The Economic Times

India and Oman inked an agreement for the exchange of white shipping information and to boost maritime security cooperation in reflection of growing cooperation between the two sides. The pact was signed by Chief of Navy Staff Admiral Karambir Singh and his Omani counterpart Admiral Saif bin Nasser bin Mohsen Al-Rahbi in Muscat.

[Cyclone Shaheen Strikes Parts of Oman and Iran](#)

October 03, 2021, AL Jazeera

At least nine people were killed in Oman and Iran as Tropical Cyclone Shaheen pummelled parts of their coastlines.

Qatar

[Qatar-Pak-Turkey Nexus Behind Twitter Trend Against India, Ultimate Target Was Saudi Arabia: Report](#)

October 02, 2021, News 18

The #BoycottIndianProducts trend on Arabic Twitter was the handiwork of Muslim Brotherhood leaders in Egypt with troll handles in Qatar, Turkey and Pakistan fuelling the campaign against India, a report by Disinfo Lab has claimed.

[US Issues Hezbollah-related Sanctions in Coordination with Qatar](#)

September 29, 2021, AL Jazeera

The Biden administration, in coordination with Qatar, has imposed sanctions on several alleged Hezbollah financiers based in the Gulf region, accusing them of providing and facilitating material support to the Lebanese group.

[Qatar Wraps Up Legislative Polls, No Women Candidates Elected](#)

October 03, 2021, AL Jazeera

The results of Qatar's first legislative council election have been announced, with none of the 26 female candidates winning.

[Qatar-China Ink Major 15-year LNG Deal](#)

September 30, 2021, Doha News

Qatar Petroleum has signed a deal with CNNOOC to supply liquified natural gas to China for 15 years.

Saudi Arabia

[Reliance Industries Defends Aramco Chief Joining Its Board](#)

September 30, 2021, Mint

Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) defended the appointment of Saudi Aramco chairman Yasir Al-Rumayyan as an independent director after two of the Indian conglomerate's institutional investors said they would oppose the move.

[Saudi Arabia Confirms First Round of Talks with New Iranian Government](#)

October 03, 2021, Reuters

Saudi Arabia confirmed it had held its first round of direct talks with Iran's new government last month, part of a process begun earlier this year to reduce tension between the Gulf's rival Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim powers.

[Top White House Aide Discussed Oil Prices with Saudi Arabia](#)

September 30, 2021, Reuters

President Biden's National Security Adviser, Jake Sullivan, met in Saudi Arabia with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and raised the issue of oil prices as well as the war in Yemen.

[OPEC Boss Says World Can't Afford to Underinvest in Oil](#)

October 01, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

OPEC's secretary-general said consumers should brace for more energy shortages unless the world boosts investment in new oil-and-gas development, the cartel's first, full-throated response to increasing calls to limit such spending.

[OPEC Meets On Output Increase As Oil Prices Rally](#)

September 03, 2021, Arab News

OPEC and its allies meet on Monday (October 04) to debate how much oil to release into the market, where supply disruptions and recovering demand from the coronavirus pandemic have pushed oil above \$80 per barrel.

[OPEC Says India Will Be Hooked on Oil for Years to Come](#)

September 29, 2021, Business Standard

Indian motorists will struggle to move away from gasoline and diesel-powered cars over the next quarter of a century, suggesting the nation's push toward electric vehicles may not be a complete success, OPEC said.

[Saudi Arabia's 2022 Budget Keeps Focus on Shrinking the Deficit](#)

September 30, 2021, Reuters

Saudi Arabia has revised its forecast for this year's budget deficit to 2.7 percent of GDP from 4.9 percent and is aiming for a further cut next year, its preliminary 2022 budget statement said, highlighting the government's tight grip on finances despite projected higher crude revenues.

Syria

[Syria High on Agenda as Putin and Erdogan Meet in Sochi](#)

September 29, 2021, AL Jazeera

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan have concluded talks aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and addressing regional security issues, including the situation in war-torn Syria.

[US Confirms Killing of Senior Al-Qaeda Leader in Syria](#)

October 01, 2021, Middle East Monitor

The United States has confirmed that it has killed a senior Al-Qaeda leader, Salim Abu-Ahmad in Syria in a drone strike last month, the Pentagon announced.

[ISIS, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham Gaining Strength in Syria: India Warns UN Security Council](#)

September 30, 2021, India Today

Designated terrorist groups such as ISIS and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham have continued to gain in strength in Syria, India has said, reiterating that there can be no military solution to the longstanding conflict in the country.

Turkey

[Turkey, Russia to Jointly Work on Space Program, Building Warships](#)

October 01, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has announced his decision to work with Russia in the field of space exploration and the production of warships, submarines and jet engines.

[UAE Official Says Time to Manage Rivalry with Iran and Turkey](#)

October 03, 2021, AL Jazeera

Anwar Gargash, diplomatic adviser to the UAE President, told a conference that there was uncertainty about the United States' commitment to the region and concern about a "looming Cold War" between Washington and Beijing.

UAE

[Reliance Industries Incorporates Wholly-owned Subsidiary 'Reliance International' in UAE](#)

October 02, 2021, Mint

The subsidiary was set up for trading of crude oil, petroleum products, petrochemicals and agricultural commodities.

[Expo 2020 Dubai: India's Participation Will Boost UAE Ties, Says PM Modi](#)

October 01, 2021, Khaleej Times

India's participation in Expo 2020 Dubai will go a long way in strengthening its "deep and historical relations with the UAE", the country's Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.

[Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal Inaugurates India Pavilion at Dubai Expo 2020, says India to Drive Next Phase of Global Growth](#)

October 01, 2021, Times Now

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal inaugurated the India Pavilion at Dubai Expo 2020, featuring an innovative kinetic facade made up of 600 individual colourful blocks. Among the 192 participating countries, India has the biggest pavilion in the expo.

[UAE to Invest \\$75bn in India, Partner On Clean Energy: Union Minister Piyush Goyal at Dubai Expo 2020](#)

October 03, 2021, Hindustan Times

The UAE government has committed to invest \$75 billion from their sovereign funds in India and the two partners have a shared vision for clean energy as they are working together to start manufacturing of equipment for solar power, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said in Dubai.

[Centre Seeks Inputs on IPR From Industry For India-UAE Free Trade Pact](#)

October 03, 2021, The Hindu BusinessLine

India's Department of Policy for Investment and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has called for suggestions from industry bodies and other stakeholders on intellectual property rights issues that could make it easier for Indians to do business in the UAE.

[Expo 2020 Dubai: Chinese President Xi Jinping Invites The World To Experience 'Light of China'](#)

October 01, 2021, Global Times

Noting that Expo 2020 Dubai is the first world expo held in the Middle East, President Xi said under the theme of "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future," countries have an opportunity to share their philosophies and success of economic and social development and enhance dialogue and cooperation, which shows the significant importance of the expo.

Yemen

[Clashes between Separatist Forces Kill Four Fighters in Yemen's Aden](#)

October 03, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Clashes in the Yemeni city of Aden between members of the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) killed at least four fighters before armoured vehicles were deployed and calm was restored, security sources and residents said.



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