



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

Aimed at further strengthening India-UAE strategic partnership, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit the gulf country on January 6, 2022. As noted in earlier issues of West Asia Review, PM Modi will visit the India Pavilion at 'Dubai Expo 2020' as well as sign 'Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement' (CEPA) with UAE.

In tandem, India-Saudi Arabia defence cooperation is also deepening following first ever agreement between Indian Defence Public Sector Undertaking, 'Bharat Electronics' (BEL) and Saudi Arabia-based company 'Power for Defense Technologies Co' (PDTC). The partnership will "enable Saudi Arabia to bring critical technologies for defence as well as civilian applications to the Kingdom".

The 8th round of Vienna talks on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear program is scheduled to be held from December 27. Amidst this, in a warning to the "Zionist regime" (Israel) and the United States, Iran fired sixteen ballistic missiles capable of hitting Israel. Significantly, the exercise included "blowing up a target resembling Israel's Dimona nuclear complex". United Kingdom condemned Iranian actions as a "threat to regional and international security while calling on Tehran to cease such activities". Meanwhile, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and NSA Eyal Hulata in Jerusalem. The joint statement issued after the meeting of U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group underscored the "need to confront all aspects of the threat posed by Iran including its nuclear program, destabilizing activities in the region, and support for terrorist proxy groups".

During the week, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein called on US and Iran to hold "direct negotiations" on nuclear issue. He highlighted that there is a problem in the current format of negotiations where Washington and Tehran communicate indirectly through intermediaries. "Iraq's interest is in helping the two parties sit round a table and talk", Fuad Hussein added.

Strengthening Israeli presence in the 'Golan Heights', PM Naftali Bennett, approved NIS (New Israeli Shekel) 1 billion plan to double Jewish population and allow creation of two new towns in the strategically important region near the Syrian border. It must be noted that, Israel had conquered the Golan Heights from Syria during the 1967 six day war and claimed sovereignty over the region in 1981. In 2019, the United States officially recognised Israeli sovereignty over the Golan

Heights. In another development, Indonesia's Foreign Ministry revealed that "Secretary Blinken had raised the possibility of Jakarta and Tel Aviv normalising diplomatic relations" during his recent visit to Southeast Asia.

In a significant development, US intelligence based on satellite images reported, Saudi Arabia building its own ballistic missiles with China's help. A report which was not denied by China. Riyadh's advances in ballistic missiles could complicate Washington's efforts to restraint Iran's missile advances and nuclear ambitions. As regards high-tech weaponry, three Israeli weapons manufacturers have been indicted for exporting cruise missiles to China without a permit.

With regards to developments in Afghanistan, Qatar and Turkey held talks with interim Emirate Government, regarding operation of Kabul airport. They claimed despite assurances, the "two sides have not made any progress" so far.

As the war in Yemen showed no signs of abating, Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthi rebels revealed footage showing Hezbollah and Iran's involvement in the conflict. It also highlighted that the Houthi rebels were "militarising" Sanaa airport by deploying missiles. It further stressed that "militia had launched 430 rockets and 851 armed drones targeting Saudi Arabia since January 2018".

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

Bahrain

[Bahrain Moves To Covid-19 Yellow Alert Level Starting December 19](#)

December 15, 2021, Arab News

Bahrain has announced the precautionary adoption of the coronavirus Yellow Alert Level starting Dec. 19 until Jan. 31 of 2022. A Yellow Alert Level is declared if the rolling average of positive cases within intensive care units is 51 to 100 cases for seven days.

Egypt

[India's Uflex to Build \\$30m Chemicals Plant in Egypt](#)

December 21, 2021, Zawya (Refinitiv)

India's Uflex is planning to build a new chemicals plant in Egypt with total investment of \$30 million, according to a statement by the Egypt's cabinet.

[Egypt, Russia To Intensify Joint Efforts To Settle Libya Crisis](#)

December 25, 2021, Arab News

The two sides agreed to intensify joint efforts and coordination to settle the crisis in Libya, achieve the desired aspirations of the Libyan people, combat armed militias and terrorist organizations, while ending illegal foreign interference in Libya's affairs.

Iraq

[Iraq Calls For Direct Nuclear Talks Between Iran and US](#)

December 23, 2021, The Times of Israel

Iraq's foreign minister said on a visit to Tehran that the time has come for the Islamic republic of Iran and the United States to negotiate directly on Iran's nuclear ambitions.

[China Signs Deal To Build 1,000 Schools in Iraq as Beijing Pushes for Greater Role in Middle East After US Withdrawal](#)

December 19, 2021, South China Morning Post (SCMP)

China has signed a deal to build 1,000 schools in Iraq as Beijing pushes for a bigger role in the Middle East while the United States retreats.

Iran

[INS Sudarshini Visits Iran](#)

December 24, 2021, The New Indian Express

The Indian Navy's sail training vessel INS Sudarshini is on the culmination phase of its deployment to the Gulf region as part of the Navy's efforts towards familiarising friendly foreign navies on various facets of operations and training on board sail training platforms and extending bridges of friendship.

[Iran Nuclear Deal Talks To Resume on December 27](#)

December 23, 2021, AL Jazeera

The announcement came amid warnings the landmark agreement would become obsolete within weeks if Iran continued to step up its nuclear activities as it has been doing since 2019, a year after the United States unilaterally withdrew from it and reimposed sanctions against Iran.

[Iranian FM Amir Abdollahian Calls For Balanced Deal In Vienna Talks](#)

December 24, 2021, Business Standard

Iran will continue the negotiations until a good agreement is reached, Amir Abdollahian said, adding that "when other parties show their seriousness, it is the day when we can talk about the return of all parties to their commitments" under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

[In 'Warning' to Israel, Iran Says It Fired 16 Ballistic Missiles Able To Hit Country](#)

December 24, 2021, The Times of Israel

"These exercises were designed to respond to threats made in recent days by the Zionist regime," armed forces chief of staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri told Iranian state television.

[UK Condemns Iran's Launch of Ballistic Missiles in War Games](#)

December 24, 2021, Arab News

Britain said it condemned a launch of ballistic missiles by Iran in war games. "These actions are a threat to regional and international security and we call on Iran to immediately cease its activities," the Foreign Office said in a statement.

[Microsoft Warns China, Iran, North Korea and Turkey Are Exploiting Recently Revealed Software Vulnerability](#)

December 15, 2021, CNN

Hackers linked with the governments of China, Iran, North Korea and Turkey have moved to exploit a critical flaw in software used by big tech firms around the world, Microsoft warned.

[Iran Agrees To Accept Sri Lankan Tea in Payment For \\$251m Debt](#)

December 26, 2021, Middle East Monitor

In a first-of-its-kind barter deal, Iran has agreed to accept payment from Sri Lanka in the form of Ceylon tea to clear a debt for part oil exports worth \$251 million.

Israel

[Joint Statement on Meeting of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group](#)

December 22, 2021, The White House

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Israeli National Security Advisor Dr. Eyal Hulata led a December 22 meeting in Jerusalem of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group. They discussed the need to confront all aspects of the threat posed by Iran, including its nuclear program, destabilizing activities in the region, and support for terrorist proxy groups.

[FM Lapid: 'Bad' Nuclear Pact with Iran Worse Than No Deal At All](#)

December 24, 2021, The Times of Israel

Foreign Minister Lapid says Israel would back a 'good' agreement to keep Iran from obtaining nuclear arms, but tightened sanctions would still be better than reviving the 2015 JCPOA.

[Israel Approves NIS 1b Plans For Golan Heights, Will Build Two New Towns](#)

December 26, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

The Israeli government approved a NIS (New Israeli Shekel) 1 billion plan to develop the Golan Heights that will at least double its Jewish population and allow for the creation of two new towns in the region.

[Meeting President Biden's NSA, Palestinian President Abbas Urges Closer US-Palestinian Ties](#)

December 22, 2021, The Times of Israel

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas hosted visiting US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan for talks in Ramallah, telling him that obstacles to closer American-Palestinian ties "must be removed".

[Israeli Companies Sold Weapons To China 'Without Permit'](#)

December 21, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Three Israeli weapons manufacturers have been indicted for selling arms to China without a permit. The three were found to have exported cruise missiles to Beijing.

[Indonesia Confirms Secretary Blinken Raised Normalizing Ties with Israel](#)

December 26, 2021, Nikkei Asia

The U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken raised the possibility of Indonesia normalizing its diplomatic ties with Israel during his visit to the Southeast Asian country in mid-December, Indonesia's foreign ministry has confirmed.

[Majority of UN Members Back War Crimes Probe Against Israel](#)

December 25, 2021, Middle East Monitor

A majority of 125 countries in the UN General Assembly backed an unprecedented open-ended war crimes probe against Israel.

Jordan

[Jordan Reports 295 New Cases of Omicron, 328 in Total](#)

December 26, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Abdel Bilbeisi, the Prime Minister's adviser on containing the COVID-19 pandemic, told the state news agency Petra that the new tally brought to 328 the number of omicron infections detected in the country.

Kuwait

[Indian Embassy Promotes Trade, Technology, Tourism in Meeting with Kuwaiti Media](#)

December 23, 2021, Kuwait Times

Ambassador of India to Kuwait Sibi George interacted with Kuwaiti media-persons on promotion of trade, technology and tourism, as part of the realization of the vision for 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat' or 'Self-Reliant India', as envisaged by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi.

[COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Compulsory for Kuwaiti Travellers](#)

December 23, 2021, Gulf News

Kuwait has made COVID-19 vaccine booster shot compulsory for citizens who have completed nine months after receiving the second dose if they wish to travel.

Lebanon

[President Aoun: Lebanon Needs 'Six to Seven Years' To Exit Crisis](#)

December 25, 2021, AL Jazeera

Lebanon needs "six to seven years" to emerge from the crisis it is currently in, the country's president has said.

[UN Secretary-General Guterres Calls For Hezbollah To Be Political Party](#)

December 22, 2021, Middle East Monitor

"I think there are many problems in Lebanon," Guterres said during his trip to the country. "I think that it is important that Hezbollah becomes a political party that plays the political party roles as any other political party in Lebanon."

Oman

[Huawei signs a Memorandum of Understanding with Omani Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Omantel](#)

December 23, 2021, Huawei

The three parties will strengthen cooperation in innovation center construction, trainee cultivation, and 5G applications.

[Oman Sets Covid-19 Double Jab Entry Requirement for Visitors](#)

December 26, 2021, Arab News

Omani authorities require foreign travellers aged 18 or older to have received at least two COVID-19 vaccine doses to enter the sultanate.

Qatar

[Turkey, Qatar Hold Talks With Taliban for Kabul Airport Operations](#)

December 25, 2021, Daily Sabah

Turkish and Qatari officials are holding negotiations with the Taliban in Afghanistan to operate Kabul airport, according to Afghan officials.

[Qatar Targets \\$10 Billion of Investments in U.S. Ports - Sources](#)

December 21, 2021, Reuters

Qatar plans to invest at least \$10 billion in U.S. ports and has approached international banks for financing help, three finance sources say, in an infrastructure spree that reflects the Gulf country's deepening ties with Washington.

Saudi Arabia

[India and Gulf Region: First Ever Tie Up Between BEL and Saudi Company for Defence Technologies](#)

December 22, 2021, The Financial Express

In an effort to promote deeper cooperation in defence and aerospace technologies, for the first time a Saudi Arabia based company Power for Defense Technologies Co (PDTC) has inked an agreement with DPSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).

[US Intel and Satellite Images Show Saudi Arabia is now Building its Own Ballistic Missiles with Help of China](#)

December 23, 2021, CNN

US intelligence agencies have assessed that Saudi Arabia is now actively manufacturing its own ballistic missiles with the help of China, a development that could have significant ripple effects across the Middle East and complicate Biden administration's efforts to restrain the nuclear ambitions of Iran.

[Saudi and US Air Forces Conclude Joint Combat Readiness Exercise](#)

December 26, 2021, Arab News

The Royal Saudi Air Force and their US counterparts concluded a bilateral exercise in western Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom's defense ministry said.

[Saudi Arabia Ready To Normalise Ties With Israel Based on 2002 Arab Peace Initiative](#)

December 15, 2021, Dawn (Pakistan)

Abdallah Al-Mouallimi, the Saudi Arabia's permanent representative to the UN, said Riyadh is committed to the Arab Initiative for peace, which calls for the end of the Israeli occupation of all Arab territories occupied in 1967 and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital in return of normalising ties with Israel.

Syria

[French-Syrian Man Arrested in France over Chemical Weapons Parts in Syria](#)

December 27, 2021, France 24

A French-Syrian man has been detained by French police on suspicion of supplying components for the manufacture of chemical weapons in Syria through his shipping company.

[Official Accuses Qatar, Saudi Arabia of Obstructing Syria's Return to Arab League](#)

December 23, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Syria's Deputy Foreign Minister Bashar Al-Jaafari has accused Qatar and Saudi Arabia of obstructing the regime's return to the Arab League.

Turkey

[Turkey To Be Among Top 10 Economies With New Model: President Erdoğan](#)

December 26, 2021, Daily Sabah

Turkey is rapidly moving towards the goal of placing itself among the top 10 economies worldwide with its new economy program, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said.

[President Erdogan Seeks To Boost Ties at Turkey-Africa Summit](#)

December 18, 2021, AL Jazeera

Turkey is aiming to deepen economic and military ties in Africa, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in remarks at a major summit of African heads in Istanbul, and called for a seat representing the continent at the UN Security Council.

UAE

[PM Modi to Be in UAE on January 6; No Visit to Kuwait](#)

December 26, 2021, WION

With a visit to the Dubai Expo and the signing of the India-UAE free trade agreement, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on January 6.

[UAE Plans to Stop Monopoly of Key Business Families](#)

December 26, 2021, Middle East Monitor

The Emirati government plans to end its monopoly on the sale of imported goods, in an effort to attract foreign investments.

Yemen

[Arab Coalition Releases Footage Showing Hezbollah, Iranian Involvement in Yemen War](#)

December 26, 2021, Arab News

The Arab coalition released footage and pictures it said provided evidence of Hezbollah and Iran's involvement in Yemen's seven-year war and the use of Sanaa airport as a missile launch site.

[Houthi Projectile Kills Two in Saudi Arabia's Jazan](#)

December 24, 2021, Arab News

A Saudi citizen and a Yemeni resident of the Kingdom were killed after a Houthi projectile hit Jazan.



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