



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

Owing to the ongoing Russia – Ukraine conflict and the attendant sanctions, crude prices touched the USD 140/barrel mark on March 6. This will have a serious impact on India’s energy security. Importantly, despite the ongoing conflict rattling the global energy markets, OPEC+ has decided to stick with its earlier plan of increasing crude output gradually by 400,000 barrels per day in April 2022. It is expected that crude prices could average USD 95 – 125 in the short term, pushing India’s domestic petrol and diesel prices by as much as INR 15-22 per litre.

Israeli Ambassador to India, Naor Gilon, met the Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), S Somanath, to discuss various avenues for expanding space relations between the two countries. In another development, Turkey’s Ilker Ayci has declined to take on the appointment of Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Air India owned by the Tata Group owing to concerns raised about Ayci’s possible affiliation with Turkish President Erdogan.

Meanwhile, Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have agreed to a three-month plan that will resolve the long-pending issue of uranium particles found at three undeclared sites in Iran. Open-source intelligence points toward this development as a “removal of a major obstacle” in reimplementing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) between P5+1 and Iran. As the West continues to impose unprecedented sanctions on Russia, Moscow demanded written guarantees from the US that the sanctions would not impact Russia’s trade and investment cooperation with Iran, involvement in Iran’s civilian nuclear sector, and arms sales to Tehran. Kremlin demanded clarity on these issues prior to backing the renewed JCPoA. On his part, US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, asserted that “sanctions imposed on Russia for invading Ukraine have nothing to do with Iran nuclear talks”.

As the conflict in Ukraine continues unabated, diplomatic activities to mediate between Kyiv and Moscow have intensified. Israeli Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett, visited Russia on March 5, to meet President Vladimir Putin which the Russian media described as a “risky” diplomatic gamble. Meanwhile, reports point toward, “Russia recruiting Syrians skilled in urban combat as it plans to expand attacks deeper into the Ukrainian cities”. On the other hand, the Ukrainian military leadership based in the western part of the country (Lviv) continues to appeal to Israel and the West for air-defence systems. In another development, Middle East

countries are seriously concerned about the shortages of wheat as Russia and Ukraine account for around 30 percent of global wheat exports.

Highlighting the continued uncertainty in US-Saudi Arabia relations, Crown Prince, Mohammed Bin Salman, warned the US that it “should not interfere in the internal affairs of the Kingdom” stressing that “he doesn’t care even if President Biden misunderstands him, adding that the US should think about its own interests”. Importantly, Saudi Crown Prince alluded to the possibility of reducing investments in the US that reportedly stand at USD 800 billion. As regards relations with Israel, Mohammed bin Salman stressed that Tel Aviv can be a “potential ally” with shared interests, but it must “resolve the conflict with the Palestinians first”. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, continuing with its policy of localising military industry, signed an agreement with China to build military drones in the Kingdom.

With regards to developments in Yemen, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) extended an arms embargo to all Houthis in the war-torn country.

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

Bahrain

[U.S. Bahrain Defence Leaders Discuss Global, Regional Concerns](#)

March 02, 2022, US Department of Defence

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III hosted Bahrain Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa for a wide-ranging discussion.

[Readout of Vice President Harris's Meeting with Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa of Bahrain](#)

March 04, 2022, The White House

Vice President Kamala Harris met with Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa of Bahrain in Washington, D.C. The Vice President underscored the U.S. commitment to strengthening the U.S.-Bahrain partnership and expressed appreciation for Bahrain's collaboration on a range of bilateral, regional, and global issues.

Egypt

[Middle East to Suffer from Grain Shortage Due to The War in Ukraine](#)

March 07, 2022, Business Standard

As Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues unabated, many countries of the Middle East are seriously concerned about the inevitable shortage of grain as Russia and Ukraine together account for 30 percent of global wheat exports.

[US Has Not Requested Suez Canal Closure to Russian Ships: Egypt](#)

March 02, 2022, Arab News

The head of the Suez Canal Authority has denied social media reports that the US has asked Egypt to close the canal to Russian ships as part of international sanctions against Moscow over the Ukraine conflict.

[Egypt Supports Efforts to Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East: FM](#)

March 02, 2022, Daily News Egypt

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sameh Shoukry, confirmed Egypt's support for the Conference on Disarmament in its efforts to overcome the paralysis that has been affecting it for more than two decades, pointing out Egypt's firm position on the necessity of nuclear disarmament.

Iraq

[Tony Blair Admits He 'May Have Been Wrong' About Iraq, Afghanistan Invasions](#)

March 06, 2022, Arab News

Former British Prime Minister Sir Tony Blair has admitted that he “may have been wrong” about the decision to invade Iraq and Afghanistan but remained steadfast in his view that he thought it was “the right thing” to do.

[US-based CBS Hacked After Reporter Says Ukraine 'Relatively Civilised' Compared to Iraq](#)

March 03, 2022, AL Monitor

On March 2, hackers temporarily assumed control of CBS' website and posted messages praising Iraqi civilization. One image read “Iraq came, then history came”.

[Iraqi Parliament Reopens Registration for Delayed Presidential Vote](#)

March 06, 2022, The Arab Weekly

The court's exclusion of Hoshyar Zebari from the race has cleared the way for his main challenger, incumbent President Barham Salih, who is expected to run for a second term.

Iran

[Iran's Khamenei: 'Mafia Regime' of US Created Ukraine Crisis](#)

March 01, 2022, AL Jazeera

Iran wishes for the war in Ukraine to end but believes the crisis is rooted in the policies of the United States and other Western nations, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has said.

[Iran, IAEA Agree Timeline to Remove Obstacle to Reviving Nuclear Deal](#)

March 06, 2022, Reuters

Iran and the IAEA agreed a three-month plan that in the best case will resolve the long-stalled issue of uranium particles found at old but undeclared sites in the country, removing an obstacle to reviving the Iran nuclear deal.

[Russia Demands for US Guarantees Before Backing Iran Nuclear Deal](#)

March 05, 2022, News 18

Russian FM Lavrov said that Moscow is demanding guarantees from the US before backing the Iran nuclear deal, citing the current wave of unprecedented Western sanctions against Russia.

[Russia's Demand for US Guarantees May Harm Nuclear Talks, Says Iran Official](#)

March 06, 2022, India Today

Russia's demand for written US guarantees that sanctions on Moscow would not harm Russian cooperation with Iran is "not constructive" for talks between Tehran and global powers to revive a 2015 nuclear deal, a senior Iranian official said.

[US Secretary of State: Russia Sanctions Have Nothing to Do with Iran Nuclear Talks](#)

March 06, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken says the sanctions imposed on Russia over its ongoing military action in Ukraine have nothing to do with a potential nuclear agreement with Iran.

[Cyber Attacks by Iranian Hackers on Rise](#)

March 06, 2022, The New Indian Express

India's government departments have been facing a growing number of breaches from hackers in Iran.

Israel

[India, Israel Discuss Avenues to Expand Cooperation in Space Sector](#)

February 23, 2022, Business Standard

"The ongoing interactions between the space agencies and the avenues for expanding space relations between India and Israel, in view of space reforms announced by the Government of India, were discussed during the meeting" between the Israeli Ambassador to India and Chairman of ISRO.

[Israeli PM Meets President Putin on Ukraine in 'Risky' Diplomatic Gamble](#)

March 06, 2022, The Moscow Times

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett stepped into the role of mediator as Russia's invasion of Ukraine intensified, holding a three-hour meeting at the Kremlin with President Vladimir Putin before calling Ukraine's President and flying to Berlin.

[We Need Air Defences from Israel, Not Goodwill Statements Says Ukrainian Commander based in Lviv](#)

March 04, 2022, The Times of Israel

Ukraine needs Israeli weapons far more than it needs sympathetic statements from Tel Aviv, a top official in western Ukraine said, joining the country's leadership in urging Israel to help arm their embattled military.

['A Real Opportunity': Israel Urges Ukrainian Jews to Immigrate](#)

March 04, 2022, AL Jazeera

About 100 Ukrainian Jews have arrived in Israel and government officials say some 10,000 are expected in the coming weeks.

[US Department of Homeland Security to Increase Security Cooperation with Israel Through New Arrangements](#)

March 03, 2022, Department of Homeland Security, US Government

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Under Secretary for Policy Robert Silvers visited Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, to sign security agreements with the Government of Israel, engage with key government and private sector partners on a range of joint security issues, and deliver keynote remarks on DHS cybersecurity priorities at the CyberTech Global Conference.

[IDF Says Its F-35 Jets Intercepted 2 Iranian Drones Ferrying Arms to Gaza Last Year](#)

March 06, 2022, The Times of Israel

Two aircraft were intercepted by F-35 jets far from Israel's borders in March 2021, the IDF said in a statement.

[Iran Has Used Advanced Air Defence Batteries Against Israel in Syria](#)

March 06, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

Iran has used advanced air-defence batteries against Israeli planes carrying out operations in Syria in an attempt to challenge IAF pilots.

[US CENTCOM Commander: Iran Poses Biggest Threat to Regional Security](#)

March 03, 2022, Israel Hayom

On a farewell visit to Israel, Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie said Iran is the biggest threat to regional security, and the US will do everything possible to prevent it from securing nuclear weapons.

[Palestinian Fatah Official Stresses Need to Change Strategy After 'Evaporation' of US Promises](#)

March 03, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The deputy head of Fatah said that all the American promises that were made after the election of Joe Biden as US President have "evaporated", and issues are being avoided.

Jordan

[Number of Israeli Settlers in West Bank, Jordan Valley Close to Half a Million](#)

March 05, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Reportedly, the number of settlers in the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley, have increased by 43 per cent since 2011.

Kuwait

[Changes To Migrant Rules in Kuwait Force Indian Workers to Return Home](#)

March 02, 2022, The New Indian Express

Changes in migrant rules in Kuwait have forced a section of Indian workers to return to their homes. As per new guidelines, the non-graduate migrants who completed 60 years of age cannot remain in Kuwait.

Lebanon

[Michel Aoun: Isolating Hezbollah Will Lead to Civil War in Lebanon](#)

February 28, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Lebanese President Michel Aoun said isolating Hezbollah will lead to civil war in Lebanon.

[Gas Queues in Lebanon as Fears Mount Over Food Security Amidst Ukraine Crisis](#)

March 06, 2022, Arab News

Hour-long queues outside gas stations have returned to Lebanon, as supplies of cooking oil and flour in shops dwindle amid mounting fears of a food security crisis.

Oman

[His Majesty Issues Directives to Boost Oman's Economy](#)

March 05, 2022, The Times of Oman

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik chaired a meeting of the Council of Ministers at Al Barakah Palace giving directives to further boost Oman's economy.

Qatar

[Russia-Ukraine War: Qatar Supports Ukraine's Territorial Integrity](#)

February 28, 2022, Middle East Eye

Qatar's foreign minister called for a diplomatic settlement to the conflict between Moscow and Kyiv, to preserve Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

Saudi Arabia

[OPEC+ Sticks to Plan of Gradual Output Hikes as Crude Soars](#)

March 03, 2022, ABC News

The OPEC+ coalition of oil producers – made up of OPEC members led by Saudi Arabia and non-cartel members led by Russia – chose to increase oil production by 400,000 barrels per day in April.

[Brent Crude Nears \\$140/barrel, Close to All-time High](#)

March 07, 2022, Deccan Herald

Brent oil prices soared to a near 14-year high of \$140 on Sunday (March 06) as traders fretted over the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

[Fueling Inflation: Petrol, Diesel Prices Set to Rise as Crude to Range Around \\$95-\\$125](#)

March 05, 2022, The Economic Times

Hostilities between Russia and Ukraine, along with sustained demand, is expected to keep global crude oil prices in the range of \$95-to-\$125 per barrel in the short term.

[Saudi Crown Prince Says 'Do Not Care' if President Biden Misunderstands Him](#)

March 03, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The de facto ruler of the world's top oil exporter warned the United States not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Kingdom. "Simply, I do not care," he said. It is up to President Biden "to think about the interests of America," he said when asked whether Biden misunderstood things about him.

[Saudi Crown Prince Says Kingdom Could Reduce U.S. Investments](#)

March 03, 2022, Reuters

"In the same way we have the possibility of boosting our interests, we have the possibility of reducing them," the Saudi Crown Prince said, speaking about Saudi Arabia's U.S. investments that reportedly amount to \$800 billion.

[Israel Can Be a 'Potential Ally', Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Says](#)

March 03, 2022, Middle East Eye

Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Mohammed bin Salman, said he sees Israel as a "potential ally" with shared interests, not an enemy - but that it must solve its conflict with the Palestinians first.

[Saudi Arabia, China Sign Agreement to Build Military Drones in Kingdom](#)

March 06, 2022, Gulf News

Saudi Arabia has signed an agreement with China to build military drones locally in the Kingdom as part of its efforts to localise military industries and make it an important source of the economy.

Syria

[Russia Recruiting Syrians for Urban Combat in Ukraine, U.S. Officials Say](#)

March 06, 2022, The Wall Street Journal

Moscow is recruiting Syrians skilled in urban combat to fight in Ukraine as Russia's invasion is poised to expand deeper into cities, according to U.S. officials.

[Amidst Ukraine Crisis, Syrians Recount Horror Under Russian Air Attacks](#)

March 05, 2022, AL Jazeera

Often seen as one of the most brutal battles in the Syrian civil war, pro-government forces retook the city of Aleppo from the rebels in 2016. The offensive was made possible by Russia's rounds of heavy aerial bombardment, including targeting non-combatant facilities such as hospitals.

[UN: Syria Has Largest Displaced Population in The World](#)

March 03, 2022, Middle East Monitor

There are 14.6 million Syrians in need of aid and around 6.9 million others displaced, the UN announced. The spokesperson for the UN secretary-general said that Syria has the largest number of "internally displaced persons (IDP) in the world."

Turkey

[Turkey's Ayci Declines Air India CEO Role](#)

March 01, 2022, Reuters

Ayci said in a statement that in a recent meeting with Tata Chairman N Chandrasekaran he declined to take the post after reading about attempts "to colour my appointment with undesirable colours" in some sections of the Indian media.

[Turkey Will Work for Russia-Ukraine Peace, President Erdoğan Tells EU's Michel](#)

March 06, 2022, Daily Sabah

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and European Council President Charles Michel discussed the latest developments about the Russia-Ukraine war over the phone. During the call, Erdoğan told Michel that Turkey will continue all its efforts to achieve peace between Ukraine and Russia.

UAE

['We See India-UAE CEPA as Opening Doors to Range of Capital Exchange': UAE Minister Al Zeyoudi](#)

March 07, 2022, Hindustan Times

The free trade agreement between India and UAE is a comprehensive deal that moves beyond a limited trade pact, said Thani Bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, UAE's minister of state for foreign trade. Besides commerce, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) could open the doors to the full range of financial, technological and human capital exchange.

[U.S. Recalls Cable Saying India and UAE "In Russia's Camp"](#)

March 03, 2022, Axios

The State Department has recalled a cable to U.S. diplomats that instructed them to inform counterparts from India and the United Arab Emirates their position of neutrality on Ukraine put them "in Russia's camp".

[U.S. Ties with Gulf Partner UAE Are Being Tested, Envoy Says](#)

March 03, 2022, Reuters

U.S. ties with the United Arab Emirates are being tested, a senior Emirati diplomat said, in a rare admission of strains in their strategic partnership which have been highlighted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Yemen

[UN Security Council Extends Yemen Arms Embargo to All Houthis](#)

February 28, 2022, AL Jazeera

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has extended an arms embargo to all Houthi rebels, as the Yemeni group faces increased international pressure after a string of recent attacks on Gulf countries.

[Yemen's Houthis Agree UN Proposal to Offload Decaying Oil Tanker](#)

March 06, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Yemen's Houthi movement has signed an agreement with the United Nations to deal with a decaying oil tanker threatening to spill 1.1 million barrels of crude oil off the war-torn country's coast, a Houthi official said.



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