



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

Amidst rising crude prices owing to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, Indian public sector oil companies have stepped up efforts to secure Russian crude available at discounted rates. Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) bought three million barrels of Russian crude for May delivery at a discount of USD 20-25/barrel to the dated price of Brent crude.

Iran has also indicated its interest in meeting India's energy needs through the INR-Rial trade mechanism. Even as the global oil prices hover around the USD 110 per barrel, resurgence of COVID-19 in South China's 'Shenzhen' and massive lockdown of population has led to a drop in oil prices below USD 100 per barrel in the past week. In the midst of wide-ranging US sanctions, Saudi Arabia is in talks with China to price some of its crude sales to Beijing in CNY instead of the US Dollar. Meanwhile, India's 'Adani Group' is exploring possibilities of acquiring a stake in Saudi Aramco.

To commemorate 30 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Israeli Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett, will visit India in April 2022. Underscoring the deep relations between the two countries, PM Bennett has pledged to expand cooperation in areas that among others include, innovation and technology, security and cyber, agriculture, and climate change. Meanwhile, India has boosted fertilizers imports from Israel and Canada as the Russian supply remains disrupted. As noted in earlier issues of West Asia Review, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is threatening the food security of several countries in the Middle East. To help in meeting these shortages, India will boost wheat exports to Egypt, Israel, Oman, Nigeria, and South Africa. In the meantime, after the visit of Oman's defence officials, the country's foreign minister is scheduled to visit New Delhi this week.

Pakistan will host the 48th session of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) on March 22-23 with the focus of discussion on "Islamophobia, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Kashmir". Importantly, the OIC has invited the Chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Masarat Alam Bhat, to attend the Islamabad OIC-CFM. Reacting sharply, India asserted that "we do not expect OIC to encourage the actors and organisations engaged in terrorism and anti-India activities". Earlier, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution to declare March 15 as the 'International Day to Combat Islamophobia'. India, France, and the European Union objected to this resolution

with India's Permanent Representative calling for condemnation of all "religious phobia" instead of just singling out Islamophobia, referring to discrimination against Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs.

The revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the P5+1 and Iran appears to be imminent as Russia has received written security guarantees from Washington that Western sanctions for its invasion of Ukraine will not affect cooperation between Tehran and Moscow. Meanwhile, Israel expressed deep concerns over reports about the Biden administration's plans to delist Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terror group. On its part, the US State Department reportedly clarified that no decision has been made on this and "any speculation to the contrary is simply uninformed". Amidst this, Commander of US CENTCOM, General, Kenneth McKenzie, warned the Senate about Iran possessing 3000 ballistic missiles, many of which can hit Israel.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed Israel's Knesset (Parliament). Zelenskyy, who is Jewish, called on Israel to strongly oppose Russia while accusing Russian President Vladimir Putin of trying to carry out "final solution" (Holocaust) against the Ukrainian people. In another development, Germany and Qatar have agreed on an energy partnership that will reduce Berlin's reliance on Russian gas imports.

In an important regional development, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad visited UAE to meet the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed. On his part, Sheikh Mohammed hoped that Assad's visit will mark a new beginning of peace and stability in Syria and the Middle East as a whole. He also highlighted Damascus as a key pillar of Arab security and UAE's keen interest in bilateral cooperation for Syria's development. Washington, on the other hand, expressed "profound disappointment" over Assad's visit to Abu Dhabi urging allies to avoid normalising relations with a regime accused of committing "horrific atrocities".

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

Bahrain

[Bahrain is Pushing a Regional 'Security Architecture' For the Middle East](#)

March 18, 2022, Jewish Insider

During a recent visit to Washington, Bahraini Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa promoted "a new security architecture for the Middle East that will help guarantee the security of the region as a whole," Bahraini Ambassador to the U.S. Abdulla Bin Rashid Al Khalifa said.

[Binance Gets Its First Gulf Crypto Licence in Bahrain](#)

March 15, 2022, Reuters

The world's largest cryptocurrency exchange 'Binance' has been given a crypto-asset service provider licence by Bahrain's central bank, its first such licence in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the company and the bank said.

[Vladimir Putin, Bahrain King Discuss Importance of Diplomatic Solutions - King's Adviser](#)

March 15, 2022, Reuters

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Bahrain King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa discussed in a phone call the "importance of solving conflicts by diplomatic means," an adviser to the king said.

Egypt

[Egypt Set to Substitute Wheat from Russia, Ukraine with Imports from India](#)

March 20, 2022, Mint

India is in final talks to start wheat exports to Egypt - one of the largest importers of wheat from Ukraine as well as Russia, the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry said.

[US To Deliver F-15 Jets to Egypt as It Seeks to Reassure Allies](#)

March 16, 2022, The Arab Weekly

US CENTCOM Commander said that he believed the United States would provide Egypt with F-15 aircraft. However, he did not provide details on timing or how many F-15 aircraft, made by Boeing, would be provided.

[Egypt Seeks to Boost Gas Exports to Europe as Russia-Ukraine War Drags on](#)

March 17, 2022, AL-Monitor

Egypt hopes to boost its natural gas exports at a time when European Union (EU) countries are gradually giving up reliance on Russian hydrocarbons, including gas, in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Iraq

[After 19 Years, U.S. Human Rights Crimes Still Fresh in Iraq](#)

March 21, 2022, Xinhua

Nineteen years after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, many Iraqis still remember the horrors of war and human rights violations committed by Washington that took a heavy toll on civilians.

[Iraqi Minister Says High Oil Prices, If They Last, Could Speed the Shift to Electric Vehicles](#)

March 10, 2022, The New York Times

According to the Iraqi Oil Minister, Iraq and other Middle Eastern oil producers were concerned that high crude prices could lower demand or even hasten the transition to electric vehicles, reducing reliance on oil.

[China's Covid Resurgence is Part of The Reason Oil Prices Plummeted from Record Highs](#)

March 16, 2022, CNBC

China's recent Covid wave and subsequent lockdowns in Shenzhen have helped oil prices ease from record highs reached roughly a week ago.

[Oil Settles Higher, India's Imports to Rise, Iran Aims 1.4m Bpd Crude Exports](#)

March 20, 2022, Arab News

Brent crude futures settled up \$1.29, or 1.2 percent, to \$107.93 a barrel a day after surging nearly nine percent in the biggest daily percentage gain since mid-2020.

Iran

[Iran Ready to Meet India's Energy Needs, Tehran Envoy Tells New Delhi](#)

March 18, 2022, Business Standard

Iran is ready to meet India's energy needs by launching rupee-rial trade for export of oil and gas, said Ali Chegeni, Tehran's Ambassador to New Delhi.

[After IOC, HPCL Buys 2m Barrels of Russian Crude, MRPL Seeks 1m Barrels](#)

March 17, 2022, The Economic Times

After Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) has bought two million barrels of Russian crude oil as Indian refiners stepped up efforts to secure Russian oil available at deep discounts.

[Russia Backs Down on Demands in Iran Nuclear Deal Talks, Making Revival of 2015 Pact Imminent](#)

March 18, 2022, CNBC

Russia has walked back its threat to torpedo the revival of the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal over recent sanctions imposed over its invasion of Ukraine, reopening the way to an agreement after nearly a year of talks in Vienna.

[US Ready to Make 'Tough Decisions' to Revive Iran Nuclear Deal, Official Says](#)

March 19, 2022, The Times of Israel

"We are not negotiating in public and are not going to respond to specific claims about what sanctions we would be prepared to lift as part of a mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA," the State Department official said.

[U.S. Weighs Deal to Remove Iran's IRGC From Terror Blacklist](#)

March 16, 2022, Axios

The Biden administration is considering removing Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) from a terror blacklist in return for a public commitment from Iran to de-escalation in the region, three Israeli officials and two U.S. sources said.

[Iran Releases British Prisoner Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe Amid Hopes of Breakthrough in Nuclear Talks](#)

March 16, 2022, The Wall Street Journal

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, the British national who was imprisoned in Iran in 2016, left the country, according to Iranian state media.

Israel

[Israeli PM Bennett To Visit India Next Month to Mark 30 Years of Diplomatic Ties](#)

March 20, 2022, The Times of Israel

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is slated to pay an official visit to India in April 2022 to commemorate 30 years of full diplomatic relations between the two nations.

[India Boosts Fertiliser Imports from Canada, Israel as Russian Supply Disrupted](#)

March 16, 2022, The Economic Times

India is boosting fertiliser imports from nations including Canada and Israel to ensure sufficient supplies for the coming summer sowing season after the disruption of shipments caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

[We Are Working to Bring Semiconductor Unit to Karnataka: Israeli Ambassador Gilon](#)

March 01, 2022, Deccan Herald

Israeli officials are working to facilitate ISMC-Tower Semiconductors' joint venture to set up a semiconductor fab (manufacturing unit) in the Southern Indian state of Karnataka, Israeli Ambassador to India Naor Gilon said.

[Israeli PM Bennett Says US Determined to Sign Nuclear Deal at 'Any Cost'](#)

March 20, 2022, The Times of Israel

"We are very concerned about the United States' intention to give in to Iran's outrageous demand and remove the IRGC from the list of terrorist organizations," Bennett said at a cabinet meeting.

[Iran Has 3,000 Ballistic Missiles, Many That Can Reach Israel - US CENTCOM General](#)

March 15, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

Iran has more than 3,000 ballistic missiles, many of which can reach the State of Israel, commander of the United States Central Command Gen. Kenneth McKenzie told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

[Israel Says Government Sites Targeted by Cyberattack](#)

March 15, 2022, AL Jazeera

Israel says its government websites were hit by a cyberattack but services have since been restored. The websites of the ministry of the interior, the ministry of defence and others were affected.

[Israel Targeted Drone Site in Iran, Report Says](#)

March 17, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Israel had hit an Iranian drone factory last month from a base in Iraq. Reportedly, this was the reason why Tehran launched a strike on a site in the northern Iraqi city of Erbil last weekend.

[Russia-Ukraine War: Zelensky Presses Israel For Its Iron Dome Missile Defence System](#)

March 20, 2022, Middle East Eye

In an address to Israel's Knesset, Ukrainian President Zelensky said, "Everybody knows that Israeli missile defence systems are the best... and that you can definitely help our people, save the lives of Ukrainians, of Ukrainian Jews".

[President Zelenskyy Calls on Israel for Stronger Opposition to Russia, Compares Invasion to Holocaust](#)

March 21, 2022, NBC News

Ukraine's President called on Israel to take a stronger stand against Russia, delivering an emotional appeal that compared Russia's invasion of his country to the actions of Nazi Germany.

[Russia Says It Used Hypersonic Missiles in Ukraine Again](#)

March 20, 2022, AL Jazeera

Russia's defence ministry says it attacked Ukraine with cruise missiles from ships in the Black and Caspian Seas, and with hypersonic missiles from Crimean airspace.

Jordan

[King Abdullah Says Jordan is Seeking to Contain Economic Damage from Russia-Ukraine War](#)

March 10, 2022, The National News

Jordan's King Abdullah II said his country would work with Arab neighbours to contain the economic effects of the war in Ukraine, especially high energy prices, and Ukrainian wheat supply.

Kuwait

[Kuwait 7th in Global Oil Reserves](#)

March 21, 2022, Arab Times

Kuwait has been ranked seventh in the world in terms of the volume of global oil reserves with a total of 102 billion barrels and a market share of six percent, according to statistics issued by the German data company Statista.

Lebanon

[Lebanon Fears Food Crisis as Ukraine War Continues](#)

March 20, 2022, Deutsche Welle

Prices have shot up over years of economic instability in Lebanon. Now people are scared the war in Ukraine could make things even worse.

Oman

[Oman's Foreign Minister to Visit India This Week](#)

March 17, 2022, WION

Oman's foreign minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi will visit India next week. He is expected to be in Delhi from 23rd to 24th.

[India to Boost Wheat Exports To Oman, Israel, Nigeria, and South Africa To Fill Void Left by Ukraine Conflict](#)

March 21, 2022, Mint

Israel, Oman, Nigeria and South Africa have approached India to secure wheat supplies, two government officials said, as the Russia-Ukraine conflict entered its fourth week, threatening a global food crisis.

Qatar

[Qatar to Help Germany Cut Reliance on Russian Gas, Says Economy Minister Robert Habeck](#)

March 20, 2022, Deutsche Welle

Germany and Qatar have agreed upon a long-term energy partnership to help cut reliance on Russian gas over the invasion of Ukraine, German Economic Minister Robert Habeck said.

[Mubadala, Qatar Fund Holding on to Russian Assets for Now](#)

February 28, 2022, Bloomberg

Two influential Middle Eastern wealth funds are for now planning to hold on to Russian assets worth billions of dollars, seen as strategic and long-term investments, people familiar with the matter said.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Aramco Reports Profit Surge on Day Sites Hit by Yemen Rebels](#)

March 20, 2022, Moneycontrol

As the world economy started to rebound from the Covid pandemic, "Aramco's net income increased by 124 percent to \$110 billion in 2021, compared to \$49 billion in 2020," the company said.

[India's Adani Group Exploring Partnerships with Saudi Aramco: Report](#)

March 20, 2022, Arab News

Indian multinational conglomerate Adani Group headed by Gautam Adani is exploring potential partnerships in Saudi Arabia, including the possibility of buying a stake in the world's largest oil exporter Aramco.

[Saudi Arabia in Talks to Use Chinese Yuan in Oil Deals: Report](#)

March 16, 2022, CNBC

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is considering future deals where China could purchase oil from the country using the CNY, instead of the USD, which dominates the global oil trade.

[Saudi Arabia's Oil-For-Yuan Bid is No Threat to America's Dollar](#)

March 18, 2022, Mint

At a time when the world appears to be splitting into rival democratic and authoritarian blocs, it's inevitable that chatter about a yuan challenge to the dollar's status as the world's reserve currency should return. Such talk has always been fanciful, but it's even more unlikely right now.

[India Reportedly Explores Yuan in Oil Trade with Russia, as Frustration Grows Over US Sanctions](#)

March 15, 2022, Global Times

India is reportedly planning to buy Russian oil at discounted prices and even considering the Chinese yuan as a reference currency in an India-Russia payment settlement mechanism.

[Saudi Arabia Invites China's Xi to Visit](#)

March 14, 2022, Reuters

Saudi Arabia has reportedly invited Chinese President Xi Jinping to visit the kingdom in a trip that could happen as soon as May 2022.

[U.S. Sends Patriot Missiles to Saudi Arabia, Fulfilling Urgent Request](#)

March 21, 2022, The Wall Street Journal

The Biden administration has transferred a significant number of Patriot anti-missile interceptors to Saudi Arabia within the past month, fulfilling Riyadh's urgent request for a resupply amid sharp tensions in the relationship.

Syria

[UAE Leaders Receive Syrian President Assad](#)

March 18, 2022, Arab News

Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed welcomed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the UAE, saying he hoped his visit will be the beginning of peace and stability for Syria and the entire region.

[US 'Disappointed and Troubled' as Syria's Assad Visits UAE](#)

March 20, 2022, TRT World

Syrian regime leader Bashar al Assad's visit to the United Arab Emirates has left the US "profoundly disappointed", it has said, urging allies to avoid normalising ties with a regime accused of "horrific atrocities".

[Syria To Supply Russia with 40,000 Mercenaries - Ukrainian Defence Ministry](#)

March 17, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has promised to provide some 40,000 militants to the Russian Federation for the war in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Defence Ministry reported.

['They Will Bomb Everything': Syrian Warns of Russian Tactics](#)

March 16, 2022, CNN

Many of the Russian tactics in Ukraine are familiar to Syrians who suffered a similar fate when Russia attacked Aleppo.

[Iran Sends Military Reinforcements to Syria's Homs](#)

March 16, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The Iranian militias have sent huge military reinforcements to the eastern countryside of Homs in Syria. The reinforcements were for "starting a broad campaign targeting Daesh cells (ISIS) in the city."

Turkey

[OIC To Focus on Islamophobia at Upcoming Meeting: Diplomat](#)

March 16, 2022, Pakistan Today

Pakistan will be hosting the 48th session of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) on March 22-23 to further discuss Islamophobia, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Palestine, according to Pakistan's ambassador to Turkey.

[India Doesn't Expect OIC To Encourage Terrorist Actors: MEA on Invite to Hurriyat Leader](#)

March 17, 2022, India Today

The OIC has invited the chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Masarat Alam, to attend a meeting of its foreign ministers in Islamabad on March 22 and March 23.

[France, EU, India Object to International Day to Combat Islamophobia](#)

March 19, 2022, Middle East Monitor

France, the European Union (EU) and India have objected to the decision to declare 15 March the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly.

[U.S. Suggested Turkey Transfer Russian-Made Missile System to Ukraine](#)

March 19, 2022, Reuters

The United States has informally raised with Turkey the unlikely possibility of sending its Russian-made S-400 missile defence systems to Ukraine to help it fight invading Russian forces, according to three sources familiar with the matter.

UAE

[Ahead of OIC Meet in Pakistan, High-level UAE Delegation Reaches Srinagar to Explore Business Opportunities](#)

March 21, 2022, ANI

Ahead of the OIC meet in Islamabad, a high-level business delegation from the UAE landed in Srinagar to explore business opportunities.

[British PM Boris Johnson Meets Saudi, UAE Leaders as Ukraine War Roils Oil Prices](#)

March 16, 2022, AL Jazeera

British PM Boris Johnson visited the Gulf for talks aimed at moving away from reliance on Russian oil and gas supplies amid Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

[Strong Bond of Friendship Between India, UAE Bound to Flourish, Achieve New Heights: CJI Ramana](#)

March 17, 2022, ANI

Chief Justice of India (CJI) NV Ramana said the strong relationship between India and UAE will only grow in the times to come and flourish to achieve new heights.

[UAE Keen to Cooperate with Russia on Energy Security, Says UAE Minister](#)

March 17, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The United Arab Emirates is keen to cooperate with Russia on improving global energy security, UAE Foreign Minister, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, said in Moscow.

Yemen

[Houthis Launch Multiple Strikes on Saudi Sites](#)

March 20, 2022, AL Jazeera

Yemen's Houthi rebels have unleashed a barrage of drone and missile attacks on Saudi Arabia, targeting a liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant, water desalination plant, oil facility and power station.

[Yemen's Houthis Say They Welcome Talks in 'Neutral' Country](#)

March 18, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Houthi officials have welcomed calls for dialogue with the Saudi-led Arab Coalition in Yemen, on the condition that the talks are held in a neutral country.

[Ex-minister: New Saudi-UAE Plan to Split Yemen](#)

March 17, 2022, Middle East Monitor

A former Yemeni minister warned of a "new plot led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE to strike the Republic of Yemen and legitimise the division of the country."



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