DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW

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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.

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# Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. 1  
Bahrain ................................................................................................................................. 3  
Egypt ...................................................................................................................................... 4  
Iraq ..................................................................................................................................... 5  
Iran .................................................................................................................................... 6  
Israel ................................................................................................................................... 7  
Jordan ................................................................................................................................. 8  
Kuwait ................................................................................................................................. 9  
Lebanon ............................................................................................................................... 10  
Oman ................................................................................................................................. 11  
Qatar ................................................................................................................................... 12  
Saudi Arabia ..................................................................................................................... 13  
Syria ................................................................................................................................... 14  
Türkiye ............................................................................................................................... 15  
UAE .................................................................................................................................... 16  
Yemen ............................................................................................................................... 17
Abstract

India’s Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan is on a two-day visit to Oman beginning October 3. He is scheduled to meet Oman’s Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi to further deepen the “growing partnership” between the two countries. Oman is likely to sign an agreement with India for cooperation in digital finance and payments including the usage of Unified Payment Interface (UPI) and RuPay cards.

Indian Navy’s ‘INS Sunayana’ participated in its first capacity-building exercise held in Seychelles from September 24-27 as an associate partner of Bahrain-based ‘Combined Maritime Forces’ (CMF). At India-US 2+2 ministerial meeting held in April 2022, New Delhi had agreed to join the CMF as an associate partner.

The United States has sanctioned Indian petrochemical trading company ‘Tibalaji Petrochem Pvt Ltd’ for evading US sanctions by “purchasing petrochemical products from Iran” and “shipping them to China”. Meanwhile, marking the 73rd anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi called on the two countries to forge closer ties and “oppose unilateralism” and “interference in internal affairs of other countries”.

Amidst stalled JCPOA talks, Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have restarted talks over a probe into nuclear material found at undeclared sites in Iran. The safeguards issue, however, continues to remain a major hurdle in reviving the Iran nuclear deal. On the other hand, at an IAEA conference, Israel described Iran as “the leading factor” of instability in the Middle East and reiterated Tel Aviv’s determination to stop Tehran from developing nuclear weapons. Israel may also share nuclear technology with the ‘Abraham Accord’ states.

As part of the “Jerusalem Declaration” issued during President Biden’s visit to Israel in July 2022, US and Israel have launched a “strategic dialogue” aimed at “boosting technological cooperation”. The two countries seek to strengthen their partnership in “critical and emerging technologies”, as well as “areas of global concern” including “pandemic preparedness”, “climate change”, and “artificial intelligence”.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been named the country’s ‘Prime Minister’. This announcement came days before the “deadline for the Biden administration to inform the federal court whether the prince has sovereign immunity in a civil lawsuit filed against him for the assassination of journalist
Jamal Khashoggi”. The designation of Prime Minister is likely to give Mohammed bin Salman potential immunity from prosecution and lawsuits in US courts, where foreign Heads of State are generally immune from action.

As crude prices hover around USD 80/barrel, OPEC+ is reportedly considering cutting oil production by more than one million barrels per day in its meeting scheduled to be held on October 5. Amidst Western sanctions on the Russian energy sector, International Energy Agency (IEA) warned that “Europe could face unprecedented shortages of natural gas this winter”.

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

Indian Navy Participates in Maiden Exercise with CMF as Associate Partner
September 29, 2022, The Hindu
The Indian Navy participated in its maiden exercise with the Bahrain-based multilateral partnership Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) as an associate partner earlier this week. At the India-U.S. 2+2 in April this year, India had announced that it would join the CMF as an associate partner.

Russian, Bahraini Leaders Discuss Relations, Regional Matters in Phone Call: Kremlin
October 1, 2022, Anadolu Agency
Russian President Vladimir Putin and Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa expressed a mutual commitment to pursue ties in a traditionally friendly, mutually beneficial and constructive manner.
Egypt

Joint Statement Following the US, GCC, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen Ministerial

September 24, 2022, US Embassy in Egypt

The ministers underscored the historic, strategic, ambitious, and growing partnerships between the United States and the GCC, its member states, as well as Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen, to promote peace, security, stability, and economic prosperity in the Middle East.

Egypt to Start Teaching Chinese in Middle Schools

September 27, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Egypt has launched a pilot programme to teach the Chinese language at 12 public middle schools across three governorates in the upcoming 2022/2023 academic year, the Deputy Minister of Education and Technical Education Mohamed Megahed said.

Egypt: Israeli Violations Against Al-Aqsa Mosque Dangerous Escalation

September 27, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Egypt condemned "repeated violations" committed by right-wing Israelis against Jerusalem’s Al-Aqsa Mosque. In the statement, which was issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt said that the Israeli raids "are being carried out with the support and protection of the Israeli occupation police."
Iraq

**Iraqi PM Condemns Iran Attacks on Kurdistan, Calls on Forces to Maintain Security**

October 1, 2022, Arab News

Iraqi ministers condemned an Iranian drone bombing campaign targeting bases of an Iranian-Kurdish opposition group in northern Iraq, which killed at least nine people and wounded 32 others.
Iran

US Sanctions Indian Company, Seven Others for Iran Energy Dealings
September 30, 2022, The Economic Times
The US has imposed sanctions on Mumbai-based petrochemical trading company Tibalaji Petrochem Pvt Ltd, the first such action against an Indian company for dealing with Iran.

Iran and IAEA Restart Talks Amid Nuclear Deal Deadlock
September 27, 2022, AL Jazeera
Talks between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have restarted over a probe into traces of uranium found at nuclear sites in Iran, which has been at the centre of the stall in efforts to restore the country’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Iran Says it is Due USD 7 Billion for Release of US-Iranian Father and Son
October 2, 2022, The Guardian
Iran is awaiting the release of about $7bn (£6.3bn) in funds frozen abroad, state media said, after it allowed an Iranian-American to leave the country and released his son from detention.

President of Iran Calls for Closer Iran-China Ties Amid US Unilateralism
October 1, 2022, Press TV (Iran)
Marking the 73rd Anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Iranian President in a letter to Chinese President Xi Jinping called for expansion of bilateral relations between Iran and China as two independent countries that oppose unilateralism and interference in internal affairs of other countries.

More Iranian Suicide Drones Used by Russia Downed in Ukraine
October 3, 2022, The Jerusalem Post
Ukraine’s Air Force shot down five out of seven Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones that Russia has been using to attack the Mykolaiv region recently.

Iran Indicts 14 Over Killing of its Top Nuclear Scientist Blamed on Israel
September 26, 2022, The Times of Israel
Fourteen people have been indicted in connection with their alleged roles in the 2020 killing of a top nuclear scientist in an attack Tehran has blamed on Israel.
Israel

Israel Tells IAEA That Iran is the Source of Middle East Instability
September 28, 2022, The Times of Israel

Israel's nuclear chief told the International Atomic Energy Agency conference that Iran is “the leading factor” of instability in the Middle East and that Israel will not accept Tehran obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Israel May Share Nuclear Tech with Abraham Accords States - Israeli Atomic Chief
September 28, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

Israel may share aspects of its nuclear technology and knowledge with countries that are part of the Abraham Accords, Israel Atomic Energy Commission Director-General Moshe Edri said.

US, Israel to Launch Strategic Dialogue Aimed at Boosting Tech Cooperation
September 28, 2022, The Times of Israel

Israel and the US will launch a strategic dialogue aimed at boosting technological cooperation at the White House. The initiative was first announced in the “Jerusalem Declaration” that US President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Yair Lapid signed during Biden’s visit to Israel in July.

Israel-US Tensions Grow Over West Bank Escalation
September 30, 2022, AL-Monitor

With Israeli elections just a month out and despite US warnings, Prime Minister Yair Lapid is sticking with his hawkish line on West Bank security escalation.

Israel Defiant Against UN Resolution to Halt Illegal Settlements, UN Envoy Says
September 29, 2022, Middle East Monitor

A United Nations Envoy has acknowledged that Israel continues to defy a resolution by the UN Security Council (UNSC) to immediately cease all activity in building illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, as Tel Aviv has advanced plans for the construction of almost 2,000 housing units for settlements in the past three months.
Jordan

US Says West Bank-Jordan Crossing to Open 24/7, but Israeli Restrictions Increase
September 28, 2022, Middle East Eye

The US Ambassador to Israel announced that a border crossing between Jordan and the occupied West Bank will begin to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in a pilot programme that comes despite increasing restrictions being imposed on the Palestinians.

Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon Agree to Boost Food Security Cooperation
September 27, 2022, Middle East Monitor

The agriculture ministers of Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria have agreed to support an initiative to boost food security in the region.
Kuwait

FIEO Plans Series of Activities in GCC Markets to Push India’s Exports

September 26, 2022, The Economic Times

Exporters body FIEO said it has planned a series of activities in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) markets to push India’s exports.
Lebanon

Israel Praises US Plan for Lebanon Maritime Border Deal

October 2, 2022, AL Jazeera

Israel praised a US proposal to resolve the country’s maritime border dispute with Lebanon, building further momentum towards an agreement between two nations still technically at war.
Oman

Visit of India’s Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan to the Sultanate of Oman
October 1, 2022, Ministry of External Affairs - Government of India
Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan will pay an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman on 03-04 October 2022. This will be his second visit to the Sultanate and a part of the periodic exchange of high-level visits to reinforce the shared commitment to the ever-growing relationship between India and Oman.

Oman to Start Usage of India’s RuPay Card, UPI Platform
October 2, 2022, WION
Oman is set to be the latest country in West Asia to start using India’s RuPay card and UPI platform, which will benefit the huge Indian diaspora in the country.
Europe Faces ‘unprecedented risk’ of Gas Shortage, IEA Says

October 3, 2022, The Peninsula Qatar

Europe faces “unprecedented risks” to its natural gas supplies this winter after Russia cut off most pipeline shipments and could wind up competing with Asia for already scarce and expensive liquid gas, the International Energy Agency said.
Saudi Arabia

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Named Prime Minister
September 28, 2022, The Wall Street Journal

Saudi Arabia’s King Salman Tuesday named his son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as Prime Minister, boosting the profile of the 37-year-old, day-to-day ruler of the kingdom as he tries to end international isolation over a journalist’s killing.

OPEC+ to Consider Oil Cut of Over 1 Million Barrels Per Day
October 2, 2022, Reuters

OPEC+ will consider an oil output cut of more than a million barrels per day (bpd) next week, OPEC sources said, in what would be the biggest move yet since the COVID-19 pandemic to address oil market weakness.

GCC Chief Stresses Importance of Enhancing Prospects for Cooperation with China
October 2, 2022, Arab News

The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council stressed the importance of enhancing prospects for joint cooperation between the bloc and China to serve common interests.

Germany Approves New Arms Exports to Saudi Arabia Despite Ban Since 2018
September 30, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Germany’s coalition government has approved new arms export deals to Saudi Arabia, despite the ban imposed as a result of its involvement in the war in Yemen.
Syria

Senior Indian Diplomat Visits Syria; Both Sides Decide to Deepen Cooperation

October 2, 2022, The Print

India and Syria identified a range of sectors such as renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, civil aviation and vocational training for cooperation even as New Delhi announced 200 scholarships for Syrian students in the current academic year.
Türkiye

**Turkish President Erdogan Renews Threat to Block NATO Bids by Sweden, Finland**

October 1, 2022, Voice of America

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan renewed his threat to block the NATO bids of Sweden and Finland, saying he would not give his approval until the two Nordic countries kept promises he said were made to Ankara.

**Turkey to Reinforce Military Presence in Northern Cyprus After US Arms Embargo Lifted: President Erdogan**

September 29, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Turkey is set to reinforce its military presence of 40,000 troops in Northern Cyprus with more arms and equipment, following the United States' lifting of an arms embargo off the island.

**Greece Says it’s Open to Talks with Turkey Once Provocations End**

October 2, 2022, Reuters

Greece wants to have a constructive dialogue with Turkey based on international law but its Aegean neighbour must halt its unprecedented escalation of provocations, the Greek foreign minister said.
UAE Hails Israeli PM Lapid’s Support for Two-state Solution, Backs Palestinian State on 1967 Lines

September 25, 2022, The Times of Israel

UAE International Cooperation Minister Reem Al Hashimy welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid’s backing for a two-state solution in her speech before the UN General Assembly.

Germany’s Olaf Scholz Welcomes Energy Security Deal in UAE

September 25, 2022, Deutsche Welle

An agreement was made with UAE leaders in Abu Dhabi to buy liquified natural gas (LNG) from the Gulf state after Scholz and his delegation met with Emirati President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.
Yemen

Yemen’s Warring Sides Fail to Agree Extension to UN-backed Truce

October 3, 2022, AL Jazeera

Yemen’s warring sides have failed to reach an agreement to extend a nationwide ceasefire, the United Nations has said.