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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Abstract

To further deepen trade ties with the Gulf, India is likely to start negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in November 2022. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi thanked Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for his Diwali greetings, and conveyed India’s best wishes for a successful FIFA World Cup 2022 that is scheduled to be held in Qatar from November 20. The two leaders also agreed to “jointly celebrate 50 years of India-Qatar diplomatic relations in 2023”.

India strongly condemned a terrorist attack by ISIS in Iran’s Shah-e-Cherag Shiite Muslim shrine and called for “global unity to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations” underscoring “terrorism poses one of the biggest threats to international peace and security”. Further, at a special meeting of the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee convened in India for the first time, adopted the “Delhi Declaration” on countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorism.

Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi co-chaired the fourth meeting of the Political and Foreign Affairs Committee under the Saudi – China High-Level Joint Committee. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi highlighted the importance Beijing attaches to its relations with Riyadh. Meeting “precedes the expected visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Saudi Arabia”. He is also expected to attend, the GCC-China and Arab-China Summits.

President Biden hosted Israeli President Isaac Herzog at the White House on October 26. The two leaders discussed the “enduring strength of the US-Israel partnership” including Washington’s “unshakeable commitment to Israel’s security”. President Biden reiterated his pledge to never allow Iran to develop nuclear weapons. Other issues discussed in the meeting include “maritime boundary agreement between Israel and Lebanon”, the US’s support for Israel’s further integration with the Arab world including through the Negev Forum”, “condemnation of anti-Semitism”, “de-escalating the security situation in the West Bank”, and “two-state solution as the best option to achieve lasting peace” between Israel and Palestine. Meanwhile, the United Nations General Assembly’s First Committee called upon Israel to dispose its nuclear weapons and place all its nuclear sites under the purview of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
Amidst the growing Russia-Iran strategic partnership, Russia’s Ambassador assured Israel that “Moscow is not playing against Tel Aviv” and is “fully taking cognizance of the legitimate security concerns of Israel”. He rejected Ukrainian President Zelenskyy’s claim that “Russia will assist Iran in obtaining nuclear weapons” as “ridiculous”. Israel has thus far rejected Ukraine’s requests for weapons. In the aftermath of drone attacks on the Crimean city of Sevastopol, Russia has suspended its participation in the UN-brokered grain export deal with Ukraine. Turkey is in talks with Moscow and Kyiv to resume it as early as possible.

On the energy front, Qatar’s Energy Minister rejected the West’s attempts to impose a price cap on Russian gas as an “anti-free market measure”. In the aftermath of OPEC’s decision to cut crude production, the war of words between the US and Saudi Arabia continues. US Secretary of State Blinken stressed that “Saudi Arabia’s humanitarian aid to Ukraine is a positive step, but it will not make up for the Kingdom’s backing of OPEC+ decision to cut production”. Saudi Aramco’s President and CEO Amin Nasser called upon the West to not view energy markets solely from the Western point of view.

Among other regional developments, Israel will hold its fifth Knesset (parliamentary) election in less than four years on November 1. While, Lebanon’s President Michel Aoun has left his office with no successor in line to replace him as the country struggles from a years-long financial crisis.

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

India Likely To Start Next Month Free Trade Pact Negotiations with Gulf Cooperation Council, Say Sources

October 30, 2022, The Economic Times

India is likely to start negotiations with the Gulf Cooperation Council for a free trade agreement in November 2022 that will not only boost economic ties between the regions but also be a shot in the arm for New Delhi’s ambition to significantly shore up its share in global exports.

Pope’s Visit to Bahrain a ‘Precious Step on Path of Fraternity’

October 31, 2022, Vatican News

As Pope Francis prepares to depart for Bahrain on 3-6 November, the Director of the Holy See Press Office offers an overview of the Pope’s 39th Apostolic Journey abroad, which aims to strengthen interreligious dialogue and encourage local Catholics.
President Biden to Travel to Egypt, Cambodia, Indonesia for November Summits: White House

October 29, 2022, The Telegraph

US President Joe Biden will travel to Egypt in November to participate in the COP27 United Nations climate change summit to build on the significant work Washington has undertaken "to advance the global climate fight," the White House said.

In Rare Visit to Egypt, Israeli PM Lapid to Attend COP27 Climate Summit

October 27, 2022, AL-Monitor

The COP27 in Egypt will be launched a week after the general elections in Israel. Still, Prime Minister Yair Lapid intends to participate in the conference whatever the vote outcome.

China Urges Rich World to Shun ‘Empty Slogans’ Ahead of Climate Talks

October 27, 2022, Reuters

Rich countries must move on from "empty slogans" when it comes to climate change and make progress in meeting funding commitments, a Chinese official said ahead of a new round of global climate talks in Egypt in November 2022.

Russia Suspends Its Participation in UN-Brokered Grain Export Deal with Ukraine

October 30, 2022, Egypt Independent

Russia will suspend its participation in the United Nations-brokered grain export deal with Ukraine after drone attacks on the Crimean city of Sevastopol, the country’s defence ministry announced Saturday (October 29).
Iraq

Mohammed Shia al-Sudani: Who is Iraq's New Prime Minister?
October 28, 2022, Middle East Eye

Mohammed Shia al-Sudani has taken office as Iraq's new prime minister, ending a year of political deadlock. Iraqi MPs voted in favour of a new government headed by Sudani on Thursday (October 27), approving the new premier's 21 choices for cabinet ministers.
Iran

15 Killed, 40 Injured in Terrorist Attack Claimed by ISIS in Iran

October 27, 2022, CNN

At least 15 people were killed and 40 others were injured Wednesday (October 26) in a “terrorist attack” at the Shahcheragh Shrine in the city of Shiraz, southern Iran.

Iranians Rally Nationwide To Condemn Terrorist Attack in Shiraz

October 28, 2022, Press TV (Iran)

Iranians from all walks of life have taken to the streets across the country to sound their condemnation of a terrorist attack on the Shah Cheragh shrine, a highly revered shrine in the southern city of Shiraz, Fars Province.

India Condemns Terror Attack at Shah-e-Cherag Shrine in Iran

October 29, 2022, The Indian Express

India strongly condemned the terror attack at Iran’s Shah-e-Cherag shrine and said it is yet another reminder that terrorism continues to pose one of the biggest threats to international peace and security.

Delhi Declaration on Countering The Use of New And Emerging Technologies For Terrorist Purposes

October 29, 2022, Ministry of External Affairs - Government of India

Delhi Declaration reaffirms that terrorism in all forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivations, whenever, wherever, and by whomsoever committed, and remains determined to contribute further to enhancing the effectiveness of the overall effort to fight this scourge on a global level.

Iran is An Ever More 'Relevant' Problem, IAEA Chief Says

October 28, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Iran is a problem that is ever more “relevant”, the UN nuclear watchdog’s chief, Rafael Grossi said in an apparent reference to the growing number of advanced centrifuges the Islamic Republic is using to enrich uranium.
US, Zionists, Al Saud Behind Riots in Iran: IRGC Chief

October 29, 2022, Tasnim News Agency

The Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Maj. Gen. Hossein Salami lashed out at the US, the Zionist regime [Israel] and the Saudi Kingdom for plotting riots in Iran, warning Al Saud and the media under its sponsorship that they will have to pay a price.

Russia’s Use of Iranian Drones in Ukraine ‘Appalling’: Secretary Blinken

October 27, 2022, The Moscow Times

Russia’s use of Iranian drones in Ukraine is “appalling,” U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, adding that the United States and allies would seek to block such shipments.

Iran Will Not Remain Indifferent If Proven Russia Using Its Drones in Ukraine - Official

October 24, 2022, Reuters

Iran will not remain indifferent if it is proven that its drones are being used by Russia in the Ukraine war, the Iranian foreign minister said, amid allegations the Islamic Republic has supplied drones to Moscow to attack Ukraine.

US Sanctions Iran-based Foundation Over Salman Rushdie Bounty

October 28, 2022, Arab News

The United States imposed sanctions on the Iran-based foundation that issued a multi-million-dollar bounty on the life of acclaimed “Satanic Verses” author Salman Rushdie, who was brutally attacked in August.
Israel

Israel Election: Despite Divisions, Israelis Need Real Unity - Jerusalem Post Editorial
October 31, 2022, The Jerusalem Post
As Israel heads back to Parliamentary polls on Tuesday (November 1) for the fifth time in less than four years, there is a great deal of uncertainty about the results and their long-term ramifications.

Readout of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.’s Meeting with President Isaac Herzog of Israel
October 26, 2022, The White House
The two leaders discussed the enduring strength of the U.S.-Israel partnership, ways to further deepen cooperation between the two countries, and the United States’ unshakeable commitment to Israel’s security.

Israel Must Get Rid of Its Nuclear Weapons, UNGA Majority Decides
October 30, 2022, The Jerusalem Post
Israel must dispose of all its nuclear weapons and place its nuclear sites under the International Atomic Energy Agency’s purview, the United Nations General Assembly’s First Committee stated in an initial 152-5 vote.

Karish Gas Field to Help Address Europe’s Energy Crisis: Israel
October 30, 2022, Middle East Monitor
Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid said that the production of gas from the Karish field will reduce energy costs in Israel and will help Europe to address its energy crisis.

Russian Ambassador Says Israel Need Not Worry About Moscow’s Ties with Iran
October 27, 2022, The Times of Israel
Pressed on purchase of Iranian drones, Amb. Anatoly Viktorov says Moscow not ‘playing against Israel’ and takes its ‘legitimate security concerns’ into account.

President Zelenskyy Blasts Israel, Suggests Russia-Iran Nuclear Collusion
October 24, 2022, AL Jazeera
Ukraine’s leader rails against Israel’s refusal to provide its Iron Dome missile defence system, saying the attack on his country has brought Moscow and Tehran closer together.
Ukrainian Ambassador: US is the Only Country Israel Listens To
October 30, 2022, The Jerusalem Post

Ukraine is pushing the US to pressure Israel into providing weapons to the country, with Ukrainian Ambassador to Israel Yevgen Korniychuck stating that "the Americans are the only country that Israel is listening to".

2022 Could be the Deadliest Year for Palestinians in West Bank, UN Says
October 30, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Speaking to the UN Security Council (UNSC) this week, the special coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, said that "a spike in fatal violence" is causing 2022 to be the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since 2005, the year when the UN started tracking fatalities.

Australia Reverses Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital
October 18, 2022, AL Jazeera

Australia says it will no longer recognise West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, reversing a decision taken by the government of former Prime Minister Scott Morrison in 2018.
Jordan

Jordan's Crown Prince to Attend Arab League Summit in Algeria

October 31, 2022, The National News

Jordan’s King Abdullah II will not attend the Arab League summit in Algeria this week, Jordanian state media reported. Crown Prince Hussein will lead Jordan’s delegation to the summit, which convenes on Tuesday (November 1), as a representative of the king.
Kuwait

Kuwait and the United States of America Ties Forged in Blood & Honor

October 27, 2022, Arab Times

The Foreign Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah praised the distinguished historical and close bilateral relations between Kuwait and the United States of America, and the existing strategic partnership between them, saying he is looking forward to further advance relations at all levels.
Lebanon

**Lebanon’s President Michel Aoun Leaves Office Amid Crisis**

October 30, 2022, AL Jazeera

Lebanon’s President Michel Aoun has vacated the presidential palace with no successor in line to replace him as the divided country struggles to recover from a years-long financial crisis.

**Israel, Lebanon Finalise Maritime Demarcation Deal Without Mutual Recognition**

October 27, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Israeli and Lebanese leaders finalised a US-brokered maritime demarcation bringing a measure of accommodation between the enemy States, as they eye offshore energy exploration.
Oman

Oman, India to Invest More in Agriculture, Food Security

October 30, 2022, Times of Oman

Omani-Indian Business Forum, organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, highlighted the strong potential of growth between Oman and India in food security, agriculture and other sectors.

Oman Playing a Key Role in Regional Security, Peace, Says US official

October 23, 2022, Times of Oman

The central role played by the Sultanate of Oman in backing endeavours to achieve regional security and peace have been underscored by Barbara Leaf, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs of the United States of America.
Qatar

**PM Modi Speaks to Qatar's Amir To Celebrate 50 Years of Diplomatic Ties**
October 29, 2022, Business Standard
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday (October 29) spoke to Qatar’s Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani as the two leaders agreed to jointly celebrate the 50 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2023.

**How Elon Musk Financed His $44bn Twitter Takeover**
October 28, 2022, AL Jazeera
Billionaire used personal assets, investment funds and bank loans to seal the purchase of social media giant Twitter.

**Qatar Slams 'Anti-free Market' Energy Measures, in Swipe at Russian Price Caps**
October 24, 2022, Middle East Eye
Qatar’s top energy official called for countries to end "anti-free market" agreements in the oil and gas trade, in a veiled swipe at western efforts to tame rising energy prices following Russia’s Ukraine invasion.

**Qatar Summons German Ambassador Over Interior Minister's Provocative Statements**
October 29, 2022, Middle East Monitor
Qatar has summoned the German ambassador to Doha in protest against the: "Unacceptable, reprehensible and provocative statements made by a German minister regarding the World Cup, which the former will host in three weeks."

**Qatar Will Host a Safe World Cup, Says US CENTCOM Commander**
October 24, 2022, The Peninsula Qatar
The top US military general for the Middle East has expressed “great confidence” that Qatar will host a safe FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.
Saudi Arabia

China's President Xi Jinping to Visit Saudi Arabia, Says Kingdom's Foreign Minister
October 28, 2022, The National News

China’s President Xi Jinping is expected to visit Saudi Arabia in the near future, the kingdom’s Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, said on Thursday (October 20).

6th Future Investment Initiative Conference Concludes in Saudi Arabia
October 28, 2022, Xinhua

The three-day conference, held under the theme "Investing in Humanity: Enabling a New Global Order," gathered 6,000 participants including policymakers, investors and entrepreneurs from various countries to discuss the world’s most pressing issues and challenges facing the global economy and new pathways for global investment.

War of Words Escalates Between US and Saudi Arabia Over OPEC+ Production cut
October 26, 2022, Middle East Eye

Saudi Arabia's "positive" steps towards Ukraine are not enough to make up for the kingdom’s backing of an OPEC+ decision to cut oil production, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.
Syria

The IDF's Shadow War on Iranian Weapons Smuggling in Syria
October 29, 2022, The Jerusalem Post
The IDF is in the midst of an ongoing war against the smuggling of weaponry from Iran to Syria, where they end in the hands of the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah.

Australian Women and Children Trapped in Syria Back in Sydney as Coalition Condemns ‘inexcusable’ Mission
October 29, 2022, The Guardian
Four Australian women and 13 children who had been detained in an internally displaced persons camp since the fall of Islamic State in 2019 in Syria have arrived safely in Sydney.
Türkiye

Turkish Defence Minister in Talks with Kyiv, Moscow to Resume Grain Deal

October 30, 2022, Middle East Eye

Turkey’s defence minister is in talks with counterparts in Moscow and Kyiv to try to revive a UN-brokered deal for exports of Ukrainian grain, the ministry said on Sunday (October 30).

President Erdogan: ‘We Will Distribute Russian Gas to Europe via Turkiye’

October 29, 2022, Middle East Monitor

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that Turkiye will distribute natural gas from Russia to Europe through its TurkStream project.

Turkish Drones a ‘Game Changer’, Says UK Defence Minister

October 27, 2022, Middle East Monitor

Turkiye’s unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) have become a “game changer” in modern wars, Britain’s defence secretary said speaking at the SAHA Expo, a defence event in Istanbul.
India Inc Moves to Dubai in Droves as Emirate Eases Ownership Rules

October 30, 2022, Business Standard

Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani might have made news for purchasing the most expensive beach-side villa in Dubai recently, but he is not the only Indian eyeing the city for investment.

Satellite Images Reveal Deployment of Israeli Missile Defence System in UAE

October 29, 2022, Middle East Eye

Satellite images have emerged showing that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has deployed Israeli Barak Air Defence Systems in a sign of deepening relations between the two countries.

A Far-right Israeli Coalition Threatens Bilateral Relations, Warns UAE FM

October 27, 2022, Middle East Monitor

UAE Foreign Minister, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed (ABZ), is the latest world leader to express concern over the growing influence of the far-right in Israeli politics. The likes of Itamar Ben Gvir, who brandished a gun threatening to shoot Palestinians and Bezalel Smotrich, are expected to double their seats in November’s Israeli election.

CPC Will Continue Leading China in Achieving Prosperity: UAE Ambassador

October 29, 2022, Xinhua

The past ten years have been glorious for China under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), and the party will continue to lead China in achieving prosperity, Ali Obaid Al Dhaheri, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to China, told Xinhua in an interview.

Oil Slips on China COVID Curbs, Weak Factory Activity Data

October 31, 2022, Reuters

Oil prices fell on Monday (October 31) following weaker-than-expected factory activity data out of China and on concerns its widening COVID-19 curbs will curtail demand.
Yemen

Houthi Attacks Kill 2 Soldiers, Wound 3 Civilians in Taiz, Lahj

October 30, 2022, Arab News

A mortar shell fired by the Iran-backed Houthis into residential areas in Yemen’s city of Taiz seriously injured three children on Sunday (October 30), less than a day after the Houthis killed two servicemen and injured one in another strike in Yemen’s southern province of Lahj.