



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives January 4, 2023



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ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on strategic and international issues of critical national interest. DPG is a non-partisan institution and is independently funded by a non-profit Trust. Over past decades, DPG has established itself in both domestic and international circles and is widely recognised today among the top security think tanks of India and of Asia's major powers.

Since 2016, in keeping with India's increasing global profile, DPG has expanded its focus areas to include India's regional and global role and its policies in the Indo-Pacific. In a realist environment, DPG remains mindful of the need to align India's ambitions with matching strategies and capabilities, from diplomatic initiatives to security policy and military modernisation.

At a time of disruptive change in the global order, DPG aims to deliver research based, relevant, reliable and realist policy perspectives to an actively engaged public, both at home and abroad. DPG is deeply committed to the growth of India's national power and purpose, the security and prosperity of the people of India and India's contributions to the global public good. We remain firmly anchored within these foundational principles which have defined DPG since its inception.

India's Proximity Archives

India's Proximity Archives covers major developments in South Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia and China of strategic relevance to India, compiled from open-source media. The research team includes Angana Guha Roy, Ph.D., Shreyas Deshmukh, Sanket Joshi and Anshita Shukla, Research Associates. Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Sanket Joshi at sanket@dpg.org.in.

Cover Image:

South Asia: *Chinese Embassy in Nepal declared Pokhara International Airport as a project built under BRI, January 1, 2023.* Source: [Twitter/@nayapages](https://twitter.com/nayapages)

Southeast Asia: *President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. delivered a brief address at the Villamor Air Base on January 3, before his departure for a two-day state visit to Beijing, amidst tensions in the South China Sea.* Source: [Twitter/@bongbongmarcos](https://twitter.com/bongbongmarcos)

West Asia: *Iran holds military exercise 'Zolfaqar 1401', December 31, 2022.* Source: [Islamic Republic News Agency](https://www.islamicrepublicnewsagency.com)

China: *On January 3, 2023, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated projects worth Rs. 724 million in Arunachal Pradesh.* Source: [The Hills Times](https://www.thehillstimes.com)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

In response to the Taliban's decree banning women's employment at non-governmental organisations, the United Nations has announced a [temporary suspension](#) of some "time-critical" programmes in Afghanistan. However, the UN Resident Coordinator in Afghanistan, Ramiz Alakbarov, has said that the UN would not stop providing [help to Afghanistan](#) because "aid is never conditional". On January 1, 2023, the deputy head of the [UN mission in Afghanistan](#), Markus Potzel, met Maulvi Abdul Salam Hanafi to discuss the issue of the marginalisation of women.

Pakistan's relations with the Taliban continue to deteriorate. The Interior Minister of Pakistan said his country might target [TTP militants](#) in Afghanistan if the Taliban did not take firm action against them, following a decision taken at the [National Security Council meeting](#) held on December 30, 2022. In response to Pakistan's accusations, the Taliban's Defense Ministry [issued a statement](#) on January 1, 2023, saying the TTP's hideouts are inside Pakistan, not Afghanistan.

A day after Nepal's new Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) assumed office, a six-member Chinese technical team visited Kathmandu on January 3, 2023, to carry out a [feasibility study](#) of the Nepal-China cross-border railway. The China Railway First Survey and Design Institute Group will carry out the feasibility study under a Chinese government grant. On January 1, 2023, PM Prachanda [inaugurated](#) Pokhara Regional International Airport funded by China. Although [Nepal earlier](#) stated that, China-funded projects in the country do not come under BRI, the Chinese Embassy announced that Pokhara Airport is "the flagship project of the China-Nepal BRI cooperation". Speaking at the inauguration, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of China in Nepal, Wang Sheng, said the Chinese government will open the Yari-Purang border, an additional Nepal-China [border point](#) for bilateral trade.

Other Developments

[An explosion outside the military airport in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, caused multiple casualties on January 1, 2023. The Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the attack.](#)

[Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Naveen Srivastava called on Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on December 30, 2022.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The outgoing [Secretary General of ASEAN, Dato Lim Jock Hoi](#), while acknowledging the achievements of the body, also highlighted the challenges and suggested recommendations to make ASEAN 'more dynamic'. The three recommendations proposed by him were to keep the bloc "relevant and flexible", ensure it is "comprehensive and well-coordinated", and accord centrality to the welfare of people within ASEAN. Taking these ideas forward, the [incoming chair of ASEAN, Indonesia](#), pledged to make ASEAN a motor of peace and stability, and an epicenter of economic growth, as stated by Retno Marsudi, Indonesian Foreign Minister.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in India has reported a setback in the government-backed projects in Myanmar due to domestic political turmoil, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Under India's Act East Policy, the MEA reported the completion of the water component of the [India- Myanmar Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project](#). However, the construction of roadways remains incomplete.

Following the UN Security Council's appeal to release Aung San Suu Kyi, the ousted democratic leader has been [sentenced to seven more years in prison](#) on charges of corruption, increasing her term of imprisonment to 33 years. Myanmar approved an [additional military budget of USD 155 million](#), three months before the end of the fiscal year.

Amidst reports of fresh Chinese land grabs in the South China Sea, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have increased their presence and [intensified patrols in the West Philippine Sea](#). The two countries aim to establish a [new diplomatic line of communication](#) to avoid miscalculations and miscommunications over maritime disputes in the West Philippine Sea. This comes ahead of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s [state visit](#) to China from January 3 to January 5, 2023. Prior to his departure, President Marcos stated his intent to [strengthen bilateral cooperation](#) between the two countries in areas of 'agriculture, infrastructure, technology and trade' during an address at the Villamor Air Base.

Other Developments

[Indonesia approves \\$3 bln development plan for South China Sea gas block](#)

[Southeast Asia nations boosting submarine orders amid US-China rivalry](#)

[Myanmar's military extends the ceasefire agreement period until end of 2023](#)

[Laos has a new Prime Minister](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

India abstained from voting on the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) draft resolution that asked the [International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#) for its "advisory opinion" on the legal consequences of "Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem". The draft resolution was adopted with 87 votes in favour, 26 against, and 53 abstentions.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi [congratulated Benjamin Netanyahu](#) on assuming Israel's Premiership and looked forward to working together to further "strengthen the strategic partnership" between the two countries.

Marking the third anniversary of [Gen. Qasem Soleimani's targeted killing](#) on January 3, Iran described it as a "glaring example of an organized terrorist act designed and executed by the US". Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, on his part, remembered Gen. Soleimani as an "anti-terror icon" who "protected, empowered, equipped, and revived the [resistance front against Israel and the US](#)".

Amidst mounting tensions with the West, Iran held its annual [military exercise "Zolfaqar 1401"](#) in the coastal area of the Gulf of Oman and near the strategic Strait of Hormuz between December 29-January 2, 2023. On the other hand, Israel carried out [airstrikes on Syria's Damascus International Airport](#) reportedly aimed at preventing the smuggling of Iranian arms to its regional proxies.

Other Developments

[India Becomes Second Beneficiary of Saudi Visa Program For Skilled Workers](#)

[Germany Says It Sees No Reason To Resume Iran Nuclear Talks](#)

[U.S. National Security Advisor To Visit Israel For Briefings With New Government](#)

[China Launches Direct Shipping Line To Iran's Chabahar Port](#)

[Ties With China Strained After It Refused To Allow Turkish Ambassador To Visit Uyghur Region](#)

[Saudi Arabia Supports Efforts To Resolve Ukraine Crisis: FM Tells Russia's Lavrov](#)

[Russia Plans Prolonged Attacks With Iran-Made Drones: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

In the wake of an abrupt end to China's zero-COVID policy, the [Chinese National Health Commission](#) stopped reporting covid cases and deaths, adopting new criteria for counting deaths that exclude most fatalities from being reported. As concerns grow around the lack of vital information, a number of countries have [imposed restrictions](#) on travellers from China. Countries including India, the United States, Japan, and Australia, among others, have mandated Covid-19 tests on arrival for travellers from China. Condemning the move, China threatened to "take [countermeasures](#) based on the principle of reciprocity".

The rollback of the Zero Covid policy also impacted [China's economy](#) as reports indicate a slump in the fourth quarter after business and consumer spending dropped in December. President Xi Jinping in his [New Year speech](#) said "China has entered a new phase in its fight against the coronavirus" and added that tough challenges remain.

Following the India-China border scuffle at Yangtse near Tawang, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated projects worth Rs.724 million in [Arunachal Pradesh](#) which focus on connectivity and security. He also inaugurated the strategic Siyom bridge, which provides Indian troops with access to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the central part of Arunachal Pradesh.

[Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman](#), affiliated with the Gwadar Rights movement, issued a warning to Chinese nationals to leave the Gwadar port area. Rehman's move to issue a warning to [Chinese nationals](#) is seen as a step to coerce Shehbaz Sharif's government into a negotiation.

Sri Lanka's economic turmoil has become a full-blown political crisis. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP Shanakiyan Rasamanickam, threatened a '[Go home, China](#)' protest over China's involvement in the country's internal affairs. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's Cabinet has backed [Free Trade Agreement \(FTA\) with China](#) as a way to move away from the ongoing unprecedented economic crisis.



Other Developments

[New Chinese Foreign Minister Qin seeks to improve ties with India](#)



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