



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

February 22, 2023



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Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003

www.delhipolicygroup.org



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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, China, and Central Asia of strategic relevance to India, compiled from open-source media. The research team includes Angana Guha Roy, Ph.D., Shreyas Deshmukh, Sanket Joshi, Anshita Shukla and Jayantika Rao T.V, Research Associates. Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Sanket Joshi at sanket@dpg.org.in.

Cover Image:

Southeast Asia: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong witnessing the launch of UPI-PayNow linkage between the two countries via video conferencing on February 21, 2023. Source: [Press Information Bureau, Govt. of India](#)

West Asia: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with NDRF personnel who were part of 'Operation Dost' in earthquake-hit Turkey, February 20, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@narendramodi](#)

China: On February 18, Anthony Blinken and Wang Yi met on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference. Source: [Mint](#)

Central Asia: The opening ceremony of the China+Central Asia Industry and Investment Cooperation Forum held at Qingdao on February 16, 2023. Source: [Kazakh Invest National Company](#).

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Taliban border guards and Pakistan forces exchanged fire on February 20 at the [Torkham border crossing](#). On February 18, the office of the Karachi police chief came under a [terrorist attack](#) carried out by the TTP. Three terrorists and four persons – including rangers and police personnel – were killed during the shootout. Meanwhile, Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has [said that](#) “mixed signals from the Pakistan side were responsible for the Afghan Taliban’s inaction against the TTP”.

There are rising concerns over terrorist organisations like AQ once again operationalising their activities from Afghanistan. A [new report](#) from the United Nations asserts that Abu Ikhlas al-Masri, a veteran al Qaeda leader in Afghanistan, is likely active again in the country’s east. In a joint statement during Xi-Jinping’s visit to Iran on February 14, both countries urged the Taliban to [end restrictions](#) on women’s work and education.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen on February 15 said that [India has assured](#) of extending its cooperation for importing hydropower from Nepal and Bhutan through India. Nepal and India signed an agreement on [import and export](#) capacity through the Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission line from 600 to 800 megawatts on February 19. Similarly, Sri Lanka and [India started negotiations](#) to link the two countries' power grids and upgrade the trade agreement, which will be finalised in the next two months. The Maldives also [exempted projects](#) undertaken by India's EXIM Bank's financing from income tax.

Due to the ongoing economic crisis, the Sri Lankan government [postponed local elections](#), which are due on March 9. The elections are a crucial test of support for President Ranil Wickremesinghe, while the opposition is protesting this decision.

Other Developments

[Pakistan Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on February 15 tabled the Finance \(Supplementary\) Bill, 2023, to raise an additional Rs170 to meet the last prior actions agreed upon with the IMF.](#)

[The US-sanctioned ship which was not allowed by Bangladesh to anchor at Mongla port will be sending materials for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant \(NPP\) in an alternative way.](#)

[US defence delegation led by US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs \(PDASD\), Jedidiah P. Royal, discussed defence cooperation enhancement and regional security stability with Sri Lanka's defence officials on February 16.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The [ASEAN-India Media Exchange](#) was held in Hyderabad from February 9-15 with the participation of 16 journalists and media officials from ASEAN member countries. Participants were briefed on India's G20 Presidency and the outlook for India's economy. A range of other activities allowed the journalists to explore opportunities for collaboration between India and ASEAN countries.

On February 21, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with Singapore counterpart Lee Hsien Loong, launched the [cross-border connectivity of real-time digital payment systems](#) via video conferencing. PM Modi, in his address, remarked that "this linkage will provide a low-cost real-time payment option to people from both countries and increase remittance. This will benefit students, professionals, NRIs, and their families the most".

The Philippines Navy personnel completed the [operator training for BrahMos cruise missiles](#) at Nagpur's BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited facility in Nagpur. The training focused on the operations and maintenance of some of the most important logistics of the Shore-Based Anti-Ship Missile System. This comes a year after the two countries [signed a deal](#) worth almost \$375 million for the Philippine Marines to acquire three batteries of the BrahMos cruise missile.

A week after granting additional bases to the US, the Philippines has accused a Chinese coast guard vessel of using a ["military-grade laser"](#) to disrupt the resupply mission of the country's coast guard to troops posted in the South China Sea. The Philippines President Marcos Jr. [summoned the Chinese ambassador](#) over the issue and expressed concerns regarding China's "increasing frequency and intensity of actions" against Philippine vessels. Amidst ongoing tensions, President Marcos reinstated that the country ["will not lose an inch of its territory"](#). The country is also in talks with the US to conduct [joint coast guard patrols](#) in the South China Sea as reported by the Philippines coast guard spokesperson.

Other Developments

[Singapore to kick off Japan-ASEAN initiative on startups](#)

[ASEAN Integrated River Management Project launched in Manila](#)

[Singapore's FM Vivian Balakrishnan meets China leaders, both countries reaffirm strong ties](#)

[Indonesia seeks closer India ties to strengthen Global South role](#)

[Philippines, US to hold biggest military exercises in years amid growing tensions with China](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On February 20, Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with [National Disaster Response Force](#) (NDRF) personnel involved in "Operation Dost" in earthquake-hit Turkiye and Syria. He lauded NDRF's work and called for "strengthening its identity as the world's [best relief and rescue team](#)".

President of India, Droupadi Murmu, virtually addressed the [Global Summit of Women 2023](#) held in Abu Dhabi, UAE. President Murmu appreciated the pioneering initiative of UAE's Mother of the Nation, Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, highlighting the importance of women's empowerment.

India's Ambassador to the UAE, on February 20, inaugurated the India Pavilion at the ["IDEX" Defence Exhibition](#) in UAE. Meanwhile, marking the first anniversary of the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), the two countries launched the UAE chapter of ['India-UAE Business Council'](#) in Dubai India and UAE reiterated their resolve to consolidate bilateral economic partnership further and play a key role in [driving global growth](#). In another development, Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, stressed that Riyadh has many [plans with India in the energy sector](#).

India and Iraq held their second round of [Foreign Office Consultations](#) in Baghdad on February 20. The two sides explored ways to diversify trade from oil to non-oil sectors, expanding economic partnership and technology engagement.

Amidst stalled [Iran nuclear deal](#) (JCPOA) talks, US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken reiterated that it was up to Iran to resolve a deadlock over its nuclear program. The Foreign Minister's of US, UK, France, and Germany continued to voice concerns over [Iran-Russia defence ties](#). Reports pointed toward Iran's new underground air base "Eagle 44" preparing to host Russia's [Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets](#).

Other Developments

[Iran to shun India's Raisina Dialogue over the mention of protests](#)

[Indian companies' eye 'game-changing' potential of trade pact with GCC](#)

[UN Security Council denounces Israel in a statement after US showdown averted](#)

[Russia to propose Gulf States partnership to produce Su-75 Checkmate fighter aircraft](#)

[Negev Forum meeting delayed due to Israeli escalation against Palestinians](#)

[PM Netanyahu: Peace with Saudi Arabia and stopping Iran are intertwined goals for Israel](#)

[Senior Boeing official in Israel to push the sale of advanced F-15 jets for Iran strike](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

A bipartisan [resolution](#) was introduced in the US Congress to recognise Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of India, pushing back against Beijing's efforts to change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The draft resolution condemns China's provocations, including use of military force to change the status quo along the LAC; construction of villages in contested areas; publication of maps with Mandarin-language names for cities and features in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh; and expansion of Beijing's territorial claims in Bhutan.

In the first senior-level contact since the American military shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon [Antony Blinken](#) the US secretary of state, met with China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, in Munich on 4 February. Reportedly Blinken condemned the incursion of the PRC surveillance balloon and stressed "it must never happen again." Later Wang criticised the US for its "nearly hysterical reaction" to the Chinese balloon issue underlining misperception and strategic misjudgment of China by the US.

Protests erupted in the central [Chinese](#) city of Wuhan against Chinese government's reform in the medical insurance program leading to sharp cuts in medical care allowances.

Pentagon's top China official, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense [Michael Chase](#) paid a rare visit to Taiwan. There was no official statement on the visit. While denouncing the visit China reaffirmed its sanction against Lockheed Martin and a unit of Raytheon for supplying military equipment to Taiwan.

China is helping [Myanmar's military](#) to tighten its control over the civilians by providing them with "fighter aircraft". According to reports most of the JF-17 fighter jets purchased from China in the recent past have been grounded by Myanmar owing to technical issues.

In the wake of the shifting supply chains, Bangladesh's massive [clothing industry](#) is about to take over China as the top garment exporter to the European Union. Mounting tensions between China and the US have driven many enterprises to seek out non-Chinese suppliers in sectors ranging from clothing and textiles to consumer electronics and smartphones.

Other Developments

[Sri Lanka President to meet China Finance Minister for Debt Talks](#)

[As Biden Visits Ukraine, China's Top Diplomat Goes to Russia](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The fourth biennial joint military exercise "[Dustlik 2023](#)" between India and Uzbekistan began on February 20 and will last till March 5, 2023, in the mountains of Pithoragarh. The "[joint exercise](#)" is aimed to enhance the military capability to undertake multi-domain operations in the sub-conventional scenario under the United Nations mandate in the backdrop of semi-urban and mountainous terrain."

China and the five Central Asian countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (C +C5) kicked off the first-ever forum on industry and investment cooperation in Qingdao, China, on February 16. [Chinese President Xi Jinping](#) lauded the strategic partnership between China and the five Central Asian countries for establishing "a new path with friendly neighbourhood and win-win cooperation and a new paradigm for international relations". Lauded as an avenue to refresh the "[age-old Silk Road](#)", the Forum brought together representatives from political and business circles to promote high-quality cooperation in sectors such as the digital economy, energy and agriculture. During the Forum, Xi Jinping also called for strengthening the shield for defending peace, building a family with diverse interactions and protecting the global village that enjoys peace and development.

[Wang Yi](#), before attending the Munich Security Conference (Germany), made a technical stop in Tashkent on February 15, where he met Uzbekistan's Acting Foreign Minister, Saidov. The two sides discussed ways to promote China-Uzbekistan beneficial cooperation and China-Central Asia cooperation to achieve better results.

Senior officials from Iran and Turkmenistan's oil, gas and petroleum sectors met in Ashgabat, Iran and [discussed cooperation in the various sectors](#) between the two countries. The officials proposed that since over 70 per cent of the equipment and items used in the Iranian oil industry are manufactured by domestic producers, an agreement to supply Turkmenistan with such equipment will benefit them. The Iranian delegation expressed the Islamic Republic's readiness to build refineries, develop oil and gas fields and supply "high-quality parts and equipment at a competitive price to the Turkmen parties".

Other Developments

[Kazakhstan Calls for Solidarity Among 'Global Middle Powers'.](#)

[Kazakhstan Discovers Scheme Of Gray Imports Of Grain From Russia.](#)

[Uzbekistan Resumes Operations On Afghanistan Railroad After Dispute.](#)

[The First Inter-Parliamentary Forum of Central Asian States pledges Greater Cooperation in Economic and Cultural Areas.](#)

[Asia Development Bank To Assist The Government Of Turkmenistan In Boosting Its Power And Finance Sectors.](#)



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