

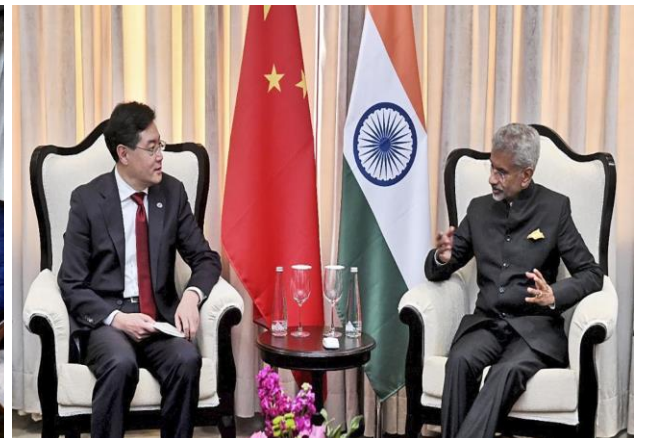


Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives March 8, 2023



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

South Asia: *India's Foreign Minister Dr. S Jaishankar held a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Bhutan Tandi Dorji on the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue on March 4, 2023.*

Source: [Twitter/DrSJaishankar](https://twitter.com/DrSJaishankar)

Southeast Asia: Delegates with Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, during the 36th Meeting of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (Source: [ASEAN Secretariat News](#))

West Asia: India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan in New Delhi on March 3, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@DrSJaishankar](https://twitter.com/DrSJaishankar)

China: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang on the sidelines of G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, in New Delhi, March 2, 2023.

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On the sidelines of the [G20 Foreign Ministers meeting](#) and Raisina dialogue from March 2-5, Indian Foreign Minister Dr. S Jaishankar held [bilateral discussions](#) with his [South Asian counterparts](#) to discuss investment, trade, and development partnerships. As India expands the areas of cooperation with neighbouring countries, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh [proposed Dhaka](#) to develop and produce defence equipment jointly.

Meanwhile, the ethnic tension in Bangladesh is flaring up against the backdrop of upcoming general elections. One person was killed and at least 30 others, including seven policemen, were injured in [clashes between](#) law enforcers and supporters of some Islamist organisations who were demonstrating against a programme of the Ahmadiyya community on March 3.

India hosted the first India-Central Asia [Joint Working Group](#) on Afghanistan on March 7. The meeting was attended by the Special Envoys/Senior Officials from India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, UNODC, and UNWFP. Following the meeting, India has announced sending assistance of 20,000 MTs of wheat to Afghan people through the Chabahar Port. Meanwhile, the security situation in Pakistan remains precarious, as nine soldiers were killed and 13 others were injured in a [suicide attack](#) in Balochistan on March 6. Militant attacks [witnessed a surge](#) in February in Pakistan. To tackle this renewed threat of terrorism, the US and Pakistan [held a counter-terrorism dialogue](#) on March 6-7. The statement suggested that the US wants to maintain counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan.

Other Developments

[Iran's trade center and a permanent exhibition of Iranian products were inaugurated in Kabul on March 5.](#)

[Russia signs a memorandum on the development of coal energy sector in Afghanistan.](#)

[At least 15 people were killed and several others injured in an explosion in a crowded market area in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka on March 7.](#)

[India and Bangladesh are soon expected to do away with the dollar as the official currency and carry out bilateral trade in Rupee and Taka.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The [36th Meeting of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights \(AICHR\)](#) was convened from 28 February to 3 March 2023 at the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, Indonesia. The meeting, chaired by Wahyuningrum- a Representative of Indonesia to AICHR, discussed key developments on human rights in the region, including new laws and regulations at the national level. AICHR also held the 1st Interface Meeting with the [ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers \(ACMW\)](#) and 3rd Interface Meeting with [the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children \(ACWC\)](#).

On March 4, the first ministerial meeting of the [Asia Zero Emission Community \(AZEC\)](#) was held in Japan with eleven Southeast Asian nations and Australia. The meeting was convened to discuss ways to reduce carbon emissions in the region, in line with PM Kishida's Asia zero emission concept. Japan's PM Kishida, through a video message, proposed an initiative to [expand hydrogen supply chain networks](#) throughout the region. In the joint statement, the countries "recognise that accelerating the energy transition in the Asian region is key to achieve the goals of the Paris international accord".

The External Affairs Minister, Dr. S Jaishankar held a [bilateral meeting with his Singapore counterpart](#) Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan on March 3. Dr. Jaishankar characterised the interaction as "a good exchange on our ever-strengthening cooperation and more. Much done and lots of possibilities in a fast-changing world".

The Philippines Coast Guard reported the presence of [a Chinese navy ship and 42 militia vessels](#) in the vicinity of Thitu Island on March 4. In the statement, the Philippines Coast Guard registered a protest against China's actions stating that "their continuing unauthorised presence is clearly inconsistent with the right of innocent passage and a blatant violation of the Philippines' territorial integrity". This comes after [Defence Secretary Carlito Galvez Jnr remarked](#) that the additional bases to the US under EDCA "are not intended for aggression" and that "we are not preparing for war".

Other Developments

[Japan pledges financial support to help ASEAN decarbonise](#)

[Indian state-owned firm sold artillery barrels to Myanmar: activists](#)

[Cambodia opposition leader Kem Sokha sentenced to 27 years' jail for treason](#)

[Malaysia's Anwar says Asean cannot view Myanmar crisis as a 'purely internal' issue](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Minister's meeting in New Delhi, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar held [33 bilaterals](#), including Foreign Ministers from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Oman, and Turkey. Highlighting the strong bond between Prime Minister Modi and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan reiterated that Riyadh attaches ["top priority" to its relations with India](#).

On March 7, External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met ['American Jewish Committee'](#) delegation, wherein the two sides discussed a "sea of change" in India's relations with the US and Israel since 2014. Meanwhile, the Indian Navy successfully tested ['Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile'](#) (MRSAM) jointly developed by DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), validating its ability to engage anti-ship missiles. In another development, Indian warship 'INS Trikand' arrived in Bahrain to participate in an [international maritime exercise](#) coordinated by the US-led Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) – a 34-nation naval group.

On the energy front, India's [crude imports from Russia](#) soared to a record 1.6 million barrels per day in February 2023, which is reportedly higher than combined crude imports from traditional suppliers Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

On March 7, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang addressed a press conference on the country's foreign policy. On the [Middle East](#), Foreign Minister Qin reiterated that China has "no intention to fill the so-called [power] vacuum in the region" and stressed that Beijing will be a "facilitator of peace and stability". Major issues touched by FM Qin included Beijing's "support for strategic autonomy of the Middle East countries", "opposing foreign interferences in internal affairs", and "seeking a political settlement of hotspot issues through dialogue and consultation".

During a visit to Iraq on March 7, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin reiterated Washington's commitment to keeping its [military presence in Iraq](#) to continue its fight against ISIS. Further, US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley met [US troops stationed in Northeast Syria](#).

Other Developments

[Turkey rakes up 'Kashmir' at UNHRC; India slams Turkish govt for making unsolicited remarks](#)

[US defence secretary warns of 'unthinkable' Iran-Russia military ties](#)

[Iran makes first arrests in schoolgirls' poisoning as cases top 5,000: Report](#)

[US says Iran poisoning probe could fall under UN mandate](#)

[IAEA chief says Israel's threats to strike Iran's nuclear sites 'illegal'](#)

[PM Netanyahu rebuffs IAEA chief's remarks against possible attack on Iran](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

China is preparing to reform its [government bureaucracy](#) to strengthen Communist Party's control over technology and financial sector. Under a newly presented plan Beijing would create new regulatory bodies to oversee broad segments of China's financial system, as well as the use of data and related digital technologies. Other state institutions, including the Ministry of Science and Technology, would be restructured or have some of their powers redistributed to other departments.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held bilateral talks with visiting Chinese Foreign Minister [Qin Gang](#), on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting on March 2. The discussion focused on current challenges to the bilateral relations especially pertaining to 'peace and tranquility' in the border areas. Later during a [media briefing](#) Dr. S. Jaishankar said, "There are real problems in that relationship that need to be looked at, that need to be discussed very openly and candidly between us. That's what we sought to do today."

During an interview with [The Kathmandu Post](#) Bishnu Pukar Shrestha, Nepal's ambassador to China while commenting on the delay in BRI projects in Nepal said "China is reluctant to prioritise Nepal's projects. Due to this, we have not started discussing how much money China will invest under the BRI in Nepal and how much Nepal will invest." Discussing about China's relations with Nepal's communist party he said, "China has been suggesting that the communist parties again work together, but that does not mean it is interfering. I also don't think the Chinese are using any kind of force to bring about another communist unity in Nepal."

During a welcome reception held at the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka the newly-appointed Chinese Ambassador in Dhaka [Yao Wen](#) has said there is no limit to the potential of Bangladesh-China relations. "China and Bangladesh are natural cooperation partners...There are no unresolved disputes or historical burdens between us." He added.

China has assured its support for Sri Lanka's [debt restructuring](#). The move will enable Colombo to secure a \$2.9 billion bailout package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on March 20.



Other Developments:

[Chinese experts in Maldives to train National TT team](#)

[China-Nepal-India border port Burang resumes two-way trade to Nepal](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

After hosting the key G20 meetings, India will host the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\)'s first ministerial meeting](#) – Energy Ministers on March 14, 2023. Although the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting ended without a joint statement, India may be able to push for a common consensus as many SCO countries are facing an energy crisis.

Despite reassurances from [Kazakh Energy Minister Bolat Akchulakov](#) stating that the oil shipment to Germany will start soon, Kazakhstan is [struggling to find enough crude oil](#) to meet the requests from European countries. Kazakhstan's oil producers are struggling to find spare barrels to help European firms stop using the Russian oil supply. The country's oil production has dropped by about 100,000 barrels a day since late February, which puts a strain on fulfilling the planned deliveries.

A week after Uzbeki state-owned natural gas company [Uztransgaz announced on](#) its Telegram channel that it was "carrying out works on pipelines to accommodate imports from Russia" which was reported by Eurasianet, the company withdrew their statement. [Uztransgaz contacted news outlets in Tashkent](#) to inform them that while the gas pipelines are being overhauled, they were not related to the import of the gas from Russia. They added that the real purpose of the works was to "improve the efficiency of gas supply to consumers in the southern regions".

In a statement released by the Azerbaijani's Defence Ministry said that the technical surveillance equipment had "again" recorded Russian peacekeeping forces accompanying Armenian armed forces and illegal Armenian armed detachments in transporting military equipment using the Khankendi-Khalfali-Turshu road. The Defence Ministry emphasised that the Russian peacekeeping forces carrying out the military transports is a gross violation of the provisions of the Trilateral Statement" which is unacceptable and must be stopped.

Other Developments

[Kazakhstan Takes Part in Trade Policy Review of Japan](#)

[USAID Talk Projects Implemented in Uzbekistan's Education Sector](#)

[Armenia Commits Another Provocation in Karabakh: Test of Baku's Resolve or Call for Military Operation?](#)

[Israel Open Permanent Representation in Turkmenistan](#)



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