



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## India's Proximity Archives March 15, 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, 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](mailto:sanket@dpg.org.in).

### Cover Image:

**South Asia:** 19<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Ministers Meeting, March 9, 2023. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand](#)

**Southeast Asia:** India's Secretary (East) Saurabh Kumar addressing the East Asia Summit (EAS) Senior Officials' Meeting in Jakarta on March 8, 2023. (Source: [MEA India/ Official Twitter](#))

**West Asia:** India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, met UAE's Minister of Economy, Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri, in New Delhi on March 13, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@ PiyushGoyal](#)

**Central Asia:** Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud headed the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) from March 10-11, 2023. Source: [Twitter](#)

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## South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Pakistan was engulfed in political chaos as the Islamabad High Court ordered the arrest of PTI leader Imran Khan. Following the order, as Islamabad Police and Rangers personnel reached the Zaman Park residence of [Imran Khan](#) on March 14, they were engaged in a pitched battle with PTI workers. Protests have erupted in many other major cities, such as Peshawar and Karachi. Imran Khan remained defiant, refused to get arrested, and called on his supporters to resist the establishment.

Meanwhile, former DG ISI Lt Gen Faiz Hamid, who was considered to be a close ally of Imran Khan [being investigated](#) for alleged corruption. The [COAS Gen Asim Munir](#) once again reiterated that he won't interfere in political matters.

The series of terrorist attacks by [ISKP is continued](#) in Afghanistan, [the Taliban governor of Balkh](#) province was killed in a blast on March 9. In another attack on March 11, during an [award ceremony](#) for [journalists](#) in Mazar-e- Sharif one person was killed.

The [19th Ministerial Meeting](#) of the BIMSTEC was held virtually in Bangkok on March 9. During the meeting, [the Ministers approved](#) rules of Procedure for Core BIMSTEC Mechanisms, Sectoral BIMSTEC Mechanisms, BIMSTEC's External Relations for submission to the 6th BIMSTEC Summit and draft agreement between India and the BIMSTEC Secretariat for establishing BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate in India.

After the third Foreign Office Consultation with Thailand, held in Dhaka on March 14, Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary said that his country is [interested in joining](#) the Myanmar-India-Thailand connectivity project.

## Other Developments

[Pakistan said it had signed a memorandum of understanding with Iran to supply 100 megawatts of electricity to Gwadar.](#)

[Russia has proposed exporting liquefied natural gas to Bangladesh as the latter seeks to meet its long-term energy needs.](#)

[Bangladesh and Australia discuss Indo-Pacific, IORA, security cooperation](#)

[The Maldivian Government announced that it will resume diplomatic ties with Iran after China brokered reconciliation between Riyadh and Teheran.](#)

[On March 13, senior leader Ram Chandra Paudel was sworn in as Nepal's third president](#)

## Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The [25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN- India Senior Officials' Meeting](#), co-chaired by Saurabh Kumar, Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs of India, and Albert Chua, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, was held in Jakarta on March 7. The meeting discussed potential areas of cooperation including maritime activities, transnational crimes, cybersecurity, science and technology, transport and connectivity, digital economy, and fintech, in order to further strengthen ASEAN- India comprehensive strategic partnership.

The [East Asia Summit Senior Officials' Meeting \(EAS SOM\)](#) was convened on March 8 chaired by Sidharto Reza Suryodipuro, SOM Leader of Indonesia. India's Secretary (East) [Saurabh Kumar](#) underscored the pivotal role of East Asia Summit as a leading mechanism for promotion of a free, open, inclusive & rules-based Indo-Pacific. He reaffirmed India's support to ASEAN centrality and implementation of ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

The Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship of India, Dharmendra Pradhan met Gan Kim Yon, Minister of Trade & Industry of Singapore in New Delhi for the [Singapore-India Hackathon 2023](#). "India, through programmes such as Skill India, is capitalising on its demographic dividend. Like India, Singapore also invests heavily in adult learning and upskilling", Mr Gan stated during the launch of the event which comes under India's G20 presidency. During his visit, Minister Gan also met [India's External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar](#) to discuss "taking forward the India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable process".

Amidst heightened tensions in the South China Sea, ASEAN announced its plans to conduct an exercise with China on a [security hotline](#) this year in an effort to prevent an accidental collision from escalating tensions in disputed South China Sea. Concurrently, Japan has joined the [ASEAN emergency hotline](#) set up to promote swift cooperation between ASEAN defence ministers in times of emergency. It is the first non-member country to join the 10 bloc members hotline.

The Philippines and United States launched three- week long [annual army- to- army exercises](#) called Salaknib on March 13. Lieutenant-General Romeo Brawner, the Philippine Army Chief, talking about the exercises said, "since this is an army-to-army exercise, we will focus on defence operations such as air defence and also our defence from the shorelines".

## Other Developments

[Malaysia keen on resuming high-speed rail project with Singapore](#)

[Malaysia buys South Korea fighter jets as ASEAN arms market grow](#)

[Philippines urged to compensate WWII sex slave survivors](#)

## West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On March 13, India's Minister of [Commerce and Industry](#), Piyush Goyal, held a meeting with UAE's Minister of Economy, Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri. The two leaders discussed gains from the India-UAE 'Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement' (CEPA) and accelerating 'UPI' (Unified Payment Interface) and 'RuPay' adoption in UAE. Meanwhile, reports pointed towards India preferring [UAE's Dirham over the Chinese Yuan](#) (CNY) for trade settlements with Russia.

After the talks facilitated by China between March 6-10, 2023, [Saudi Arabia and Iran](#) agreed to restore diplomatic relations. In light of this, Chinese state media underscored Beijing's "[goodwill to promote regional and global security](#) through its 'Global Security Initiative' (GSI) and political dialogue". Welcoming the understanding reached between Iran and Saudi Arabia, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan stressed that "de-escalation" between Tehran and Riyadh was [not "adverse" to American interests](#), rather, it is a "positive development for the Middle East promoting a goal that the US has been promoting in the region".

On March 9, during his Middle East visit, [US Defence Secretary Austin](#) met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The two leaders reiterated their resolve to "prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons", "maintain regional security", and "expand the circle of peace". Secretary Austin expressed concerns over the deteriorating [security situation in the West Bank](#) and called upon Israel to work with the Palestinian Authority Security Forces to reduce violence and restore calm.

### Other Developments

[Israeli foreign minister likely to visit India in March](#)

[Commercial Bank 'first in Qatar' to launch UPI remittance service to India](#)

[Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks on Saudi Arabia-Iran Talks in Beijing](#)

[The Saudi-Iran détente and its regional implications](#)

[Saudi Arabia launches new airline, Riyadh Air to connect 100 locations by 2030](#)

[Syria's President Assad arrives in Moscow ahead of meeting with President Putin](#)

[US calls Iran's claim of a prisoner swap deal a 'cruel lie'](#)



## China

by

Angana Guha Roy

Xi Jinping has been handed an unprecedented [third term](#) as President, making him China's most dominant leader in generations. In a speech to mark the start of his precedent-breaking third term, he vowed to oppose foreign interference on Taiwan, a veiled reference to increasing American support for Taipei. [Li Qiang](#) has been appointed as the country's new premier. However, several ministries have seen their current leaders remain in place.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in its [Annual Report 2021-22](#) released on March 13 stressed that continued unilateral attempts by China to change the Line of Actual Control (LAC) status quo have impacted India- China bilateral relationship. According to the MEA report India's engagement with China is complex. The two sides have however, agreed to manage their differences and not allow disturbed the peace and tranquillity along the LAC.

After agreeing to restructure its loans China said that it would play a positive role" in helping bankrupt [Sri Lanka](#) get through its debt crisis. At a press briefing foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said "China is ready to work with relevant countries and international financial institutions to play a positive role in helping Sri Lanka cope with its current difficulties, ease its debt burden and achieve sustainable development."

At the annual Spring Dialogue in Dhaka Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh [Yao Wen](#) introduced China's positions and propositions on various issues, including China's economic growth target in 2023, the growth of China's defense budget, GDI, GSI, Belt and Road cooperation between China and Bangladesh, bilateral trade and investment, displaced people from Myanmar to Bangladesh, Ukraine crisis, China-Russia relations, China-India relations, and the Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Chinese President [Xi Jinping](#) congratulated Ram Chandra Poudel on assuming office as president of Nepal. In his message, Xi said he attaches great importance to the development of China-Nepal relations, and is willing to work with Poudel to carry forward the traditional friendship between the two countries, consolidate mutual political trust, advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, expand cultural and people-to-people exchanges, so as to constantly promote the strategic partnership of cooperation featuring everlasting friendship for development and prosperity.

## Other development

[Bipartisan resolution introduced in U.S. Senate recognising Arunachal Pradesh as integral part of India](#)

## Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The eighteenth meeting of the Chief Justices/ Chairpersons of the Supreme Courts of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Member States was held in New Delhi from March 10-11, 2023. Under the aegis of the Chief Justice of India D. Y. Chandrachud, the two day meeting saw the physical participation of all SCO member states, two observer states (Iran and Belarus), the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS), and the SCO Secretariat. [Justice Munib Akhtar of the Pakistan Supreme Court](#) addressed the conference virtually.

[Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud](#) stressed that SCO member states should strive for judicial cooperation to make their judicial systems more approachable to people. Furthermore, D Y Chandrachud [argued](#) that the conference “allows all member and observer states to reflect on the challenges common to their jurisdictions”. During the second day of the conference, which was under the theme of ‘smart courts’, Nail Akhmetzakirov, the head of the Court Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan, offered insight into his country’s new software which was developed post-Covid-19 to make the electronic system in judicial services more accessible. Moreover, Xiaochen Qiann, the Chief Judge of the case-filing division of the Supreme People’s Court of the People’s Republic of China, said that there was great importance for the “growth of the judiciary that modern public judicial services were built featuring inclusiveness, equity, convenience, efficiency, intelligence and accuracy” which is a global challenge that needs to be addressed both nationally and collectively as members of the SCO.

On March 13, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Emomali received the Secretary General of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, Imangali Tasmagambetov. During the conversation, the President of the Republic of [Tajikistan highlighted the](#) “importance of the increasing cooperation in the political dimension, expanding the international activities of the CSTO, and increasing the effectiveness of military, military-technical and military-economic cooperation”. He further stressed the importance of strengthening the comprehensive work to counter challenges and threats to security, in particular, terrorism, extremism, radicalism, drug smuggling, cybercrime, and transnational organised crime.

## Other Developments

[SCO Members to Consider Jointly Developing Emerging Fuel Projects](#)

[Doval, SCO NSAs to discuss the rise in Afghanistan drug trade and Terrorism](#)

[Iran-Uzbekistan Foreign Ministers Discuss Situation in Afghanistan](#)

[India-Uzbekistan Concluded their Joint Military Exercise 'DUSTLIK'](#)

[Tajikistan Creates Restrictive Dress Code for Women](#)

[Uzbekistan to Hold Referendum on New Constitution that Would Allow the President to Run Again.](#)



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