



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

May 17, 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: Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina held a meeting with India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar on the sidelines of the 6th Indian Ocean Conference, Dhaka, May 11, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@DrSJaishankar](https://twitter.com/DrSJaishankar)

Southeast Asia: Leaders of ASEAN member countries at the 42nd ASEAN Summit held in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia on May 11, 2023. Source: [ASEAN Indonesia 2023](https://www.asean.org/asean-indonesia-2023)

West Asia: Indian Army Chief, Gen. Manoj Pande, met the Chief of Staff of Egypt's Armed Forces, Lt. Gen. Osama Ahmed Roshdy Abdullah Askar on May 16, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@adgpi](https://twitter.com/adgpi)

China: US National security adviser Jake Sullivan met with PRC Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission, Wang Yi, in Vienna on May 10-11. Source: [CNN](https://www.cnn.com)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

The 6th Indian Ocean Conference was held in Dhaka on May 12-13. In the inaugural address, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina outlined [six priority areas](#) for the Indian Ocean countries, including fostering maritime diplomacy and partnership and strengthening maritime security and mutual trust. India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar expressed concern over the issue of unsustainable debt and said [in his remarks](#) that, "many of us in the region are today confronting the consequences of our past choices. This is time to reflect and reform, not one to repeat and reiterate." On the side-line of the conference, Dr. Jaishankar and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina [discussed](#) the state of the South Asian regional economy.

On May 10, the European Union and Bangladesh held a [bilateral discussion](#) on sectoral issues in which they agreed to sign Partnership Cooperation Agreement. On May 14 Bangladesh and Vietnam at the second Foreign Office Consultations agreed to [explore possibilities](#) of concluding a bilateral free trade agreement. Bangladesh also proposed the formation of a joint commission at the foreign ministers' level for comprehensive cooperation.

While terming Imran Khan's [arrest unlawful](#), the Islamabad High Court granted a protected bail by restraining law enforcement agencies from arresting him again until May 31. After his release, Imran Khan [blamed Army Chief](#) for his arrest and [appealed](#) to his followers "to be ready for a massive protest". In a crackdown on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf workers, the Punjab police have [arrested](#) more than 3,500 persons across the province. In [Corps Commanders' Conference](#) held on May 15, Pakistan Army Chief said that the people [behind attacks](#) on military installations would be tried under Army Act and Official Secrets Act. Meanwhile, on May 14, the cabinet [approved the deployment](#) of Rangers in Punjab and the army in Balochistan in light of the law and order situation across the two provinces.

Other Developments

[China delivered two frigates to Pakistan's navy on May 9, completing a four-warship deal inked in 2018.](#)

[Qatar's Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani visited Kandahar, Afghanistan, on May 12 and met with Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, the acting Prime Minister in the Taliban's government.](#)

[The Bangladesh government has withdrawn additional security given to the ambassadors and high commissioners of India, China, Australia, Saudi Arabia, the US, and the UK, saying that the security situation in the country is "very satisfactory" and that there is a shortage of police personnel.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

President Joko Widodo of Indonesia called for “unity in ASEAN to chart our way forward” at the end of the 42nd ASEAN Summit concluded on May 11 in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia. The Summit ended with [three points of agreement](#) amongst ASEAN member countries - protection of migrant workers and victims of human trafficking; not tolerating violation of humanitarian values; and strengthening economic cooperation. In line with ASEAN centrality, the leaders agreed to strengthen the implementation of local currency transactions and digital payment connectivity between countries.

The Philippine Coast Guard has set up [five navigational buoys](#) within its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) carrying the national flag from May 10-12. Amidst the rise in assertive actions by China, the Philippine Coastguard aims to assert its sovereignty in the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. The Philippine Coastguard spokesperson on South China Sea issues, [Commodore Jay Tarriela](#) stated “This move highlights the Philippines’ unwavering resolve to protect its maritime borders and resources and contribute to the safety of maritime trade”.

On May 16, the President of the United States [Joe Biden vetoed legislation](#) passed by Congress that would have repealed exemptions on American tariffs on imported solar panels from four Southeast Asian nations. Biden granted these waivers for duties on panels made in Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand in June 2022. However, an [investigation by the Commerce Department](#) revealed that major Chinese solar panel makers were channelling their products through Southeast Asian countries to avoid US tariffs.

Singapore [Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong met](#) Timor-Leste Prime Minister Mr Taur Matan Ruak, Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, and Laos Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone on May 10. During the meeting with the PM of Vietnam, the two sides “discussed the cooperation between Singapore and Vietnam and exchanged views on regional developments”. This was PM Lee’s first meeting with the Laos Prime Minister in which they discussed areas to deepen cooperation in the energy, digital, and sustainability domains.

Other Developments

[Thai election: Move Forward Party declares victory, leader Pita prepared to be PM](#)

[Top Cambodian opposition party challenging Hun Sen's rule denied registration for July elections](#)

[Indian-backed port opens in Myanmar in answer to China's corridor project](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

As the [India-UAE trade partnership](#) continues to deepen, UAE's 'Mubadala' (investment company) underscored that India remains a "priority market for its real estate and infrastructure investments in Asia". Meanwhile, the [Dubai Multi Commodities Centre](#) (DMCC) will be opening a representative office in Mumbai to boost trade.

India's Chief of the Army Staff, Gen. Manoj Pande, [visited Egypt](#) on May 16-17. To enhance Indo-Egypt defence relations, the Army Chief met with Egypt's military leadership. During the visit, a book titled "Indian Army in Egypt" was released to commemorate the service and sacrifice of Indian soldiers in Egypt.

Türkiye is headed for a [Presidential run-off vote](#) on May 28 as incumbent President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his main challenger Kemal Kilicdaroglu failed to secure more than 50 percent of the votes in the first round of the Presidential election.

After five days of fighting, Israel and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) militant group agreed to an [Egypt-brokered ceasefire](#) on May 13. Commenting on the success of 'Operation Shield and Arrow', Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu informed that it has significantly weakened the [command of the Islamic Jihad](#). Meanwhile, amidst continued tensions with Iran, the US announced plans to boost its [military presence in the Gulf](#).

On May 15, the United Nations marked the 75th anniversary of the mass displacement of Palestinians known as "[the Nakba Day](#)" (catastrophe). 45 countries including the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Albania, Ukraine, India, and 27 member states of the European Union [boycotted the UN's Nakba Day events](#). Washington reiterated that it recognizes the plight of the Palestinian refugees, but has longstanding concerns over anti-Israel bias within the UN system.

Other Developments

[White House: Russia looks to purchase more attack drones from Iran after depleting the stockpile](#)

[Syrian President Bashar al- Assad invited to the COP28 climate summit by the UAE](#)

[Back in the Arab League after 12 years, Syria urges the group to invest in war-torn country](#)

[US says Israeli-manufactured Iron Dome system ready for deployment in Ukraine](#)

[80 percent of Palestinians welcome Chinese offer to mediate with Israel, US seen as the least favourite option](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

US National Security Adviser, [Jake Sullivan](#), met the Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of China, Wang Yi, in Vienna on May 10-11. The White House described meetings as “substantive and constructive” in which they touched upon “key issues in the U.S.-China bilateral relationship, global and regional security issues, Russia’s war against Ukraine, and cross-Strait issues”.

India and China held [military talks on the Line of Actual Control \(LAC\)](#) at the Daulat Beg Oldie sector on May 16 in which they discussed ways of resolving the ongoing stand-off. The divisional-level talks were held following the 18th round of corps commander-level talks held on April 23.

A [Chinese fishing boat sunk in the Indian Ocean](#) on May 16 with all 39 of its Chinese and international crew missing. President Xi Jinping ordered a coordinated search. China has deployed two commercial vessels to help in the regional search-and-rescue operation.

In an interview on the sidelines of the sixth [Indian Ocean Conference](#) in Dhaka, Bangladesh’s Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam commented on Bangladesh's ties with India and China. Alam said that India and China are the two major economies with which Bangladesh has trade imbalances. China is a friend to Bangladesh in the nation's "developmental journey", however, Bangladesh's ties with India are at a different level because of its history, he added.

Other Developments

[Former PM Deuba's relative involved in arms deal with China: Nepalese politician](#)

[Rebels attack China-backed energy project in Myanmar, days after FM visit](#)

[Sri Lanka's creditors discuss debt restructuring at the meeting, China remains an observer](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The 46th annual meeting of the [Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and the Pacific \(ADFIAP\)](#) took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan on May 15-16. The conference focused on the impact of Developmental Financial Institutions (DFIs) on sustainable infrastructure in Asia and the Pacific region. Nikolai Podguzov, Chairman of the Management Board at the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), highlighted that Central Asian nations are unable to exploit 20% of their development potential due to their lack of access to the sea.

At the conference, President Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan highlighted the ongoing systemic transformations to achieve a more robust and diversified economy. Furthermore, he expressed the country's interest in financial and economic cooperation with other nations.

On May 18-19, Kazakhstan will host [the second European Union-Central Asia Economic Forum](#). It will discuss the policies, programs, and investments needed to develop a more integrated and interconnected regional market engagement. This forum will prioritize three key areas: a green and digital transition, creating a better business environment, and improving trade and connectivity. Participants will include high-level representatives from EU member states, partners who are implementing EU-funded projects in the region, European financial institutions, and private sector representatives from Central Asian and European countries.

Leaders from the five Central Asian nations are scheduled to attend the [China-Central Asia Summit](#) on May 18-19 in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province. The Summit marks "the first diplomatic event that China will host this year" and will be the first-ever in-person summit between the leaders of China and the five Central Asian countries since the establishment of diplomatic relations 31 years ago.

Other Developments

[Kazakhstan and the European Union Take Steps to Reinforce Partnership](#)

[Uzbek Envoy Hails Cooperation with China China-Central Asia Gas Pipeline Strengthens China-Uzbekistan Friendship](#)

[Afghanistan receives 125 tons of humanitarian aid from Turkmenistan](#)



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