



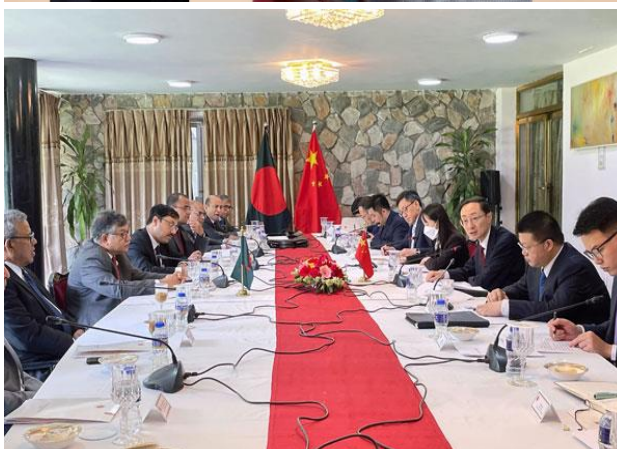
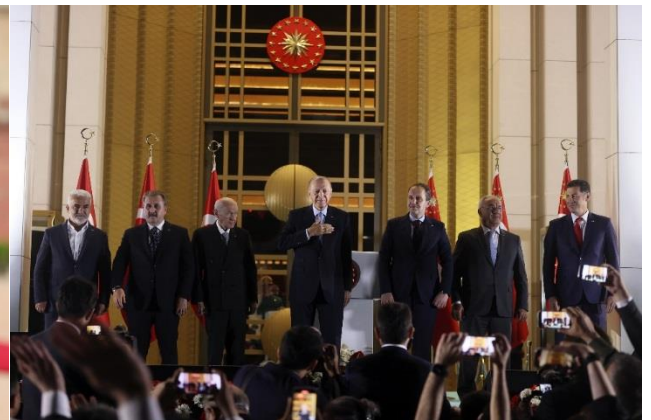
Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

May 31, 2023



Volume I, Issue 22 | May 31, 2023

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:

Southeast Asia: Cambodia's King Norodom Sihamoni meets India's President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Rashtrapati Bhavan on May 30. (Source: [PM Modi/Official Twitter](#))

West Asia: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was re-elected as President of Türkiye on May 29, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@RTErdogan](#)

China: Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong co-chaired the 12th round of China-Bangladesh diplomatic consultation with Bangladeshi Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen in Dhaka on May 27. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China](#).

Central Asia: Before a restricted attendance of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, members posed for a group photo on May 25, 2023. Source: [Kremlin](#)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Amidst Pakistan's continuing political chaos, a [crackdown](#) on Imran Khan's party 'Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf' by law enforcement agencies is ongoing. Several [PTI leaders have left the party](#), including Secretary General Asad Umar who resigned on May 24. Imran Khan and 226 other senior PTI members have been placed on the [no-fly list](#). On May 30, Prime Minister [Shehbaz Sharif](#) rejected Imran Khan's offer to hold talks for subsequent negotiations. Meanwhile, the security situation in the country has continued to deteriorate. Six security officials were killed in a terrorist [attack on](#) an oil and gas exploration site in Hangu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan on May 23.

Tensions escalated between [Iran and Taliban-ruled Afghanistan](#) as two Iranian border guards and one Taliban fighter have been killed after a shooting broke out near a border post on May 27. Each side has accused the other of shooting first.

On May 24, the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken announced a [new visa policy](#) for Bangladesh through which the US can restrict Bangladeshi citizens who undermine upcoming elections. Bangladeshi [Authorities assured](#) to tackle and prevent unlawful practices or interference in the upcoming general elections. The global credit rating agency [Moody's Investors Service](#) downgraded Bangladesh's sovereign rating by one notch to B1 from Ba3 on May 30.

On May 25, President Ranil Wickremesinghe announced that Sri Lanka intends to [apply for membership](#) in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade bloc. The IMF has urged Sri Lanka to decide on debt restructuring, including with China by October 2023, to obtain the [EFF of USD 2.9 billion](#). While, on May 30, the ADB approved a [USD 350 million](#) special policy-based loan to provide budget support for economic stabilization. India has also signed an agreement on May 30 to extend the tenure of the [USD 1 billion Credit Facility](#) provided to Sri Lanka in March 2022.

Other Developments

[After three years direct flights between Afghanistan and China resumed on May 24.](#)

[Qatar has asked the Pakistani government to address all obstacles hindering its investment in the long-delayed Energas LNG terminal.](#)

[Amid the ongoing slowdown, the Nepalese government on May 29 presented its annual financial plan worth Rs1.75 trillion for the next fiscal year 2023-24.](#)

[At least 55 people, including a central BNP leader, were injured as activists of the Awami League and the BNP clashed in Dhaka's Keraniganj and Khagrachhari town on May 26.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The Cambodia's King Norodom Sihamoni commenced his [first state visit](#) to India on May 29. During his three-day visit, King Norodom Sihamoni met with India's President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, and Minister of External Affairs Dr. S Jaishankar. The visit culminates celebrations of the [70th anniversary of diplomatic relations](#) between India and Cambodia, and aims to "strengthen and deepen the civilizational relations between India and Cambodia".

On May 25, [Vietnam demanded Beijing](#) to remove the Chinese survey ship Xiang Yang Hong 10, Chinese coastguard ships and fishing vessels out of Vietnam's waters. It was reported that the Chinese ship Xiang Yang Hong 10 started operating in Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) [from May 7](#), making this the largest incursion since 2019. Vietnam accused China of violating its sovereignty. The [Vietnam foreign ministry spokesperson](#) Pham Thu Hang stated that "Vietnam has made contact with China several times and implemented measures in accordance with international law and Vietnamese law to ensure lawful and legitimate rights and interests of Vietnam". However, a day later the vessels continued to operate in Vietnam's EEZ, as reported by [Reuters](#).

A few weeks after Philippines placed [five navigational buoys](#) within its EEZ, China deployed three navigation beacons around the contested Spratly Islands of the South China Sea on May 24. The beacons were placed close to Irving Reef, Whitsun Reef, and Gaven Reef of the Spratly Islands. China's Transport Ministry stated that the objective of the beacons is to "ensure the safety of ships' navigation and operations".

Other Developments

[Boon for Singapore as Indonesia scraps 20-year ban on sea sand exports](#)

[US denies Thailand's request to buy F-35 jets over training, technical issues](#)

[Malaysia signs \\$2.3bn in defense deals at major trade fair](#)

[Myanmar delegation visits Rohingya camps for repatriation scheme](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, congratulated [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#) on his re-election as President of Türkiye on May 29, expressing confidence that bilateral relations and cooperation on global issues between the two countries will continue to grow in the future.

Meanwhile, Israeli Knesset (Parliament) Speaker, [Amir Ohana](#), congratulated [India](#) on the inauguration of its new Parliament building. According to reports, Israel plans to hire [10,000 Indian workers](#) for its construction and nursing industries, continuing the strengthening of India-Israel economic relations.

After Iran seized two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman in recent weeks, UAE called on the U.S. to take more aggressive [measures to deter Iran](#). As a result, US Navy patrols in the Gulf have been increased. In the midst of ongoing tensions between the US and Iran, the Commander of the IRGC's Aerospace Division announced that Iran would [soon unveil a hypersonic missile](#).

Saudi Arabia is reportedly in talks with 'BRICS' to join the group's [New Development Bank](#) (NDB). Meanwhile, China is said to be negotiating [arms deals with Saudi Arabia](#) and Egypt as the Middle East countries attempt to diversify their arms supply. In light of the increasing UAE-China ties, Abu Dhabi is expanding its [fintech collaboration with Hong Kong](#) Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

Other Developments

[Indian Navy's P8I aircraft from INS Hansa lands in Bahrain to participate in Operation Compass Rose, as part of the Combined Maritime Force \(CMF\)](#)

[China's investment in Iran increases 150 percent in 2022: counsellor](#)

[China urges Israel to stop 'provocations' and 'encroachment' as Palestinian tensions flare](#)

[Ex-Mossad chief: Saudi-Iran deal won't block Israel normalization](#)

[TCS partners with Jaguar Land Rover to launch open innovation programme in Israel](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

Amidst a deepening space race with the West, [China sent three astronauts](#) to its now fully operational space station as part of crew rotation in the fifth manned mission to the Chinese space outpost since 2021. The launch comes in the backdrop of Beijing announcing plans to put Chinese nationals on the Moon before 2030.

A Chinese fighter jet carried out an "[unnecessarily aggressive](#)" maneuver near a US military plane over the South China Sea in international airspace. In a statement, the United States' military command responsible for the Indo-Pacific said the Chinese J-16 aircraft carried out the maneuver last week and forced the U.S. RC-135 plane to fly through its wake turbulence.

According to latest media reports, China has been building [border defence villages adjacent to Uttarakhand](#), sources told India Today. These border villages, comprising 250 homes, are being built 11 kilometers away from the Line of Actual Control (LAC). It has plans to construct 400 villages in the eastern sector along the border alone.

On May 27, 2023, Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong co-chaired the [12th round of China-Bangladesh diplomatic consultation](#) with Bangladeshi Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen in Dhaka. Sun Weidong said that China is ready to strengthen high-level exchanges, seek synergies in development strategies, vigorously advance cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative and major projects, and actively expand coordination and cooperation in various fields including economy, trade and investment, agriculture and fishery, disaster prevention and reduction, maritime affairs, people-to-people and cultural exchanges and multilateral affairs, so as to jointly realize the Chinese dream of great national rejuvenation and the dream of "Sonar Bangla".

The [12th meeting of the China-Bhutan boundary issue expert group](#) was held in Thimphu, Bhutan on May 24-25 wherein the two sides stressed the importance of increasing the frequency of their meetings. However, the meeting didn't announce any breakthrough in setting a date for the next round or the 25th round of boundary talks, which have not been held since 2016, and was suspended after the military standoff at Doklam, but said that they agreed to hold them "as soon as possible at mutually convenient dates."

Other Developments

[China, India kick out nearly all of each other's journalists as rivalry escalates](#)

[IMF urges crisis-hit Sri Lanka to decide on debt restructuring, including with China: Report](#)

[Sri Lanka: China-Sri Lanka tourism cooperation meeting](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On May 25, [the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council held its annual meeting](#) composed of the Heads of State of the Eurasian Economic Union member states. [As the chairman of the Eurasian Economic Union](#) in 2023, the President of Russia presided over the restricted meeting. The leaders discussed 17 issues ranging from ensuring energy and food security to speeding up digital transformation. The agenda also included discussions about the Union's international activity and expanding trade and economic ties with third countries.

During the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council meeting, the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinian and the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, [quarrelled](#), forcing Russian President Vladimir Putin to intervene. Prime Minister Pashinian accused Azerbaijan of claiming certain territories of Armenia, which President Aliyev "flatly denied". Prime Minister Pashinian also insisted that "Yerevan's priority was to protect the rights of ethnic Armenians who live in Nagorno-Karabakh", a territory that the countries have had a territorial dispute since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. On the other hand, President Aliyev denied the claim that the Azerbaijanis were blocking the Lachin Corridor – the only link between the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and Armenia.

On May 24, the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, [attended the inauguration of a vehicle assembly plant](#) that officials have indicated will serve to bolster the country's defence capabilities. The Sipar Guruh or Shield Group is a newly formed company based in Tursunzoda, a city near the border with Uzbekistan, that appears mainly geared towards producing military automobiles. President Rahmon was shown several kinds of armoured vehicles the company proposes to build. Certain parts for the preparation of special military and civil vehicles will be delivered by the '[Streit Group](#)' Company of the United Arab Emirates.

On May 29, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan V. Hajivev [held talks](#) with the Director of the Department for WTO Accession Division, Maika Oshikawa. The parties discussed issues of enhancing cooperation concerning the process of Turkmenistan's accession to the WTO. It was emphasised that the Turkmen side had prepared and approved the Work Plan for 2023-2024 to expand cooperation with the WTO Secretariat.

Chief Operations Officer at the Baku International Sea Trade Port said that [Kazakhstan plans to use the Baku International Sea Trade Port](#) to build a grain depot "to facilitate its goal of broadening its international export market". Eugene Seah reported that the facility could appear in the coming five years. Seah also indicated that the Baku terminal is minimally exposed to the West's sanctions against Moscow since only a few Russian ships dock there.

Other Developments

[Kazakhstan says it has no plans join any other union like the Russia-Belarus Union State.](#)

[Putin signed law on ratification of agreement on United Air Defence System with Kyrgyzstan.](#)

[Turkmenistan and Afghanistan discuss development of cooperation in transit cargo transportation.](#)

[Tajikistan Summons Russian Ambassador Amid Reports Of Mass Beatings Of Tajik Students By Russian Police](#)



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