



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

August 2, 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.

Cover Image:

South Asia: Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan Hayashi Yoshimasa, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka M.U.M. Ali Sabry in Colombo, Sri Lanka on July 29, 2023. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#)

Southeast Asia: President Marcos Jr. of the Philippines met with Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur on July 27, 2023, during his three-day state visit to Malaysia. (Source: [President Marcos/Official Twitter](#))

West Asia: Indian Navy Chief, Admiral R Hari Kumar met with Gen Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of Royal Office of Oman on August 1, 2023. Source: [Indian Navy Spokesperson Official X Handle](#)

Central Asia: US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls and Human Rights Rina Amiri attended the C5+1 Special Session on Afghanistan in Astana on July 27-28, 2023. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)

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Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor,

India Habitat Centre,

Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003.

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Contents

South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh 1

Southeast Asia

Anshita Shukla 3

West Asia

Sanket Joshi..... 5

China

Angana Guha Roy 7

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 9

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Following the 15th India-Japan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue on July 27, Foreign Minister of Japan Yoshimasa Hayashi visited Sri Lanka and Maldives on July 29 and 30 respectively. [Minister Hayashi met M.U.M. Ali Sabry](#), Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, and discussed issues related to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), IORA, and Sri Lankan debt restructuring. Minister Sabry invited [Japanese investments](#) in Sri Lanka, particularly in sectors such as power, infrastructure, and dedicated investment zones, as well as in the green and digital economies. In Maldives, Minister Hayashi [held a meeting](#) with Maldivian Minister of Defense Mariya Ahmed Didi. Both sides agreed to "deepen security cooperation" and "[work together](#) to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific".

On July 31 special ceremony was held to commemorate 10 years of CPEC in Islamabad. Vice Premier of the State Council of China, He Lifeng [attended the celebration](#) as a special representative of President Xi Jinping and signed [six MOUs](#) to initiate the second phase of CPEC which includes establishing an export exchange mechanism and Karakoram Highway Phase-II realignment. Chinese President Xi Jinping in a [congratulatory message](#) said, "China will work with Pakistan to aim for high-standard, sustainable and livelihood-enhancing outcomes and further build the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) into an exemplary project of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation." Earlier Pakistan Finance Minister [Ishaq Dar announced](#) that "Chinese EXIM Bank has rolled over for two years principal amounts of following loans totalling USD 2.4bn – which are due for repayment \$1.2bn each in FY24 and FY25." Meanwhile, four Pakistani state-owned petroleum companies signed a MoU on July 27, to facilitate USD 10 billion Saudi investment in a new oil refinery at Gwadar, Balochistan. The government is negotiating with Aramco to execute the greenfield refinery project with a production capacity of 300,000 barrels per day.

Other Developments

[The so-called Islamic State-Khorasan \(IS-K\) group on Monday claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing at a JUI-F political gathering, as the toll from the tragedy rose to 54, including 23 minors.](#)

[US State Department delegation convened meeting with officials of five central Asian countries on Afghanistan in Astana.](#)

[Foreign Secretary of Bhutan Aum Pema Choden paid an official visit to India from July 28-29.](#)

[French President Emmanuel Macron visited Sri Lanka on July 28.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The 3rd round of [Foreign Office Consultations \(FOC\)](#) between India and Laos was convened in Vientiane, Lao PDR on July 27, 2023. The Indian delegation was led by Mr. Saurabh Kumar, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, and the Laos delegation by H.E. Mr. Phoxay Khaykhamphithoune, Deputy Foreign Minister. The two sides signed five MoUs for implementation of five Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), in the fields of education, health, water facility and IT.

President Marcos Jr. of the Philippines undertook a state visit to Malaysia from July 25-27, 2023. During the three-day visit, [President Marcos stated](#) that the two sides are "resolute in empowering the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao with capacity-building initiatives, especially in sectors such as the Halal industry, Islamic banking, and food security". Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia and his counterpart discussed [ASEAN's engagement with Myanmar](#) stating to "give some flexibility for neighbouring countries to engage on an informal basis without sacrificing the issue of human rights, and the treatment of minorities, particularly the Rohingya."

On July 31, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated that the European Union has restarted negotiations on a [free-trade agreement](#) with the Philippines. The talks had paused under the leadership of Rodrigo Duterte as the deadly drug war attracted strong criticism from the West. President Ursula von der Leyen remarked that an FTA between the EU and the Southeast Asian country "has huge potential for both of us in terms of jobs and growth".

The Myanmar junta has pardoned the [former leader Aung San Suu Kyi](#) for five of the nineteen offences for which she was jailed in 2021. This will reduce her scheduled jail time of 33 years by six years, informed Myanmar's state media. A week prior to this, Aung San Suu Kyi was moved from prison to house arrest in the capital, Naypyitaw. The government has also officially postponed the elections promised to be held in August 2023 while [extending the state of emergency](#) in the country by six months. The official statement read that "to be able to vote without any fear, necessary security arrangements are still needed and so the period for the state of emergency is required to extend".

Other Developments

[Cambodia's strongman Hun Sen resigns as prime minister after 38 years](#)

[Singapore urges India to exempt it from export ban on non-basmati rice](#)

[Thailand's Parliament prepares to hold fresh PM vote on Aug 4](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

During his visit to Oman from July 31-August 2, [Indian Navy Chief](#), Admiral R Hari Kumar, met with Oman's Minister of Royal Office, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani. Their discussion focused on deepening bilateral [defence cooperation](#) and progress made by India in the field of defence manufacturing. Meanwhile, two suspects were arrested in Mumbai for [plotting a terrorist attack on the 'Chabad House'](#).

The [Organisation of Islamic Cooperation](#) (OIC) held an extraordinary meeting to discuss repeated incidents of the desecration of copies of the Qur'an in Sweden and Denmark. At the meeting, Saudi [Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan](#) reiterated that Riyadh "will not tolerate prejudice toward the Holy Qur'an", calling for joint efforts to combat them.

Saudi Arabia is reportedly planning a meeting in Jeddah on August 5-6 to discuss Ukrainian [President Zelenskyy's peace plan](#) amid the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. A number of countries have been invited to the meeting, including the United States, European nations, Brazil, China, and India. However, it is [unlikely that Russia will be invited](#).

Prior to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to China scheduled for October 2023, the [Chinese Ambassador to Israel](#) presented PM Netanyahu with a copy of the book 'Xi Jinping - The Governance of China', adding that President Xi is eagerly awaiting Netanyahu's visit. On the other hand, at a UNSC briefing on Palestine, China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Amb. Zhang Jun expressed concern over the deteriorating situation in the [occupied Palestinian territories](#).

Other Developments

[President Biden's Iran envoy placed on leave after security clearance suspended amid an investigation into possible mishandling of classified material, sources say](#)

[Saudi Arabia and Turkey are emerging as the new peace brokers of the Russia-Ukraine war](#)

[Iran Will Never Hold Talks with US on Basis of Trust: Spokesman](#)

[Israel eyeing future link to Saudi Arabia with \\$27 billion national rail project](#)

[PM Netanyahu slams Biden administration over criticism of the judicial overhaul](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

[China has appointed a new leader for the PLA's Rocket Force](#), the military unit responsible for overseeing the nation's nuclear arsenal. This announcement came in the wake of media reports indicating a corruption investigation involving its former chief, Li Yuchao. Wang Houbin has been promoted to the rank of general and named the new commander of the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force.

[Chinese ministries, regulators and the central bank pledged more financing support](#) to small businesses, suggesting an urgency among policymakers to revive the private sector amid a flagging economic recovery. The flurry of initiatives to help private businesses comes after authorities vowed to make the sector "bigger, better and stronger" after small businesses were squeezed during three years of COVID curbs. The private sector accounts for 60 percent of China's gross domestic product and 80 percent of urban jobs. Investors have been awaiting concrete stimulus measures as data suggested the economy still struggled in July.

[The United States has formally invited China's newly reappointed foreign minister, Wang Yi](#), to Washington, after Wang's predecessor was abruptly removed from his post by Beijing.

[Amidst the growing friendship between China's People's Liberation Army \(PLA\) and Zimbabwe Defense Forces \(ZDF\)](#), China has expressed China's commitment to supporting Zimbabwe's military. While speaking at the PLA's 96th Anniversary Celebration in Harare, the Defense Attaché of the Chinese Embassy, Colonel Yonglong Zhu, reaffirmed China's enduring friendship with Zimbabwe and assured the PLA's continued support as a reliable partner to the Zimbabwe Defense Forces.

Amidst heightened PLA activity along LAC, [COAS, Gen. Manoj Pande visited forward areas in Ladakh](#) to review the operational preparedness. The Army Chief's visit comes amid continuing tensions along the India-China border.

In an important announcement, [Minister of State for Information Technology](#), Rajeev Chandrasekhar, declared that India is open to Chinese investment despite border tensions between the two countries. "We are open to doing business with any company anywhere as long as they are investing and

conducting their business lawfully and are in compliance with the Indian laws, adding that India was open to all investment, including Chinese”.

Other Developments

[Along with Japan and India, China can join debt relief effort for Sri Lanka: Nirmala Sitharaman](#)

[BRI shatters Nepal's hope to graduate from LDC status](#)

[Maldives Elections: Pro-China Opposition's 'India Out' Drive Cashing In on Modi](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

[United States' Special Representative for Afghanistan](#), Thomas West, along with the Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls and Human Rights, Rina Amiri, visited Astana, Kazakhstan on July 26. They met with colleagues from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan for a C5+1 Special Session on Afghanistan. [Within this framework](#), they discussed several issues, including providing humanitarian assistance, protecting human rights, international cooperation with Afghanistan, ensuring security and combating terrorism.

[From July 25-27](#), a working meeting of the heads of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) member states defence communications management bodies took place in Moscow on behalf of the CSTO Joint Staff. Representatives of the defence agencies of the Republic of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, the CSTO Joint Staff and the CSTO Secretariat attended the event. Colonel General Anatoly Sidorov, Chief of the CSTO Joint Staff, noted that "the most important direction of the CSTO is the improvement of the system of interstate information interaction and the CSTO Troops (Collective Forces) management system, the technical basis of which is the communication system". He also noted that the experience of the peacekeeping operation in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the annual joint exercises demonstrated the need to coordinate the efforts of the CSTO member states to improve the communications system. During the meeting, [the Russian representative](#) discussed using satellite communications in armed conflict.

The regional dynamics have been affected since the [US announced its new sanctions](#) that will affect Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to curb the trade of dual-use technology to Russia. Although Kazakhstan is considered a [nominal ally of Russia](#), Kazakhstan has constantly emphasised the risk of secondary sanctions making them adhere to anti-Russian sanctions. Although smugglers work in the shadows, the Kazakh government has resisted such illicit trade. On the other hand, owing to Kyrgyzstan's close relationship with Russia, the former has continued its economic cooperation with the latter. It has been reported that [Kyrgyzstan is using Kazakhstan's dependence on the Chu and Talas Rivers for water](#) (both originating and under the control of Kyrgyzstan) to try and compel them to participate in breaking sanctions against Russia. Kazakhstan's territory offers an easier route than the existing one passing through Central

Asia and across the Caspian Sea. Therefore, while Kazakhstan will resist this pressure, the country's water crisis can shift the region's dynamics.

Other Developments

[Kyrgyzstan and Turkiyë discuss military-technical cooperation](#)

[Central Asia's Transport Revolution: Role of EU in Shaping Future](#)

[Russia Hands Over 1397 Tons of Food Products To Kyrgyzstan Via UN WFP](#)

[Azerbaijan arrests Nagorno-Karabakh resident during medical evacuation for "war crime"](#)

[Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan comments on the Kyrgyz family that went missing in the Caribbean Sea](#)



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org