India’s Proximity Archives
August 9, 2023

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Delhi Policy Group
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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.

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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: Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met with coalition partner Maulana Fazlur Rehman to discuss upcoming elections, July 31, 2023. Source: Dawn

Southeast Asia: Mr. Saurabh Kumar, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, India, and Mr. Sarun Charoensuwan, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand at the 7th Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between India and Thailand in Bangkok on August 7, 2023. Source: MEA Spokesperson/Official X Handle

West Asia: Saudi Arabia hosted a meeting of National Security Advisors from over 40 countries to discuss the Ukraine conflict on August 5, 2023. Source: Saudi Press Agency Official X Handle

Central Asia: India’s Deputy National Security Advisor, Vikram Misri, attended the Fourth India-Kazakhstan Security Dialogue with Deputy Secretary General of Kazakhstan Nurzhan Kajikbarov in Astana on August 3, 2023. Source: Embassy of India in Kazakhstan

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Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced that he will dissolve the National Assembly on August 9. The incumbent assembly’s term is scheduled to end on August 12. According to Pakistan’s Constitution, if the assembly completes its tenure, elections are to be held in 60 days, but in case of premature dissolution, this period is extended to 90 days. The Election Commission of Pakistan on August 8 disqualified former Prime Minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan for five years. The notification cited the conviction of Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case in which he is sentenced to three years in prison.

On August 8, Pakistan National Assembly (NA) approved an amendment to the Official Secrets Act 1923 which will grant blanket powers to intelligence agencies for raiding and detaining any citizen, even under suspicion of them breaching the law. Earlier on August 3, NA passed a bill to set up a new authority to counter money laundering and terror financing. It will save Pakistan from the punitive actions of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a telephone conversation with Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’, Prime Minister of Nepal on August 5. The two leaders reviewed various aspects of the India-Nepal bilateral cooperation and followed up on discussions held during Prime Minister Prachand’s recent visit to India. Nepal and India plan to convene the seventh meeting of the joint commission. However, the Nepali side has yet to decide on the date to convene the meeting, which will see the participation of foreign ministers from both countries.

The Bangladesh government has declared four cross-border trans-shipment routes for Indian traders from northeastern states. The four protocol routes are Chittagong Port-Akhaura-Agartala, Mongla Port-Akhaura-Agartala, Chittagong-Bibibazar-Srimantapur, and Mongla Port- Bibibazar-Srimantapur.
Other Developments

**Kazakhstan signs USD 200 million in contracts with Afghanistan on August 2-3.**

**Pakistan’s population has crossed 240 million and the growth rate stands at 2.55 percent, according to the 2023 national census.**

**The Maldives Supreme Court jailed former President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom barring him from running for upcoming presidential elections in September.**
Southeast Asia
by
Anshita Shukla

The 7th Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs) between India and Thailand were held in Bangkok on August 7, 2023. The meeting was co-chaired by Saurabh Kumar, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, India, and Sarun Charoensuwan, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand. The two sides discussed ways to strengthen cooperation in trade and investment, MSMEs, defence and security, connectivity, health, culture, and science and technology.

Earlier, Secretary Saurabh Kumar, participated in the East Asia Summit Senior Officials’ Meeting (EAS SOM) held in Bali, Indonesia on August 3, 2023. The country reaffirmed its support for ASEAN centrality and the EAS as a premier leaders forum. Mr. Kumar conveyed India’s views on issues of regional and global significance including the South China Sea. During his visit to Thailand, he also called on Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand in Bangkok.

The Philippines accused China’s coastguard of ‘blocking and water-cannoning a Philippine military supply boat in the disputed South China Sea’ on August 5. The Philippine coast guard vessels carrying supplies for Filipino military personnel stationed at Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly Islands were targeted. The Philippines condemned China’s coastguard for its “excessive and offensive actions” against its vessels. The US State Department condemned the actions saying they were carried out by the Chinese coastguard and “maritime militia” and threaten regional peace and stability.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry urged the Philippines again to withdraw its grounded warship in the Second Thomas Shoal on August 8. Manila grounded the warship in 1999 to establish its sovereignty claims in the region. The country has registered multiple complaints against China’s coast guard for impeding its resupply missions at the shoal. The Philippines reinstated that it will “never abandon Ayungin Shoal. We are committed to Ayungin Shoal”.
Other Developments

Cambodia’s king appoints Hun Sen’s son as new leader

Indonesia defends its curbs on nickel ore exports amid EU claim of breach in international trade

US expresses concern over China involvement in Manila Bay land reclamation project
West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On August 5, Saudi Arabia hosted a meeting of National Security Advisors from over 40 countries and international organisations to discuss the Ukraine conflict. Participants agreed that further international consultations and exchange of opinions are essential to build a common ground for peace.

The Indian Navy ships INS Vishakhapatnam and INS Trikand arrived at Dubai's Port Rashid on August 8 for bilateral exercises with UAE's Navy as part of the deepening of India-UAE defence partnership. On August 5, INS Chennai, deployed in the Red Sea undertook a passage exercise with the Royal Saudi Naval Ship HMS Al Jubail to ensure safe and secure seas. Meanwhile, the Indian Air Force received Spike NLOS (non-line of sight) anti-tank guided missiles from Israel boosting its ability to destroy targets hidden behind mountains.

China and the UAE are scheduled to conduct their maiden air exercise in August 2023 in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region despite the US-led West's concerns regarding China's human rights violations in Xinjiang. Besides energy trade, China's anti-piracy operations, construction of commercial ports, and growing arms sales underscore its intent to play a larger role in West Asia. Meanwhile, Saudi Aramco reiterated its intent to increase energy investments in China.

Amid continuing US-Iran tensions, there are reports that over 3000 US military personnel have reached the Red Sea as part of the Pentagon's response to Iran's recent seizure of tankers.

Other Developments

China praises Ukraine talks in Saudi Arabia that Russia said were ‘doomed to fail’

Oil prices ease as bearish China data fuels demand concerns

PM Netanyahu: Normalisation with Saudi Arabia not linked to the creation of the Palestinian state

UAE’s President meets President El Sisi in Egypt; bilateral ties discussed
China

by

Angana Guha Roy

Amidst the border standoff with China, External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar highlighted the crucial role infrastructure development plays in bolstering India’s security along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. Further, Dr. Jaishankar discussed the evolution of India’s strategic approach since 2014 and its commitment to improving border infrastructure.

The government has prohibited Indian manufacturers of military drones from using components made in China. The decision came after serious concerns over security vulnerabilities. Indian defence officials believe that intelligence-gathering could be compromised by the use of China-made parts in military drones.

There has been an unfavourable assessment of Nepal’s Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s official visit to India by members of his party's central committee. At a meeting with the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre (CPN-MC), the members said this visible tilt towards India — described by ‘Prachanda’ as historic — will anger China. Parsuram Tamang, a central committee member, warned that such a situation is not ideal for Nepal which has long pursued a non-aligned foreign policy.

According to Chinese customs statistics released on July 8, China’s exports suffered their biggest drop in more than three years in July as global demand slowed, adding further pressure on Beijing to find ways to reinvigorate the world’s second-largest economy. The value of exports, measured in US dollars, fell 14.5% last month from a year ago, the biggest drop since February 2020 when the initial Covid-19 outbreak battered trade and production.

Other Developments

Nepal’s PM to visit China in September end

Bangladesh’s Awami League Reaches Out to India and China

Sri Lanka issues tenders choosing India over China for power projects near Jaffna
Central Asia
by
Jayantika Rao T.V.

During the Fourth India-Kazakhstan Security Dialogue held in Astana on August 3, India’s Deputy National Security Advisor Vikram Misri and Deputy Secretary General of Kazakhstan Nurzhan Kajiakbarov discussed bilateral and regional issues, including the situation in Afghanistan. The two sides agreed to further enhance bilateral security cooperation, including in the fields of counter-terrorism, combating radicalisation, narcotics control, cyber security, connectivity, and defence cooperation.

Kazakh Trade and Integration Minister Serik Zhumangharin opened the Kazakh-Afghan Business Forum on August 3. Minister Zhumangharin said, “Kazakhstan wants Afghanistan to develop further as an independent, neutral, integral, peaceful, democratic, and flourishing nation”. Additionally, Minister Zhumangharin stressed that economic ties between the two countries should be developed and enhanced.

Prior to the Forum, Deputy Foreign Minister Qanat Tumysh emphasised on July 31 that the Kazakh-Afghan Business Forum will not affect Kazakhstan’s official stance on the Taliban. However, although the Kazakh government officially considers the Taliban, a terrorist organisation, Astana maintains official contact with “Afghanistan’s Taliban imposed government”.

On August 3, authorities in Kyrgyzstan’s southern region of Batken said that the border with Tajikistan, which was shut down more than two years ago following a deadly standoff, can “gradually reopen” after the delimitation and demarcation work between the two nations is fully accomplished. The Batken Regional Administration emphasised that the border issues had been discussed last month by Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan officials, adding that security and safety issues in areas close to the three nations were the main focus.
Other Developments

Russia Targets Neighbour Kazakhstan With Army Recruitment Ads

Russia: Debts causing rise in illegal migration among Central Asians

Last Messaging App 'Disappears' From Turkmenistan Amid World’s Slowest Internet Speed

Kazakhstan announces plans to deliver 100,000 ton of oil to Germany via Druzhba in August

Kazakhstan signs USD 200 million in contracts with Afghanistan during the Kazakh-Afghanistan Business Forum