



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## India's Proximity Archives September 13, 2023



Volume I, Issue 37 | September 13, 2023

Delhi Policy Group

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

[www.delhipolicygroup.org](http://www.delhipolicygroup.org)



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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:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a bilateral meeting with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on the sidelines of the G-20 Leaders' Summit on September 8, 2023, in New Delhi. Source: [X/@PMOIndia](https://twitter.com/PMOIndia)

**Southeast Asia:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, along with leaders of ASEAN member countries at the 20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia on September 7, 2023. Source: [MEA Spokesperson/Official Twitter](https://twitter.com/MEA_Spokesperson/Official)

**West Asia:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an MoU for India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor on September 9, 2023. Source: [Official X Handle/Narendra Modi](https://twitter.com/OfficialXHandle/NarendraModi)

**China:** Chinese Premier Li Qiang addressed the 18th G20 Summit in New Delhi on September 9, 2023. Source: [People's Daily](https://www.peoplesdaily.com)

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## South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On September 8, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a [bilateral meeting with Bangladesh Prime Minister](#) Sheikh Hasina on the sidelines of the 18th G-20 Leaders' Summit held in New Delhi. The two leaders discussed issues related to political and security cooperation, border management, trade and connectivity, water resources, power and energy, development cooperation, and cultural and people-to-people ties. Both sides agreed to initiate negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) soon. PM Sheikh Hasina participated in the G-20 Leaders' Summit as an invitee of the host country.

While speaking at the summit, PM Sheikh Hasina [asked the G20](#) to continue providing duty-free, quota-free market access and extension of unilateral tariff preferences for countries transitioning from LDCs to developing nations. She also asked for the extension of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waivers, for a significant period after graduation, to ensure a smooth and sustainable transition.

Following the G-20 Leaders' Summit, French President Emmanuel Macron visited Bangladesh on September 10-11. During the discussion with PM Shaikh Hasina, [President Macron said](#), "Based on democratic principles and the rule of law, in a region facing new imperialism, we want to propose a third way - with no intention to bully our partners or to lead them to an unsustainable scheme". Both sides [agreed to work](#) towards taking the partnership to a "strategic" level and signed [two bilateral agreements](#) to enhance cooperation in the field of infrastructure and satellite systems.

The Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [called on PM Sheikh Hasina](#) during his first-ever visit to Bangladesh on September 7-8. He also held bilateral meetings with Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen in which they [agreed to strengthen](#) trade and investment relations and also discussed the Rohingya issue.

Presidential elections which were held in [Maldives](#) on September 9 had gone to a runoff after none of the eight candidates managed to [secure over 50](#) per cent of votes. Incumbent President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) [secured second place](#) in the first round, while, PPM-PNC presidential candidate, Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, emerged as the leading

contender, securing 46 per cent of votes. Speaker of the Parliament, [Mohamed Nasheed](#), who formed a new party from a breakaway faction from the main ruling MDP, said that he can no longer reunite with President Solih.

## Other Developments

[Pakistan says Afghanistan building 'unlawful structures' along tense border](#)

[Afghanistan meth trade surges as Taliban clamps down on heroin, UN report says](#)

[Pakistan neutralises large-scale cross-border Taliban militant attack from Afghanistan, 4 soldiers killed](#)

[The World Food Programme \(WFP\) said in a press release that it is "being forced to drop another 2 million hungry people from food assistance in Afghanistan in September](#)

## Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India participated in the [20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit](#) in Jakarta, Indonesia on September 7. He presented a [12-point proposal](#) for strengthening India-ASEAN in areas of digital transformation, trade, and economic engagement, and for addressing challenges like terrorism. [He affirmed](#) India's commitment to working "shoulder to shoulder with ASEAN for the progress of free and open Indo-Pacific and elevating the Voice of Global South". PM Modi also attended the [18<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit](#), convened in Jakarta, on September 7. In [his address](#), Prime Minister Modi highlighted the need to uphold rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific and the South China Sea.

U.S. President Biden visited Vietnam on September 10 for [a two-day official state visit](#). During his visit, the two sides upgraded their relationship to 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership', the highest level in Hanoi's diplomatic hierarchy. The leaders agreed to [enhance cooperation](#) in cloud computing, semiconductors, and artificial intelligence. President Biden [stated](#) that "Vietnam and the United States are critical partners at a very critical time". The White House unveiled the Vietnam Airlines' deal to buy 50 737 Max jets from U.S. plane maker Boeing worth \$7.8 billion on September 11.

Prime Minister [Anthony Albanese visited Manila](#) on September 8, making him the first Australian Prime Minister to travel to the Philippines on a bilateral visit since 2003. During his meeting with Philippines President Marcos Jr., the two sides signed a strategic partnership to bolster the economic alliance. The Australian Prime Minister characterised their partnership as "great friends" and expressed intent to take the relationship "to an even higher level".

### Other Developments

[Myanmar receives first shipment of Russia's Su-30 fighter jets: Russian state news agency](#)

[Philippines' Marcos bucks use of 'militia vessels' to enforce South China Sea claims](#)

## West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On the sidelines of the 18<sup>th</sup> G20 Summit held in New Delhi on September 9-10, the leaders of India, the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, France, Germany, Italy, and the European Union announced a Memorandum of Understanding [to establish an economic corridor](#) connecting India, the Middle East, and Europe (IMEC). In his remarks, Prime Minister Modi described the proposed economic corridor as a [beacon of cooperation](#), innovation, and shared progress across continents. President Biden stressed that IMEC is a "game-changing regional investment" that will [stimulate economic development](#) through enhanced connectivity.

On September 11, Prime Minister Modi met with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman to further strengthen India's partnership with Saudi Arabia. The two sides held the first Leaders' Meeting of the [India-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council](#) during which they discussed bilateral cooperation in areas such as energy security, trade and investment, defence and security, healthcare, food security, and community welfare.

Oil prices rose to a near-ten-month high of USD 88 per barrel due to [tighter crude supply forecasts](#) and OPEC's optimism about energy demand from major economies. Meanwhile, on the sidelines of the G20 Summit, Prime Minister Modi along with the Leaders of UAE, Singapore, Bangladesh, Italy, the US, Brazil, Argentina, and Mauritius launched '[Global Biofuel Alliance](#)' that aims to promote sustainability through increased use of clean energy.

As part of a [prisoner swap agreement with Iran](#), the US reportedly allowed the transfer of USD 6 billion in Iranian funds from South Korea to Qatar, as well as committed to releasing five Iranian nationals detained in the US.

## Other Developments

[Why India's G20 leaders' summit has an unprecedented Middle Eastern presence](#)

[Turkey's President Erdogan opposes India-Middle East transport project](#)

[G20 admits African Union as a permanent member](#)

[GCC-Japan discuss free trade, economic cooperation](#)



## China

by

Angana Guha Roy

China praised the [G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration](#) stressing that it has sent a "positive signal" to the world. China said the statement reflected its views and showed that the G20 was working together to tackle global challenges and promote development. China's delegation at the summit was led by Premier Li Qiang, after President Xi Jinping skipped the meeting.

Amid border tensions with China, India's [Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated 90 border infrastructure projects](#) that will provide all-weather connectivity to the strategic Tawang region of Arunachal Pradesh to the foundation stone for a key military airfield in eastern Ladakh's Nyoma – across 11 states and Union Territories. These projects will help in faster mobility of troops and equipment to the Line of Actual Control in case of a contingency while also improving overall connectivity for the population. Inaugurating the projects, Rajnath Singh said the Nyoma airfield "will act as a staging ground for Indian troops at forward posts in eastern Ladakh... and will be a game-changer for our armed forces".

[Chinese Defence Minister Li Shangfu's](#) absence from the public eye in the past two weeks following President Xi Jinping's recent statement indicating the need for "unity" within the military ignited speculations about his possible removal. The speculations have gained traction also because of the disappearance of ex-Foreign Affairs Minister Qin Gang and the demotion of two Rocket Force Commanders without much information.

[Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' held extensive consultations](#) ahead of his official visit to China in September, a trip aimed at maintaining a balance in ties with both neighbours - China and India. This will be his second foreign trip after assuming the office in December last year. According to media reports, during discussions held at the Prime Minister's Office at Singha Durbar, the Prime Minister was advised to prioritize the establishment of balanced diplomatic ties with the neighbours, to review the implementation status of past agreements, to pay heed to security affairs of mutual concerns, and to promote Nepal's non-aligned foreign policy.

### Other Development

[Maldives president runoff on September 30, pro-China opposition candidate leads](#)

## Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The [40<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\) Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure Council](#) took place in Astana on September 8, 2023, with Kazakhstan as the new chair. It was attended by delegates of member states, while Belarus and Mongolia participated as observers. This marked [Iran's first official presence](#) at the meeting since obtaining full membership of the SCO in July 2023. [During the meeting](#), issues such as countering terror financing and illegal arms trafficking were discussed. The interim results of the "SCO member countries' cooperation program against terrorism, separatism and extremism" for 2022-2024 were also reviewed.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Murat Nurtleu [welcomed](#) Hakan Fidan, newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, for an official visit to Kazakhstan on September 10-11. During the meeting, the parties discussed ways to deepen strategic ties between the two countries, including politics, trade, economy, investment, transport, logistics, culture and humanitarianism. At the [joint press conference](#) Minister Nurtleu emphasised the need to utilise the potential of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor to expand transportation between the two countries.

[On September 7](#), the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, Zheenbek Kulubaev, received the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), Robert Floyd, who arrived in Kyrgyzstan to participate in the Regional Seminar "Strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime". During the meeting, the parties exchanged views on topical issues of cooperation and furthering interaction between Kyrgyzstan and CTBTO.

On [September 5](#), the Turkmen Ambassador to Pakistan, Atajan Movlamov and the acting Pakistani Foreign Minister, Jalil Abbas Jilani, had a meeting to discuss joint energy projects and the current state of bilateral relations. They expressed their willingness to strengthen ties across various areas of mutual interest. Minister Jilani praised Turkmenistan's foreign policy and emphasised the significance of the gas pipeline connecting the two nations with neighbouring countries like Afghanistan and India for Pakistan's energy needs. He also underscored the importance of collaborative ventures such as TAPI

(Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) and TAP (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan) for Pakistan.

## Other Developments

[Erdogan to visit Kazakhstan in November](#)

[Kazakhstan Seeks to Intensify Trade Cooperation with Eastern Countries](#)

[Cabinet Chairman Japarov urges Kyrgyz citizens to sparingly use electricity in run up to winter shortage](#)

[Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan meets with EU Special Representative for Afghanistan](#)



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