



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives October 4, 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, East 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: Representatives from regional countries attended the fifth meeting of the Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan on September 29, 2023, in Kazan, Russia. Source: [The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#)

West Asia: India's Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri met with OPEC Secretary General, Haitham Al Ghais, in Abu Dhabi on October 3, 2023. Source: [Official X Handle/Hardeep Singh Puri](#)

China: I Pro-China candidate Mohamed Muizzu meeting with President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih after winning the Maldives' presidential election on October 1, 2023. Source: [The President's Office - Republic of Maldives](#).

Central Asia: The Head of State of Central Asia met the President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, for the inaugural C5+Germany dialogue held in Berlin on September 29, 2023. Source: [President of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, the presidential candidate of the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) and the People's National Congress (PNC) coalition, won the Maldives' [presidential election](#). In the second round held on September 30, Dr. Muizzu secured victory with 53.8 percent of the vote, while President Solih received 46.2 percent. The PPM is perceived to be close to China. In the past, Dr. Muizzu [accused incumbent president](#) Ibrahim Mohamed Solih of acting in India's interests. Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi [congratulated Dr. Muizzu](#) for his victory and emphasised India's commitment to "enhancing overall cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region."

The 15th Meeting of the [Joint Working Group](#) on Trade (JWG) between India and Bangladesh was held on September 26-27 in Dhaka. The issues related to removing port restrictions, groundwork on commencement of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), harmonization of standards, mutual recognition of standards, supply of essential commodities to Bangladesh, and development of road and rail infrastructure were discussed during the meeting.

Afghanistan Embassy in India [suspended all its operations](#) from October 1 citing the absence of a legitimate government in Kabul and lack of diplomatic support in India. Ambassador Mamundzay, who was appointed during the previous government, had been away from India since June 18, 2023.

The fifth meeting of the [Moscow Format Consultations](#) on Afghanistan was held on September 29 in Kazan, Russia. Special representatives from China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Taliban attended the meeting. Representatives of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Türkiye were in attendance as guests. The regional countries raised concern over [the security situation](#) in Afghanistan due to the "intensification of the activities of terrorist groups". They asked the Taliban to form a "truly inclusive government" and respect "fundamental rights and freedoms".

Other Developments

[Pakistan signs FTA with GCC countries](#)

[No current talks with Taliban, Afghanistan's Massoud says, promising guerrilla warfare](#)

[India and Bangladesh commenced the 11th edition of the annual joint military exercise, SAMPRITI on 03rd October 2023 in Umroi, Meghalaya](#)

[Japan signed an agreement with Bangladesh to provide USD 1.5 billion in loans for the Matarbari coal-fired power project in Cox's Baza.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

A [two-week joint naval drill](#) between the Philippines, U.S., Japan, U.K., Canada, France, and Australia, conducted in and around the northern Philippine Island of Luzon, commenced on October 2. The New Zealand and Indonesian navies are participating as observers. The "Samasama" exercise includes a wide range of drills, including anti-submarine warfare and air defence. The Philippine Navy chief, Vice Adm. Toribio Adaci Jr., stated that the exercises aim at enhancing "our readiness to confront a wide spectrum of security challenges".

A week after the Philippines Coast Guard removed a Chinese floating barrier in Scarborough Shoal, [Philippines President Marcos](#) stated in his first remarks over the latest flare-up that the country is defending its territory and not seeking trouble. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin called the removal of the barrier as a "purely self-indulgent farce." This was followed by the Philippine Coast Guard urging the [country's fishermen](#) to keep operating at the disputed Scarborough Shoal and other sites in the South China Sea on September 27.

On October 2, Indonesia launched [Southeast Asia's first high-speed railway](#) "Whoosh". The bullet train, with a top speed of 350 km per hour is a multi-billion-dollar project backed by China and a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. President Jokowi Widodo stated on its launch that the train "is a symbol of our modernisation in the public transport, seamlessly connecting with other modes of transportation."

Other Developments

[Indonesia denies smog from forest fires drifted to Malaysia, says 'no transboundary haze'](#)

[Countries pledge to raise \\$16b billion to fund coral reef protection](#)

East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea unanimously adopted a [constitutional amendment](#) to enshrine its policy on nuclear force on September 27. The state media reported that the North Korean amendment aims to develop nuclear weapons to ensure the country's right to existence and to deter war. During his address to the parliament, the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Un stated that this was to deter the "provocations from the United States".

On October 2, Japan's Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa pledged to seek a [leaders level summit](#) with North Korea. Japan seeks a dialogue with North Korea over Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea decades ago. However, Pyongyang says that the issue has been resolved. The minister said she would "continue to convey the prime minister's determination" at a meeting.

On October 1, North Korea accused the United States of "[letting a terrorist act](#)" against Cuba take place on US soil. They claimed the [recent attack against the Cuban Embassy](#) in Washington on September 24 with the two Molotov Cocktails resulted from "despicable anti-Cuban" US intentions. The unnamed North Korean spokesman said in the statement carried by the official KCNA News Agency, "This goes to prove that the above-said incidents were committed evidently at the tactic connivance of the US administration". Furthermore, he argued that the United States should acknowledge blame for not only the recent incident but also all past terrorist cases and investigate them to show sincerity.

Other Developments

[Second round of Fukushima wastewater release to start next week](#)

[China launches first cross-sea bullet train line near Taiwan Strait](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On October 2, India's Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, inaugurated the [India Pavilion](#) at the 'Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference' (ADIPEC 2023). On the sidelines of ADIPEC, Minister Puri held talks with the [Secretary General of OPEC](#), Haitham Al-Ghais, urging OPEC to imbue a sense of pragmatism, balance, and affordability in the international oil markets. Given the current crude price of USD 90 per barrel, Hardeep Singh Puri stated that India can manage oil prices at USD 100 per barrel, but [developing countries](#) will be adversely affected, resulting in lower economic growth.

OPEC Secretary General reiterated the need for continued [investment in the oil and gas industry](#), warning that under-investment would put global energy security at risk.

During the International [Islamic Unity Summit](#) in Tehran on October 1, Iranian President, Ebrahim Raisi described any potential normalisation between Israel and Saudi Arabia as "reactionary and regressive". In his speech, he called for unity against the "agents of the United States and the Zionist regime (Israel)" and stressed the necessity of freeing Palestine and Jerusalem. On the other hand, Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, reaffirmed that Iran will not be able to prevent Israel from [expanding the circle of peace](#) in the Middle East that would benefit all of humanity.

Saudi Arabia is believed to be seeking a [military pact](#) with the United States that would require Washington to defend Riyadh in return for normalising its relations with Israel. Meanwhile, in a telephone conversation, President Biden thanked Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for helping mediate a [prisoner exchange with Iran](#).

Other Developments

[Oil industry 'central' to climate crisis solutions: COP28 president](#)

[Yemen's economic crisis deepens as talks fail to restore truce, NGOs say](#)

[Israeli government delegation holds Jewish prayer service in Saudi Arabia](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

On September 26, during an interaction in the US, India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, reiterated concerns over the state of [India-China relations](#), saying these have been in an "abnormal state" since 2020, and terming the tensions as "possibly longer than a medium-term issue". Referring to China's ambiguous policy towards India, Dr. Jaishankar stressed that having normal relations with a country that has broken bilateral agreements is difficult.

[Nepal has rejected China's offer to join President Xi Jinping's Global Security Initiative \(GSI\)](#) but agreed to take forward ambitious cross-border connectivity projects during the visit of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda to Beijing. A lengthy joint statement released by the two sides outlined several border infrastructure projects but failed to mention the GSI. "The Nepali side supports the Global Development Initiative (GDI) proposed by China and will consider joining the Group of Friends of the GDI," the statement said.

[Mohamed Muizzu, the Progressive Party of Maldives \(PPM\) candidate](#), has emerged victorious in the presidential polls after a runoff vote. Mohamed Muizzu is known for his 'pro-China' stance, which stems from significant Chinese loans received by the Maldives during the previous PPM government's tenure. These loans have led to closer economic ties between the Maldives and China, including infrastructure projects and investments. China's Foreign Ministry, in a statement, said the government "respects the choice of the Maldivian people and congratulates President-elect Mohamed Muizzu...China is willing to work with the Maldives to consolidate the traditional friendship, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation and push for continuous new progress. This would occur "in the future-oriented comprehensive, friendly cooperative partnership between the two countries".

Other developments

[Protest rallies taken out in Bangladesh demanding justice for Uyghurs in China](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

Central Asian leaders participated in the first-ever '[C5+Germany](#)' dialogue in Berlin on September 29. The meeting mainly focused on climate change and water-related challenges. The leaders also touched upon issues concerning the geopolitical situation concerning the Central Asian region and the European Union, including the Russia-Ukraine War and the situation in Afghanistan. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier emphasised that the crisis in Ukraine has a significant impact on the security of Europe and Central Asia.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev reaffirmed [Kazakhstan's commitment to adhere to the Western Sanctions](#) imposed on Russia during his visit to Germany. He stated, "Kazakhstan has unequivocally stated that it will adhere to the sanctions regime. We have contacts with the relevant organisations to ensure compliance with the sanctions regime, and I believe there should be no concerns on the part of the German side regarding any actions aimed at bypassing the sanctions regime". However, in [an interview with the Kazinform agency](#), the Kazakh President denied that his country is 'anti-Russia' and further stated that "Kazakhstan adheres to a course of comprehensive cooperation with Russia...When it comes to sanctions, I have noted in recent sessions of the UN General Assembly and in other speeches that sanctions, as a form of confrontation, are entirely counterproductive from the perspective of revitalising international relations, which have eroded as a result of the escalation of the global situation".

The government delegations of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for [delimitation and demarcation of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border](#) held talks in Batken on October 2. The Kyrgyz-Tajik delegation discussed the border delimitation and agreed to intensify the delineation of remaining undelimited sections. Following the negotiations, they adopted Protocol 44.

Other Developments

[Pro-Russian Politician Wins Slovakia's Parliamentary Election](#)

[Much of Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population flees as first UN mission in 30 years set to arrive](#)

[U.N.: More than 100,000 have fled Nagorno-Karabakh](#)



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