



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

November 8, 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: *The King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held bilateral discussions on November 6, in New Delhi. Source: [X/@narendramodi](#)*

Southeast Asia: *Indian External Affairs Minister, Dr. S Jaishankar, with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, Dr. Zambry Abdul Kadir, in New Delhi on November 7. Source: [X/@DrSJaishankar](#)*

West Asia: *US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken met with Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv on November 3, 2023. Source: [X/@SecBlinken](#)*

Central Asia: *The 10th Summit of the Organisation of Turkic States (OTS) was held in Astana, Kazakhstan, on November 3. Source: [President of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)*

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

The King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, along with senior government officials is [paying an official visit](#) to India from November 3-10. During the visit, The King of Bhutan and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi [held bilateral discussion](#) on issues of mutual interest. In the joint statement, both sides agreed to “expand the partnership between the two countries, including in new areas of connectivity in its broadest form, cross-border trade infrastructure, trade and mutual investments, energy, health, education, skill development, space technology, environment conservation, and close people-to-people contacts.” The King also visited Guwahati and Mumbai to explore new avenues of cross-border connectivity and economic cooperation.

On November 1, Bhutan's king appointed a [nine-member interim government](#) to oversee the upcoming parliamentary election which will be held within three months. The interim government is headed by Chief Justice Chogyal Dago Rigdzin. Earlier, Bhutan dissolved its 47-member National Assembly at the end of its five-year term.

The US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) announced a USD 553 million project to build a new, [deep-water shipping container](#) terminal in the Port of Colombo. The money will be allocated as a private loan for the West Container Terminal which will expand its shipping capacity, without adding to sovereign debt. Local partners will include Sri Lanka's John Keells Holdings and India's Adani Ports and Special Economic Zones Limited, which owns a 51% share in the West Container Terminal.

Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman [visited Sri Lanka](#) on November 1-3. During the visit, she called on President Ranil Wickremesinghe, and Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena in which she assured that India will continue collaborating with Sri Lanka [on debt treatment](#) as the country is coming out of financial crisis.

Other Developments

[The Election Commission of Pakistan agreed to hold general elections on Feb 8, 2024.](#)

[At least 17 Pakistani soldiers were martyred in different incidents in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including a militant attack in Gwadar, on November 3](#)

[Nine Islamist militants attacked an air force training base in the central Pakistani area of Mianwali on November 4](#)

[More than 200,000 Afghans living in Pakistan have been forcibly returned to their country since November 1.](#)

[Opium cultivation declines by 95 per cent in Afghanistan: UN survey](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, Dr. Zambry Abdul Kadir, concluded a [two-day official visit](#) to India on November 7. He co-chaired the [6th India-Malaysia Joint Commission Meeting \(JCM\)](#), along with External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S Jaishankar, in New Delhi. In his opening remarks, Dr. Jaishankar called Malaysia a “very crucial strategic partner” for India. The two sides stated the intent to explore cooperation in new areas like the digital domain, renewable energy, semiconductors, and space.

The Prime Minister of Japan, [Fumio Kishida, visited Manila](#) on November 3. PM Kishida met with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr of the Philippines and discussed their “shared serious concerns in the East China Sea and the South China Sea”. The two leaders confirmed initiating negotiations on a new reciprocal troop access deal, to strengthen security ties and facilitate joint defense drills. Japan will also be giving the Philippine Navy a 600 million yen grant for a coastal radar system to bolster its maritime domain awareness capabilities.

Later, Prime Minister Kishida made a [working visit to Malaysia](#) on November 4 where he held a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister of Malaysia, YAB Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim. Japan pledged increased Japanese investment in Malaysia, with a focus on LNG supply, decarbonization, and cybersecurity, including 5G technology. The two countries agreed to implement the ASEAN-Japan Midori Cooperation Plan, open the University of Tsukuba branch campus next year, and accelerate Official Security Assistance (OSA) coordination.

Other Developments

[In Myanmar, anti-junta forces claim capture of the first administrative headquarters in fighting back against the military Junta](#)

[US targets Myanmar’s state oil and gas enterprise with form of sanctions](#)

East Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

During his visit to Japan for the G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting, Antony Blinken, Secretary of State of the United States paid a [courtesy call to the Prime Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida](#) on November 7. Prior to his meeting with Prime Minister Kishida, Antony Blinken [held talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko](#). They discussed bilateral, regional, and global issues, including the need to increase humanitarian assistance to Gaza and the importance of strong and sustained support for Ukraine. They also discussed continuing positive momentum on US-Japan-ROK trilateral cooperation following the Camp David Summit which was held on August 18, 2023.

The United States, South Korea, and Japan have agreed to launch [a high-level consultative group](#) on countering North Korean cyber activities that they say finance its unlawful weapons programs on November 6. The statement issued by South Korea's Presidential Office stated that "it aimed at strengthening the three countries' effective response capabilities against global cyber threats, including jointly countering North Korea's cyber activities that are abused as a key source funding its nuclear and weapons of mass destruction (WMD)". They also agreed to hold quarterly meetings under the new framework.

The G7 Foreign Ministers meeting being held in Tokyo on November 7 and 8 will focus primarily on [the worsening conflict between Israel and Hamas](#). Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko who is the chair of the meeting is expected to reiterate the G7's position on the conflict which has been in support of Israel's right to defend itself. During a press conference after the first day of the meeting, Foreign Minister Yoko stated that [G7's support for Ukraine](#) "has not wavered at all, even as the situation in the Middle East intensifies". On November 8, the group's foreign ministers will hold virtual talks with a virtual meeting with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba.

Other Developments

[In a historic speech, Japan's PM vows defence cooperation with Philippines](#)

[At trilateral talks, Japan asserts Fukushima treated water is safe](#)

[Eyeing North Korea, Tokyo folds first Missile Evacuation Drill in years](#)

[Japan's ASDF Aircraft relocated to Greece from Jordan amid Gaza conflict](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, held a telephone conversation with the [President of UAE](#), Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, on November 3. In the midst of the conflict between Israel and Hamas, the two leaders expressed their shared concern about terrorism, violence, and the loss of civilian lives. They also discussed ways to further enhance the comprehensive strategic partnership between India and UAE. Prime Minister Modi also spoke with [Iranian President, Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi](#), on November 6. Both leaders stressed the need to de-escalate the conflict between Israel and Hamas while continuing humanitarian aid and restoring peace and security.

Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, reiterated Tel Aviv's [rejection of a ceasefire](#) without the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas in Gaza. PM Netanyahu, however, indicated that he was willing to consider [tactical pauses in military operations](#) in Gaza in order to facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid or allow the release of hostages held by Hamas. A "[humanitarian pause](#)", rather than a ceasefire, was also advocated by the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, during his visit to the Middle East.

Currently, the US has four [major objectives in the region](#), including ensuring the security of US personnel and citizens in the region, providing critical security assistance to Israel, coordinating with Israel to help secure the release of hostages, and strengthening its force posture throughout the region to discourage any state or non-state actors from escalating the crisis beyond Gaza. While PM Netanyahu emphasised that Israel must take "overall security responsibility" in Gaza, Washington remains opposed to [Israel reoccupying Gaza](#).

Other Developments

[India works on free trade deal with Gulf countries](#)

[Israeli construction sector moves to replace Palestinian employees with Indian workers](#)

[Saudi Arabia to host Arab, OIC summits to discuss Gaza conflict](#)

[Russia says the West is pushing the Middle East to the brink of a 'big war'](#)

[U.S. crude oil prices fall below USD 78 a barrel to their lowest since July 2023](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

A [nuclear arms control meeting](#) took place between the United States and China on November 5 in the backdrop of Washington's demand that Beijing disclose more information about its expanding nuclear arsenal. The statement released by the State Department said that representatives from the two nuclear powers engaged in a "candid and in-depth" conversation about non-proliferation and arms control. Further, it stressed the significance of increased communication and transparency on the part of China regarding actions to lower strategic risks, including those in space.

China has published a long-awaited [methane reduction plan](#), in a sign that the country is moving closer towards a new climate agreement with the US. Its publication signalled that the two countries may soon break ground on a new climate agreement ahead of the upcoming presidential meeting and the UN's climate conference, COP28. Beijing first committed to reducing its methane output at Cop26 in Glasgow in 2021, as part of a joint agreement with the US.

Sinopec, a Chinese state-owned [oil and gas enterprise](#), will be given the contract to build an oil refinery in the southern Sri Lankan port city of Hambantota, Sri Lanka's Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera has said. However, the minister neither mentioned the amount of investment nor the refinery's capacity. According to media reports, Sinopec is to make an initial investment of USD 1.5 billion, the single largest foreign direct investment (FDI) in Sri Lanka, and put in more money later in other related developments of the refinery.

Nepali officials are seeking [negotiations with China](#) to put into force the proposed plan to electrify some of the remote bordering villages of Nepal with the Chinese grid. Officials said they want assistance from China as it will be costly to connect the villages to the domestic grid due to difficult geography. Nepal had asked the Chinese side to supply electricity from the north neighbour's grid to several bordering villages during Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's visit to China in September. But no concrete agreement was signed back then.

Other Developments

[Bangladesh embraces wind energy with Chinese solutions](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The [10th Summit of the Organisation of Turkic States \(OTS\)](#) was held in Astana, Kazakhstan, under the chairmanship of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, on November 3. During the summit, the President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, made a [solemn declaration](#) that the events that unfolded in Gaza since October 7 are atrocities that “cannot be justified or described”. He underscored that “crimes against humanity have been committed” and expressed that the Organization of Turkic States could play a pivotal role in promoting a humanitarian ceasefire and fostering peace in the region.

The fifth-anniversary of the Kazakhstan – United States Enhanced [Strategic Partnership](#) Dialogue (ESPD) was celebrated in Astana on November 6. Kazakhstan is the only country in Central Asia with the status of an enhanced strategic partner of the United States. At the meeting, the delegates reviewed the progress made during the past year on current issues of bilateral and regional cooperation and outlined plans for the year ahead. Donald Lu, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, expressed the United States’ appreciation for the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan in promoting socio-economic development, regional security, and human rights. He also acknowledged the successful collaboration between the two countries in recent years, both on a bilateral and multilateral level, including within the framework of the UN and the C5+1 dialogue platform.

On November 7, the Ministries of Transport of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Türkiye [signed the protocol](#) on the formation of an international multimodal corridor between Asia and Europe as part of the 12th meeting of the Ministers of Transport of the Economic Cooperation Organization in Tashkent. According to the Ministry of Transport of Uzbekistan, the signed protocol on the formation of the route ‘Uzbekistan – Turkmenistan – Iran – Türkiye’ provides for organization of cargo transportation from the countries of the Asia-Pacific region to the countries of the European Union, application of competitive tariff rates and creation of favourable conditions for the transportation of goods by railways of four countries. The agreement also provides for the joint development of measures to unify legal and technical standards when organising cargo transportation along the route and increasing transport connectivity of the countries participating in the route.

Other Developments

[Azerbaijan says 'no alternative' to normalization with Armenia](#)

[Central Asian Nations to allocate water resources to Kazakhstan](#)

[Blinken warned lawmakers Azerbaijan may invade Armenia in coming weeks](#)

[Kazakh Foreign Minister takes part in South Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum](#)



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