

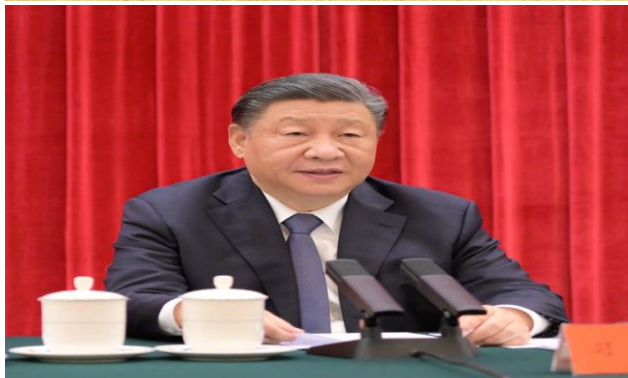


Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives December 27, 2023



Volume I, Issue 52 | December 27, 2023

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 - Baloch protesters stage sit-in outside the National Press Club in Islamabad, December 24, 2023. Source:

[X/@BYCKech](#)

West Asia - Oil/Chemical tanker MV Chem Pluto was hit by a drone on December 23, 2023, in the Arabian Sea. Source: [Official](#)

[X Handle/Indian Navy](#)

China - Chinese President Xi Jinping paid tribute to Mao on the 130th anniversary of the Mao Zedong's birthday. Source: [South](#)

[China Morning Post](#)

Central Asia - The Supreme Eurasian Council meeting was held in St Petersburg on December 25. Source: [Kremlin](#)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On December 20, Islamabad police detained [hundreds of protesters](#) including women and children who participated in a long march led by Baloch women against enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings. Later, government claimed that more than 90 per cent of the demonstrators including all women and children had been [released](#) by the police. Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamer Farooq [advised the capital police](#) chief to concentrate on controlling street crimes rather than flexing their muscles against protesters. Following the incident Balochistan remained [cut off](#) for days with Sindh and Punjab due to shuttered businesses, protest rallies, and sit-ins across the province.

On December 20, [UNSC held meeting](#) to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. During the meeting, some member states called for and some against greater engagement with the Taliban to address critical challenges in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Speakers highlighted a dire humanitarian situation and severely restricted rights for women, girls and minorities. Indian representative called for the formation of an inclusive and [representative government](#) structure in Afghanistan for combating terrorism, and preserving the rights of women, children, and minorities.

The first meeting of the Nepal-Sri Lanka [joint commission](#) co-chaired by Nepal's Foreign Minister NP Saud and Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka Ali Sabry was held in Kathmandu on December 21. Main agenda of the joint commission is to enhance trade and investment between the two countries, increasing air connectivity by starting Kathmandu-Colombo air route, cultural exchanges, tourism and education, regional cooperation including strengthening of SAARC and BIMSTEC processes and cooperation in multilateral forums.

Sri Lankan security agencies have [arrested 13,666 suspects](#) during the week-long island-wide special operation 'Yukthiya,' to curb drug-related and underworld activities. The special operation was launched covering all the provinces on December 17 by the police, STF and other security forces and ended on December 24.

Other Developments

[Bangladesh warns of deepening Rohingya crisis as refugee aid nosedives](#)

[Indo-Lanka grid connectivity: Two countries agree on submarine cable](#)

[Afghanistan needs to take 'practical' actions to resolve issues with Iran: Amir-Abdollahian](#)

[The Asian Development Bank signed a USD1.2 billion loan agreement with Pakistan on December 20](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a [telephone conversation](#) with Enrique Manalo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, on December 20. Wang Yi advised the Philippines to “act with caution” and “return to the right path” to manage the two countries’ maritime disputes. Amidst rising tensions between the two countries in the South China Sea, the call was made on the invitation by the Philippines. On December 21, [Philippines President Marcos](#) stated that Manila “remains a force and voice of reason” despite “many attempts at provocation”.

Malaysia [banned vessels owned by Israeli shipping](#) firm Zim from docking and unloading cargo at its ports along with other vessels bearing the Israeli flag on December 20. The Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim stated that “the ban is in response to Israel’s disregard for basic human rights and international law through its continued assault and brutality towards the people of Palestine.” The country has also disallowed ships en route to Israel to load any cargo in Malaysian ports.

Other Developments

[Myanmar junta accused of war crimes over response to rebel offensive](#)

East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government has agreed to allow completed defense equipment manufactured under license in Japan to be exported back to the country of origin. It has approved a plan to export Patriot missiles, PAC-2 and some more advanced PAC-3 interceptors, made in Japan to the US. This is the first time Japan will [export lethal weapons](#). Japan's Defense Minister, Itsunori Onodera, stated that "For Japan to be able to cooperate in the form of equipment is an important step for the alliance with US."

On December 21, the [Supreme Court of South Korea upheld the rulings](#) ordering-Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Nippon Steel Corp- to compensate South Korean forced laborers who worked under Japan's occupation from 1910-1945. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi registered Japan's protest stating, "this is a clear violation of the Japan-South Korea Claims Agreement and is extremely regrettable and absolutely unacceptable". The two companies characterized the South Korean Supreme Court's decision as "regrettable".

Taiwan [accused China of economic coercion](#) and election interference on December 21. This comes after Beijing accused Taipei of violating a trade agreement and announced the end of tariff cuts on some chemical imports. China's Finance Ministry stated that tariff cuts for 12 products will be suspended from January 1 citing "discriminatory prohibitions and restrictions" Taiwan imposed on Chinese exports. Taiwan's Office of Trade Negotiations accused China of carrying out "typical economic coercion" and urged it to stop its "one-sided political manipulation".

Other Developments

[North Korea's Kim warns of 'nuclear attack' when enemy provokes it with nukes: KCNA](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On December 23, the Indian Navy responded to a [maritime incident in the Arabian Sea](#) involving a drone attack on the oil/chemical tanker MV Chem Pluto. The [US accused Iran of targeting MV Chem Pluto](#), while Tehran rejected US allegations as worthless. Meanwhile, on December 26, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephone conversation with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman. The two leaders reviewed the progress made in the bilateral strategic partnership and expressed [concern about the ongoing situation in West Asia](#), including terrorism, violence, and the loss of civilian lives.

India made its first payment in Indian Rupee (INR) for crude oil purchased from the United Arab Emirates, promoting the [internationalisation of INR](#). Moreover, it has been reported that India and Oman are likely to sign a [free trade agreement](#) (FTA) in January 2023.

Amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant reiterated that [Israel will dismantle Hamas](#) no matter how long it takes. The Israeli military is poised for an intensified push into central and southern parts of the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, the [United Nations Security Council](#) (UNSC) passed a resolution calling for urgent steps to immediately allow safe, unhindered, and expanded humanitarian aid to Gaza.

In response to a series of attacks on US personnel in Iraq, including on the Erbil Air Base, the [US military conducted precision strikes](#) on three facilities used by the Iranian-affiliated Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups in Iraq on December 25.

Other Developments

[No embassy staff hurt in blast near Israeli mission in Delhi](#)

[Saudi Arabia and France sign executive plan for military and R&D cooperation](#)

[Analysis: Has the US-led Red Sea force calmed shippers amid Houthi attacks?](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

[China sanctioned Kharon, a US firm](#) founded by former Treasury Department officials that provides data to companies on alleged forced labour in the Xinjiang region to help them comply with US laws. The foreign ministry in a statement said it would take "countermeasures" against Kharon and its director of investigations for providing "so-called evidence for America's illegal sanctions related to Xinjiang". In response, Kharon said it had no presence in China, so the action was "largely symbolic" and would not impact its operations or ability to service its clients. In service of our clients and all global businesses that seek to implement leading risk management programs, Kharon will continue to provide research and data analytics that is objective, independent, and based on reliable sources," it said in a statement. The affected individuals will be banned from entering China, including Hong Kong and Macau, and the property of Kharon in China will be frozen, the ministry said.

Responding to Financial Times report on the [diminishing influence of the Central Bank](#) after China centralized Communist party control over financial regulation, Global Times commented that the latest step was undertaken for qualitative development of the financial industry and that the strategy would serve as stabilizer for preventing financial risks and maintaining financial security amid a difficult global economic environment.

[China and Russia have agreed to work together](#) in developing widebody passenger jets, Arctic shipping corridors and artificial intelligence after their leaders vowed to broaden cooperation amid tensions with the United States. Further, the two countries agreed to strengthen their "no-limits" strategic partnership and pledged to enhance trade and cooperation on technology at a meeting between their heads of government this week.

[Chinese President Xi Jinping in a recent statement](#) has asserted that mainland China will "surely" be unified with Taiwan in the future. "The complete reunification of our motherland is an overall trend, a righteous cause, and the common aspiration of the people. Our motherland must be reunified, and it will surely be reunified... We firmly oppose anyone using any means to separate Taiwan from China." Xi said in his speech during the 130th anniversary of Mao Zedong's birthday .

Other Developments

[Chinese-built underwater tunnel in Bangladesh catalyzes economic advancement](#)

[China-Nepal cultural exchange exhibition fosters the enduring bilateral friendship](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

At [the Supreme Eurasian Council meeting](#) held on December 25, the leaders of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) countries adopted a declaration on further development of the Union. The [President of Kazakhstan](#), Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, emphasised the importance of free movement of goods, and called for the elimination of existing barriers and restrictions on the common market. He also urged for the introduction of uniform technical regulations to be expatiated.

On December 22, [Uzbekistan's Foreign Ministry summoned the Russian ambassador](#) over a call by a Russian politician to annex the former Soviet Republic states. Russian nationalist writer Zakhar Prilepin, who is the co-chair of the "A Just Russia – For Truth", said "Russia should annex Uzbekeistan and other countries whose citizens travel en masse to Russia for work". The Uzbek foreign Ministry told Russian Ambassador Oleg Malginov that Tashkent was "deeply concerned" about these "provocative" comments.

Lawmakers in Kyrgyzstan backed the proposal to [modify the country's flag](#) so that it will feature sun rays arguing that the move would boost the economy. Supporters of the change, including President Sadyr Japarov argue that the current design 'resembled a sunflower' and that this had kept Kyrgyzstan from fulfilling its potential as a "developed and independent" state. On December 20, 59 lawmakers in the parliament approved the change and only 5 voted against.

Other Developments

[Shrinking Caspian Sea worries secretive Turkmenistan](#)

[EDB Report Warns of Looming Water Crisis in Central Asia by 2028](#)

[Kazakhstan Reluctant To Approve Chinese Nuclear Plant Proposal – Report](#)

[2024 Parliamentary Elections of Mongolia to be held in 13 constituencies](#)



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