



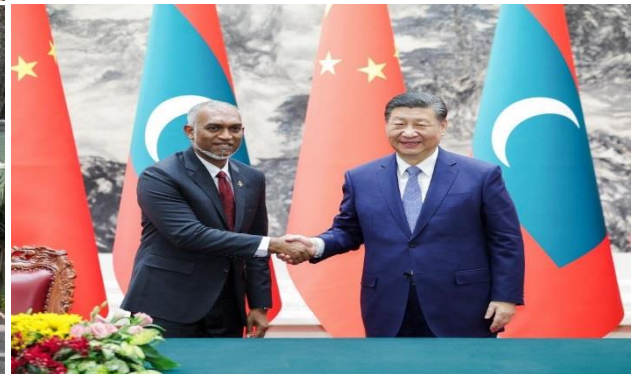
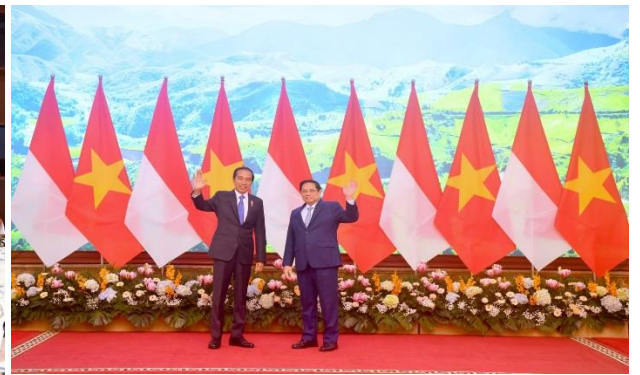
Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

January 17, 2024



Volume II, Issue 3 | January 17, 2024

Delhi Policy Group

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

www.delhipolicygroup.org



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

India's Proximity Archives

Vol. II, Issue 3

January 17, 2024

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 - Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma called on Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud on January 15, 2024. Source: [DD News](#)

Southeast Asia - Indonesia's President Joko Widodo with Vietnam Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh during his three-day state visit to Hanoi on January 12, 2024. Source: [President Widodo/ Official X account](#)

West Asia - India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, met with Iran's Foreign Minister, Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Tehran on January 15, 2024. Source: [Official X Handle/Dr. S. Jaishankar](#)

China - Chinese President Xi Jinping and President of Maldives Mohamed Muizzu met in Beijing on January 10, 2024. Source: [Xinhua/Liu Bin](#)

© 2024 by the Delhi Policy Group

Delhi Policy Group

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

India's Proximity Archives

Vol. II, Issue 3

January 17, 2024

Contents

South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh 1

Southeast Asia

Anshita Shukla 3

East Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 4

West Asia

Sanket Joshi..... 6

China

Angana Guha Roy 8

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 9

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

[On January 14](#), the India-Maldives High-Level Core Group held its first meeting in Male. Both sides engaged in discussions during the meeting, focusing on bilateral matters, including the search for a viable solution to maintain the operation of Indian aviation platforms that offer humanitarian and medvac services to the people of Maldives. Two helicopters and a Dornier aircraft from India [are in operation](#) in the Maldives. After the meeting, Abdullah Nazim, the Policy Director of the Maldives President's Office, [stated](#) that President Muizzu suggested the "withdrawal of Indian troops from Maldives by March 15."

Upon securing her fourth successive term in the national elections on January 7, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assembled a [new cabinet comprising 37 members](#). The swearing-in ceremony for new ministers took place on January 11. Dr. Hasan Mahmud has been appointed as the new Foreign Minister. Dr. Mahmud received a visit from Pranay Verma, the Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, on January 15. In the meeting, Dr. Mahmud acknowledged India's solidarity with Bangladesh in their pursuit of democratic continuity.

Bhutan's People's Democratic Party (PDP), led by ex-Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, won the second round of [parliamentary elections](#) on January 9. The PDP won 30 seats in the 47-member National Assembly. Mr. Tobgay will form the next government with a strong majority. Out of the 498,135 eligible registered voters, 326,775 people in Bhutan cast their ballots, resulting in a voter turnout of 65.6 per cent according to the Election Commission. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi [congratulated Mr. Tobgay](#) and the PDP for winning the parliamentary elections.

Pakistan, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia held the [second meeting](#) of the Trilateral Defence Industrial Collaboration on January 9 at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. This meeting is a continuation of the committee's initial session in Riyadh last August. In the meeting, the emphasis was on pooling resources to achieve shared objectives and achieve self-sufficiency in defence. On the sidelines of the trilateral dialogue, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia conducted their third bilateral defence collaboration meeting.

Other Developments

[Taliban detains dozens of women in Afghanistan for breaking hijab rules with "modeling"](#)

[Iran bombs 2 Baluchi militant group bases in Pakistan](#)

[Afghanistan Discussed by Foreign Ministers of India, Iran](#)

[India protests visit of British High Commissioner in Islamabad to Pakistan occupied Kashmir](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Indonesia's President Joko Widodo commenced a [three-day state visit to Hanoi](#) on January 11. During his meeting with Vietnam President Vo Van Thuong, the two leaders discussed maritime security in the disputed South China Sea, bilateral cooperation, and environmental issues. The two countries' delegations also signed a document on closer cooperation between their fisheries and MOUs in the fields of information technology and communications.

Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong and Prime Minister of Malaysia Anwar Ibrahim agreed to [jointly develop a special economic zone \(SEZ\)](#) in the southern Malaysian state of Johor on January 11. The SEZ is aimed at attracting investments and freeing up the movement of goods and people. Malaysia's Economic Minister, Rafizi Ramli, stated that the SEZ is "an unprecedented opportunity to enhance the cross-border flow of goods and people, bolster the business ecosystem and elevate the economic attractiveness of both Johor and Singapore".

The Philippine's military chief, Romeo Brawner, on January 15 announced the country's plans to [develop its outposts in the South China Sea](#) to make it more habitable for troops. Manila has nine outposts in the South China Sea, including the Second Thomas Shoal. Brawner stated that "we'd like to improve all the nine, especially the islands we are occupying". The Philippine military also wants a desalination machine for troops living aboard the BRP Sierra Madre, for the warship deliberately grounded by the Philippines on Second Thomas Shoal in 1999, informed Brawner.

Other Developments

[Philippines reaffirms 'one China' policy after President Marcos congratulates Taiwan's Lai](#)

[Myanmar's junta says it reached ceasefire deal with rebels](#)

East Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Un, on January 15 addressed the Supreme People's Assembly and called for a [constitutional amendment](#) to eliminate the idea of shared statehood. Kim Jong Un stated that 'unification with the South was no longer possible' and accused Seoul of seeking regime collapse and unification by absorption. The state-run KCNA news agency quoted [Kim saying](#), "We don't want war, but we have no intention of avoiding it". As a result of this declaration, North Korea will be closing three agencies that oversee unification and inter-Korean tourism.

In a historic election, Taiwanese voters elected pro-sovereignty [William Lai](#) as their president, cementing a path increasingly divergent from China. Lai won [third term](#) in power for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Saturday's election, with more than 40 per cent of the vote. In his first remarks, after his opponents conceded, he stated that this was an irreversible trajectory and that the country will continue to walk on the right path forward". He characterised his win as a 'triumph of democracy'. The election results triggered Beijing, who stated after the announcement insisting that "Taiwan is part of China".

The [government of Nauru](#), an island country in Micronesia, north-east of Australia, said it had decided to switch diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China less than 48 hours after Taiwan's presidential election. The decision leaves Taiwan with just 12 formal diplomatic allies.

After Lai Ching-te won the presidential election, [a delegation of former US officials](#) was sent to Taiwan to show their support. The delegation comprised of Stephen Hadley, former National security advisor from 2005 to 2009, James Steinberg, former Deputy Secretary of State, and Laura Rosenberger, the Washington-based Chair of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT). On January 15, they met Lai and incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen.

Other Developments

[Philippines hopes to sign Troops Pact with Japan in first quarter](#)

[North Korea fired an apparent intermediate-range missile into the sea on January 14](#)

[Ex-South Korea PM to Launch new Party ahead of April Election](#)

[Australia cautions Beijing to 'respect' outcome of Taiwan Elections](#)

[North Korea claims to have fired Solid-Fuel Hypersonic Missile in latest weapons test](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, met with Iran's Foreign Minister, [Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Tehran](#) on January 15. The two leaders discussed issues such as connectivity through Chabahar port and INSTC, maritime threats, the current situation in Gaza, Afghanistan, and Ukraine, as well as 'BRICS' cooperation. Meanwhile, on January 10, the [UN Security Council adopted a resolution](#) condemning "in the strongest terms" the attacks by Houthi rebels on commercial vessels in the Red Sea.

Amidst this, on January 12, the US Central Command forces in coordination with the United Kingdom and with support from Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, and Bahrain conducted [joint strikes on Houthi targets](#) in Yemen. Nonetheless, the Houthi rebels maintained that they would continue to attack Israeli ships or [ships heading to Israeli ports](#).

In response to terrorist attacks in the city of Kerman on January 3, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) conducted ballistic [missile strikes against Daesh](#) (ISIS) positions in Syria's city of Idlib. The IRGC also launched missile attacks on targets in the [Kurdistan region of Iraq](#) (Erbil), including what it claimed was a Mossad center. The US condemned Iranian missile attacks as [undermining Iraq's stability](#).

Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, met with Arab League Secretary-General, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, in Cairo on January 13. In a joint statement, [China and the Arab League called for an immediate ceasefire](#) between Israel and Hamas in Gaza and a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Meanwhile, as Israel marked the [100th day of its war with Hamas](#), Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated that the war will continue until all of its objectives have been accomplished, including eliminating Hamas, returning all hostages, and making sure Gaza will never pose a threat to Israel again.

Other Developments

[Biden administration expected to re-designate Houthis as a global terrorist entity](#)

[Qatari-brokered agreement between Israel, Hamas to deliver aid to civilians, hostages](#)

[Israel carries out intense strikes on Hezbollah in south Lebanon](#)

[Israeli team arrives to hire Indian construction workers](#)

[Middle East investments in China to bloom in amount, scope in 2024 as sovereign wealth funds aim to diversify: bankers](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

China and the Maldives [upgraded their relationship](#) during newly elected President Mohamed Muizzu's [first state visit](#) to Beijing from January 8-12. The Maldives signed several new agreements with China – its largest external creditor on January 10, including ones on climate, agriculture and infrastructure. No details about the value of the deals were shared by either side.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in his [congratulatory message](#) to Hasan Mahmud on his assumption of office as foreign minister of Bangladesh wrote that China and Bangladesh are neighbours with a long history of friendship. He wrote: "China and Bangladesh have firmly supported each other on issues that bear on each other's core interests. The China-Bangladesh relations have made significant progress." "Over the past 49 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two countries have always respected each other, treated each other equally, and achieved mutual benefit and win-win results," the Chinese embassy in Dhaka said.

China's top diplomat in the United States during a speech marking the [45th anniversary](#) of US-China relations sent out a cautionary message on Taiwan. "Today, the Taiwan question remains the most important, sensitive, explosive question in China-US relations. Adding that, "There is but one China and Taiwan is part of China."

Other Developments

[India, China clashed twice near LAC after 2020 Galwan Incident: Report](#)

[China eyes Gorkha Soldiers from Nepal](#)

[Belgian prime minister meets Xi Jinping in Beijing, vows to oppose decoupling](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On January 15, a meeting was held between the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Alikhan Smayilov and the Vice President of the European Commission, Margaritis Schinas, in Astana, to discuss [European investment in Central Asia](#) and the strengthening of trade and economic relations between Kazakhstan and the European Union. The parties engaged in discussions regarding increasing trade turnover, attracting investments, enhancing cooperation in transport and logistics and augmenting industrial cooperation.

After a recent pledge to drastically improve internet services, Tajikistan's communications regulator has begun working with several international companies to overhaul the core infrastructure. The most notable conversation is happening with [China's Huawei](#). The Tajik government and the Chinese company's local representation office signed a memorandum of cooperation that will see the latter take the lead in a project to upgrade or install 7,600 base stations envisioned as the backbone of a future 5G network. This initiative is part of the State Communications Service's work implementing the government's renewal and development of mobile communications 2024-2028. Tajikistan's imminent full-blown reliance on Huawei may cause unease in some Western nations.

The [trilateral gas swap agreement](#) between Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkmenistan has stopped. The National Iranian Gas Company said, "gas supplies from Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan had been temporarily suspended". While the company did not provide any details, they only said "the suspension of Turkmen gas supplies to Iran had disrupted the flow of gas from Iran to Azerbaijan under the trilateral swap agreement". A [government source in Baku](#) said that the plan was for Azerbaijan to buy up to three billion cubic meters of gas from Turkmenistan in 2024, but the sides could not agree on the commercial terms.

Other Developments

[Russia boosts fuel exports to Central Asia, Afghanistan and Mongolia in 2023](#)

[Afghanistan reports sixfold increase in trade with Uzbekistan](#)

[Kyrgyzstan: security services raid news agency HQ](#)

[Russia rejects criticism of peacekeepers in Karabakh](#)



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org