



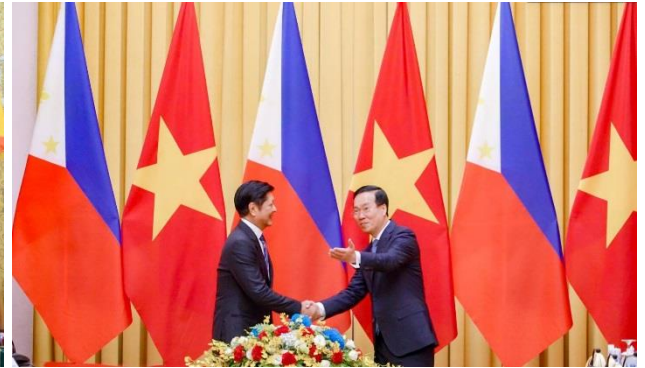
Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

January 31, 2024



Volume II, Issue 5 | January 31, 2024

Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003
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, 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 Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra called on Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay on January 29 in Thimphu, Bhutan. Source: [X/@Indiainbhutan](https://twitter.com/Indiainbhutan)

Southeast Asia - President of the Philippines, Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Vo Van Thuong met in Hanoi on January 30, 2024. Source: [Government of the Philippines](https://www.government.ph)

West Asia - Indian Air Force participated in 'Ex Desert Knight' along with the Air Forces of the UAE and France on January 24, 2024. Source: [Official X Handle/Indian Air Force](https://twitter.com/OfficialXHandle/IndianAirForce)

Central Asia - Vice President of the European Investment Bank (EIB), Teresa Czerwińska, European Commission Executive Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis and Kazakhstan's Minister of Industry and Infrastructural Development, Marat Karabayev signed a memorandum of understanding on January 29, 2024. Source: [European Commission](https://ec.europa.eu)

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Contents

South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh 1

Southeast Asia

Anshita Shukla 3

East Asia

Anshita Shukla 4

West Asia

Sanket Joshi..... 5

China

Angana Guha Roy 6

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 8

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

India's Foreign Secretary, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, [visited](#) Bhutan from January 29 – 31, 2024. The first official consultation occurred after the recent general elections in Bhutan, with the People's Democratic Party (PDP) winning majority seats and Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay leading the government. During the visit, India's Foreign Secretary called on King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay and the Foreign Affairs Minister D. N. Dhungyel. Mr Kwatra held bilateral consultations with the Foreign Secretary of Bhutan, Aum Pema Choden, and discussed issues related to development partnership, the 13th Five-Year Plan, cooperation in energy, trade, technology, connectivity, infrastructure, economic ties, and people-to-people connections between the two countries.

The Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), which has a majority in Parliament, intends to initiate an impeachment motion against President Mohamed Muizzu. As a result of [violence erupting](#) in the Maldives Parliament, MPs from the pro-government parties, People's National Congress (PNC) and Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) disrupted proceedings and confronted the Speakers. The collection of [necessary signatures](#) by MDP allows them to initiate a no-confidence motion against the President. As per the Constitution, a two-thirds majority vote in Parliament can result in the removal of the President. Meanwhile the PPM-PNC coalition, on January 28, filed [no-confidence motions](#) against Speaker Mohamed Aslam and Deputy Speaker Ahmed Saleem.

Following recent border clashes between Iran and Pakistan, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian visited to Islamabad on January 29. Mr Abdollahian met caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar, caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani, and Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir during the trip. [Both parties reached](#) a consensus in the meeting to promptly designate liaison officers in Turbat and Zahedan, with the purpose of reinforcing the ongoing security and intelligence collaboration.

On January 29, the Afghan Taliban held their [first-ever international conference](#), named 'Afghanistan Regional Cooperation Initiative,' which aimed to enhance economic connectivity and cooperation among regional countries in addressing common challenges. The [participating countries](#) included India, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan. Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan

Muttaqi told the inaugural session that "regional security remains of grave importance" for his government.

Other Developments

[9 Pakistani labourers shot dead in Iran on January 27](#)

[Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf \(PTI\) leaders Imran Khan and Shah Mehmood Qureshi sentenced to 10-year imprisonment in cypher case](#)

[Pakistan, India start issuing visas to diplomats](#)

[Nepal's ruling alliance wins 18 of 19 seats in National Assembly polls](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Philippines President Marcos Jr. commenced a two-day state visit to Hanoi on January 29, 2024. In his meeting with Vietnam's President Vo Van Thuong, [President Marcos stated](#) that "he hopes his visit would bring their relations to greater heights and usher in a new era of friendship and cooperation". The two sides signed [two memorandums of understanding](#) on security covering "incident prevention in the South China Sea" and "maritime cooperation" among coast guards. President Marcos is scheduled to meet Vietnam's top officials to reach agreements on rice supply.

Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan commenced [a three-day state visit to Laos](#) on January 26, 2024. During his visit, he met with Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone, Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith, and Mr Thongsavanh Phomvihane, head of the external relations committee of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. As the two countries mark the 50th anniversary of bilateral relations, Singapore has stated its intent to work closely with Laos to maximise its economic potential through education and training, as well as provide assistance to help it plug into the global markets, including in the sale of carbon credits. Dr. Balakrishnan further stated that "there is potential and there are sensible rational arrangements that can be made bilaterally, regionally, ASEAN-wide, which will unlock the potential for Laos and also expand opportunities for Singapore and Singaporeans".

The [ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat](#) was convened in Luang Prabang, Laos, on January 30, 2024. The Myanmar junta, banned from sending political appointees to high-level ASEAN meetings since the 2021 coup, sent a senior official to participate in the retreat. The Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Ministry under the control of the junta, Ms Marlar Than Htaik, represented Myanmar at the retreat. On the issue, [Laos Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith](#) stated "We feel a little bit optimistic that the engagement may work, although we have to admit that the issues that are happening in Myanmar will not be resolved overnight".

Other Developments

[Philippines denies 'special arrangements' with China to supply troops on reef](#)

[China allows Philippines to supply troops at disputed reef](#)

East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

China's Vice-Foreign Minister, [Sun Weidong, held a meeting with his North Korean counterpart Pak Myong Ho](#) in Pyongyang on January 26, 2024. The two sides agreed to strengthen tactical cooperation and defend common interests, as reported by the North's official KCNA news agency. China stated that the two countries pledged to strengthen strategic communications "at all levels" and reaffirmed an "unswerving stance" on deepening ties.

On January 28, North Korea tested its [new submarine-launched cruise missiles](#), called Pulhwasal-3-31. North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, called the test a success "which is of strategic significance in carrying out the plan...for modernising the army which aims at building a powerful naval force", as reported by KCNA. A day later, North Korea [fired another round of cruise missiles](#) detected by South Korea's military. Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) stated that "our military is cooperating closely with the US while strengthening surveillance and vigilance and is closely monitoring North Korea's activities".

Other Developments

[Taipei angered at China's 'unilateral' change to Taiwan Strait flight path](#)

[China military says U.S. destroyer in Taiwan Strait 'hyped' passage](#)

[Taiwan detects 33 Chinese military aircraft around island](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

Three US service members were killed in a [drone attack on US forces](#) in northeast Jordan near the Syrian border on January 27. This attack was attributed to Iran-backed militant groups operating in Iraq and Syria, and President Biden pledged to respond without triggering a regional conflict. Meanwhile, in response to allegations that [UNRWA staff members](#) were involved in the October 7, 2023 terror attack on Israel, the US, Australia, Canada, Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Finland have halted funding for the agency. US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, stressed that reports about UNRWA staff members were "[deeply troubling](#)", adding that the organisation cannot be replaced as a major humanitarian aid provider.

On January 29, India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar held a telephone conversation with Israel's Foreign Minister, Israel Katz. The two leaders discussed the [security situation in West Asia](#) and the economic corridor that connects India and the Middle East. Meanwhile, on January 24, India, the United Arab Emirates, and France conducted [Air Exercise "Desert Knight"](#) over the Arabian Sea to enhance synergy and interoperability among them. Further, India-Saudi Arabia's inaugural military exercise "[SADA TANSEEQ](#)" commenced on January 29 in Rajasthan.

Amidst continuing Houthi attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, the US has reportedly called upon [China to urge Iran to rein in the Houthi militants](#). In light of this, Chinese state media reiterated that the only solution to the Red Sea crisis is an immediate ceasefire and a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Other Developments

[5 more states seek to join Israel job drive as 5.6k from UP, Haryana selected](#)

[U.S. Presses for Hostage Deal in Gaza as Israel and Qatar Spar](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

The European Union (EU) has reportedly [suspended its complaint at the WTO](#) against China over the so-called economic coercion of Lithuania, citing "technical reasons". Chinese experts stressed that China-EU economic ties are mutually beneficial, and the EU should commit to maintaining the healthy development of the ties, which should not be "hijacked" by Lithuania's missteps. EU trade spokesman Olof Gill said, "this is a procedural step taken for technical reasons related to the need to assess certain elements arising from the preparation of written submissions". According to the report, the suspension will be for an "indeterminate period of time," but the bloc has one year to resume the dispute.

Days after [French President Emmanuel Macron's high-profile visit to India](#), Chinese President Xi Jinping has announced to boost China-France ties. Jinping has said, "China and France should jointly open up a path of peace, security, prosperity, and progress for human development".

[China has invited Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina](#) for an official visit to the country as Beijing is keen to work with the new government in Dhaka to cement bilateral cooperation in all fields. Responding to the invitation Foreign Minister Hassan Mahmud said, "We (Dhaka) will find a suitable time for the visit," told reporters after he met with Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen. Wen met Mahmud after the Hasina-led Awami League was re-elected to power for the straight fourth term in the elections boycotted by the major opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on January 7.

Nepal and China is slated to sign the implementation plan of the [Belt and Road Initiative](#) "very soon", Deputy Prime Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha has said. While addressing an event that is part of the Silk Road Youth Forum and South Asian Cooperation Conference the minister said "Once we sign the implementation plan, we will move into the implementation phase."

Other Development

[We should welcome competition, not be scared of China, says Jaishankar](#)

[China, US resume fentanyl talks in Beijing](#)

[C Raja Mohan writes: India's new possibilities amid China's relative economic decline](#)

[China's manufacturing activity shrank for the fourth straight month in January](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The [Global Gateway Investors Forum for the European Union–Central Asia Transport Connectivity](#) commenced in Brussels on January 29. During the plenary session, European Commission Executive Vice President, Valdis Dombrovskis announced that European and other international financial institutions will commit 10 billion euros (US \$10.2 billion) in support and investments towards the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), which connects Europe and Central Asia. As part of the forum's proceedings, the [European Investment Bank](#) (EIB) Global also signed a memorandum of understanding for project co-financing with Kazakhstan (including the Development Bank of Kazakhstan), the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan worth 1.47 billion euros (US \$1.6 billion).

Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Murat Nurtleu and Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov expressed [mutual interest in expanding allied relations](#) during Nurtleu's first official visit to Bishkek on January 29. [President Japarov](#) praised the high level of bilateral cooperation, the deepening of strategic partnership, the development of sustainable political dialogue, and the effective interaction of the two countries both bilaterally and within regional organizations.

At the [first session of the Eurasian Economic Commission \(EEC\) Council](#) of the year held on January 29, the Kazakh delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Serik Zhumangarin raised several pressing issues for the country. The primary area of concern was the issuance of "gray certificates", which are issued with or without formalities, resulting in counterfeit products and further hurting human health. Considering the danger of the current situation, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states agreed on the need to take joint systematic measures regarding the certificates. Additionally, another issue discussed was regarding 'extending the tariff discount for raw cane sugar', which will be considered at the level of heads of government of the EAEU in early February. While the Kyrgyz side did not support the extension, the leading producers of EAEU sugar (Russia and Belarus) supported Kazakhstan's demand.

Other Developments

[Central Asia Seen as Key to Breaking China's Rare Earth Monopoly](#)

[Kazakhstan fully ensures its water security: new measures have been approved by the Government](#)

[FM Kulubaev receives Japanese Foreign Ministry's Special Representative for Central Asia](#)

[Tajikistan's President Urges Public To Stockpile Food For Two Years \(Again\)](#)



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