



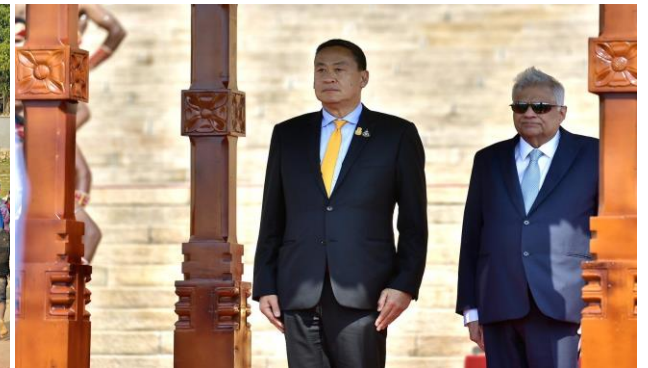
Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

February 7, 2024



Volume II, Issue 6 | February 7, 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 6

February 7, 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 - 264 Members of Myanmar's Border Guard Police, who have sought refuge in Bangladesh being taken to Ghumdhum Government High School in Bandarban by BGB personnel on February 6, 2024. Source: [The Daily Star](#)

Southeast Asia - Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin of Thailand and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe at the presidential secretariat in Colombo, Sri Lanka on February 3, 2024. (Source: [Srettha Thavisin/Official X Account](#))

West Asia - US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, and Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Mohammed bin Salman, met in Riyadh on February 6, 2024.

Source: [Official X Handle/Secretary Antony Blinken](#)

Central Asia - The Council of National Coordinators of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states held a meeting in Beijing on February 1, 2024. Source: [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation](#)

© 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 6

February 7, 2024

Contents

South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh 1

Southeast Asia

Anshita Shukla 2

East Asia

Anshita Shukla 3

West Asia

Sanket Joshi..... 4

China

Angana Guha Roy 5

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 7

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On February 2, the [second meeting](#) of the India-Maldives High Level Core Group was held in New Delhi. During the meeting, both sides also agreed on a set of mutually workable solutions to enable continued operation of Indian aviation platforms that provide humanitarian and medvac services to the people of Maldives. The Maldives Foreign Ministry statement said that both sides [agreed](#) that India will withdraw its military personnel from the Maldives [by May 10](#), but will continue to operate the two helicopters and a Dornier aircraft in the island nation with the help of Indian civilian replacements and Maldivian defence personnel. Meanwhile, on January 31, the Maldives defense ministry, [claimed](#) that its military was informed that personnel from Indian coast guard had boarded a Maldives fishing vessel.

While fleeing from the ongoing battle between Myanmar troops and the Arakan Army at least [264 members](#) of Myanmar forces and border guards had taken refuge in Bangladesh on February 6. A Bangladeshi woman and a Rohingya man were killed as a [mortar shell fired](#) from Myanmar exploded in Bandarban's Ghumdhum union of Bangladesh on February 5. Bangladesh Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said it was [unacceptable](#) that people were dying and getting injured in his country because of the conflict in Myanmar.

Sri Lankan political party National People's Power (NPP) leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake visited New Delhi on February 5-6. During his visit he held discussions on the issues related to regional security and bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka with [Foreign Minister](#) Dr Jaishankar, [NSA Ajit Doval](#) and [Foreign Secretary](#) Vinay Mohan. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) MP Namal Rajapaksa has welcomed Dissanayake's Indian visit, signalling a potential shift in the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna's (JVP) stance on [Indian investments](#) which the JVP had for years criticized and neglected.

Other Developments

[10 personnel martyred as militants storm D.I. Khan police station in Pakistan on February 5](#)

[Representatives of Pakistan and China Discuss Afghanistan](#)

[Indian submarine 'Karanj' visited Colombo](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Thailand Prime Minister, Srettha Thavisin, concluded a successful [two-day official visit to Sri Lanka](#) on February 4. He was in Sri Lanka on an invitation extended by President Ranil Wickremesinghe, to participate in the 76th Anniversary celebrations of Sri Lanka's Independence as Guest of Honour. During his visit, the two countries signed the Sri Lanka – Thailand Free Trade Agreement (SLTFTA) aimed at enhancing market opportunities, with negotiations covering various aspects such as Trade in Goods, Investment, Customs Procedure, and Intellectual Property Rights, according to the official statement. The two countries also renewed the Air Services Agreement and entered a MoU on cooperation in the Gems and Jewellery sector.

Philippine President Marcos Jr. approved the [third phase of the military's modernization strategy](#), including a submarine purchase plan on February 1. Navy spokesperson for the West Philippine Sea, Roy Trinidad, stated that the third phase of the modernisation plan, which underwent revisions to make it more attuned to the country's needs, is estimated to cost 2 trillion pesos (\$35.62 billion) and will be implemented over a period of several years. The acquisitions under the third phase will focus on stepping up capabilities in domain awareness, intelligence, and deterrence in maritime and aerial spaces, added [Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro Jr.](#)

On January 31, Myanmar's military junta announced the [extension of the imposed state of emergency](#) in the country for another six months. The extension is aimed at bringing "the nation to a normal state of stability and peace", reported the military-run media outlet Myawaddy on Telegram. This is the fifth extension since the military junta ousted the elected government three years ago. The United States has imposed fresh sanctions on entities and individuals it said are providing support to the military regime in Myanmar on February 1. The [U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control \(OFAC\)](#) said in a statement that it has sanctioned entities that have "enabled the purchase of foreign currency and the importation of petroleum and other materials on behalf of the military regime".

Other Development

[Myanmar resistance groups offer conditional talks with military](#)

[Thailand to intensify efforts to resolve Myanmar crisis](#)

East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The US military and Japan's Self Defence Forces (JSDF) began a bilateral command post exercise known as '[Keen Edge 24](#)', with the participation of the Australian Defence Force on February 1, 2024. It was reported that the JSDF and the US military named [China as a hypothetical enemy](#) for the first time including a simulation which envisioned an emergency in Taiwan. In the past, during the previous exercises, a provisional name has been used when referring to the enemy.

President of Italy, Giorgia Meloni, concluded an [official two-day visit to Japan](#) on February 6, 2024. During her visit, President Meloni and Prime Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, convened the Japan-Italy Summit Meeting on February 5. The two leaders agreed to cooperate towards the success of G7, with Italy taking over the presidency from Japan this year. PM Kishida and President Meloni also discussed their three-way joint project to develop a next-generation fighter jet with Britain.

South Korea's military reported that [North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles](#) off its west coast on February 2. This is the fourth time in just over a week that Pyongyang has launched such missiles off both the east and west coast. This comes after the North Korean state media reported that Mr Kim inspected a shipyard in the port city of Nampo on the west coast and stressed the importance of a strong naval force in "war preparations" on February 2.

Other Developments

[Taiwan military simulates scenario where China turns drills into an actual attack](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On February 2, the [US conducted airstrikes in Iraq and Syria](#) against Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force and affiliated militia groups, in response to a drone attack on a US base in Jordan. While tensions continue to rage in the Middle East, US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken held meetings with leaders of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Qatar between February 5-7. Washington intends to ensure the [release of all Israeli hostages held in Gaza](#), enhance humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza, prevent the spread of conflict, defend the right to freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, and continue discussions on creating a more integrated Middle East.

On the Arab-Israeli Peace Process, Saudi Arabia reiterated that it will not establish [diplomatic relations with Israel](#) until an independent Palestinian state is established on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and all Israeli forces are withdrawn from Gaza. The statement was issued in response to a claim by the White House National Security Council Spokesperson, John Kirby, that Saudi Arabia was willing to normalise relations with Israel without a ceasefire in Gaza and progress toward Palestinian statehood.

Hamas militant group demanded a permanent ceasefire in response to [Qatar's proposal for a hostage deal](#), something Israel is unlikely to accept as it has vowed to dismantle Hamas. Meanwhile, the Houthi rebels of Yemen have warned that they will [escalate attacks in the Red Sea](#) if Israeli aggression against the Palestinians in Gaza does not cease.

China, Russia, and Iran plan to hold a [joint naval exercise in March 2024](#) to bolster regional security amidst continuing tensions in the Red Sea. At a UN Security Council meeting on February 5, Russia and China accused the US of [deliberately escalating tensions in the Middle East](#) with retaliatory airstrikes on Iran-backed groups in Iraq and Syria.

Other Developments

[India's PM Modi to address World Government Summit 2024 in Dubai](#)

[S. Jaishankar, Omani Counterpart Discuss West Asia Situation, Concerns About Red Sea](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

A video that shows [Chinese soldiers intercepting Indian shepherds](#) in the Kakjung area of Ladakh and claiming the area belongs to China is being circulated in social media. The confrontation, which happened on January 2, involved the shepherds throwing rocks at the Chinese personnel. The incident transpired near Patrolling Points (PPs) 35 and 36 at Kakjung under the Nyoma constituency in Ladakh. Ishey Spalzung, Councillor of Nyoma told the paper that the disputed area aligns with India's perception of the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The [China-US economic working group held its third meeting in Beijing](#) from February 5 to 6, China's Ministry of Finance said in a statement. The meeting was co-chaired by Chinese Vice Minister of Finance Liao Min and US Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Jay Shambaugh. The Chinese side expressed concerns over the US tariff hikes on China, two-way investment restrictions and sanctions to suppress Chinese enterprises. The two sides agreed to continue to maintain communication.

The International Monetary Fund predicted China's economic decline over the next four years amidst challenges of rapidly aging population, higher unemployment and a property crisis. [In a recently published report](#) IMF projected China's economic growth to reduce to 4.6% this year, down from its 5.2% growth in 2023, and fall further to 3.4% by 2028. The property market, which has historically represented about a quarter of China's GDP, is under trouble, with a Hong Kong court ordering Chinese property giant China Evergrande, mired in more than \$300 billion of debt, to liquidate.

Nepal and China are [slated to sign the implementation plan](#) of the Belt and Road Initiative "very soon", Deputy Prime Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha said on January 27, nearly seven years after the two neighbours inked an agreement to undertake ambitious Beijing-backed infrastructure projects in the Himalayan nation.

European [solar panel producers have appealed for urgent curbs](#) on Chinese access to the EU photovoltaic (PV) market to protect their industry. In a letter sent to the European Commission, a group representing "nearly the entire European PV manufacturing industry" called for "emergency measures" to safeguard the EU supply chain amid "significant oversupply" from China. It

claimed that oversupply of PV modules from China late in 2022 and through 2023 had “triggered a drastic reduction in prices”, forcing European manufacturers to reduce production and leaving stocks “languishing” in warehouses.

Other Developments

[China expresses concern over U.S. tariff in 3rd economic working group meeting](#)

[Chinese Netizens Criticize Government on US Embassy's Weibo Post](#)

[India 'Beats' China In Diplomatic Duel; Sri Lanka Welcomes INS Karanj After Expelling Chinese Ship](#)

[Wall Street snubs China for India in a historic markets shift](#)

[China's cull of EV overcapacity will bring little relief to Europe](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The Republic of Kazakhstan chaired a regular [meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\) National Coordinators](#) at the SCO Secretariat in Beijing on February 1. The participants reviewed the preparations for meetings of the SCO Heads of State Council, the SCO Foreign Ministers Council and continued to work with drafting political, trade and economic, cultural and humanitarian documents. They discussed various proposals for streamlining the organisation's executive mechanisms in implementing the resolutions of the SCO Heads of State Council that were adopted in Dushanbe in 2021 and Samarkand in 2022.

On February 2, Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan said that Armenia can [no longer rely on Russia](#) as its main defence and military partner because Moscow has repeatedly let it down, so Yerevan must think about forging closer ties with the United States and France. Pashinyan said "We need to understand who we can really maintain military-technical and defence relations with." Furthermore, he said "95-97% of our defence relations were with the Russian Federation. Now this cannot be for both objective and subjective reasons." Pashinyan said Armenia should consider what security ties it can build with the United States, France, India and Georgia. He also questioned whether Armenia should remain a member of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), and said Armenia needed a new national security strategy and would strengthen its army.

The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) hosted '[AIFC Connect: London 2024](#)' to exchange views on investment opportunities in Kazakhstan and Central Asia on February 2, 2024. The meeting brought together 120 representatives from more than 70 organisations including investment banks, international financial companies, law firms and advisory companies. AIFC Governor, Renat Bekturov presented investment opportunities in Kazakhstan to representatives of British companies, emphasising the strategic location between Europe, Asia and the Middle East grants Kazakhstan direct access to the major markets of the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as China and the Caspian countries.

Other Developments

[Afghanistan Clears Electricity Debts To Tajikistan](#)

[Kyrgyzstan And Tajikistan Agree On 3.71 Km Of Border Line](#)

[Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic Intend to Expand Allied Relations](#)



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org