



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

February 14, 2024



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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- Bangladesh Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Hasan Mahmud and India's Minister of External Affairs Dr. S. Jaishankar Discussed steps to forge ahead in our vibrant and people-centric partnership, in Delhi on February 7, 2024. (Source: [X/@DrSJaishankar](https://twitter.com/DrSJaishankar))

Southeast Asia- Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet hold a signing ceremony at Government House in Bangkok on February 7, 2024. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand/Official Website](https://www.mfa.go.th/en/press-releases/2024/02/07))

West Asia- India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE's President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed met in Abu Dhabi on February 13, 2024. (Source: [Official X Handle/Narendra Modi](https://twitter.com/NarendraModi))

Central Asia- President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva and family members cast their votes at the Polling Station 14 of Constituency 122, in the city of Khankendi, Azerbaijan, on February 7, 2024. (Source: [President of the Republic of Azerbaijan](https://www.president.az/en))

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Bangladesh Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Hasan Mahmud, [visited India](#) from February 7-9, 2024. This was his first official visit to India, and his first bilateral visit to any country, after assuming office as the new Foreign Minister of Bangladesh in January 2024. During the visit, he called upon President Droupadi Murmu and held meetings with his Indian counterpart Dr. S. Jaishankar, and National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval. The [discussions were focused on](#) cross-border connectivity, defence and security, power, energy, water resources, and people-to-people exchanges. In his meeting with NSA Ajit Doval, Dr Mahmud raised the issue of the [worsening security situation](#) in Myanmar.

Pakistan conducted its national and provincial assembly elections on February 7. The country witnessed incidents of political violence and terrorist attacks both prior to and following the elections. Two bomb blasts outside the offices of election candidates in Pishin and Qilla Saifullah in Baluchistan [killed 28 and injured over 50 people](#) on February 7. On the [election day, mobile phone and data](#) services were suspended nationwide by the government. The multitude of videos on social media revealing [malpractice and election rigging](#). The official result of the polls was made public by the Election Commission on February 12. The results are as follows: [National Assembly](#) - PMLN: 75, PPP: 54, PTI-backed Independents: 92, MQM-P: 17, and others: 13. Provincial assemblies - PPP emerged victorious in Sindh and Baluchistan, PTI in KP, and PMLN along with its coalition partners in Punjab. Due to the lack of an absolute majority, the major parties are engaged in negotiations to form the Government. According to the constitution, the new [National Assembly](#) session must be called by February 29th.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with the President of Sri Lanka, Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe and the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Mr Pravind Jugnauth jointly inaugurated the launch of Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services in Sri Lanka and Mauritius, and also RuPay card services in Mauritius via video conferencing on February 12.

Other Developments

[Maldives is at high risk of external debt distress, warns IMF](#)

[Dhaka, Delhi agreed to use non-lethal weapons to reduce border killings: FM](#)

[Nepal, Australia sign trade and investment framework arrangement](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet made his [first official one-day visit to Thailand](#) on February 7, 2024. In his meeting with the Prime Minister of Thailand, Srettha Thavisin, the two countries agreed to enhance cooperation in the exploitation of oil and gas resources in the Gulf of Thailand, where the two countries have competing maritime territorial claims. The two leaders discussed "the possibility of establishing complimentary special economic zones along border areas in order to promote the linkage of supply chains in specific key industries including automotive, electronics and medical devices", as [stated by PM Manet](#).

The [United States and the Philippines conducted joint sea and air patrol](#) off the coast of the Philippines on February 9, 2024. This marks the third exercise between the USA and the Philippines in the last three months. The patrol witnessed the participation of the US combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords and an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter, along with the Philippine Navy's BRP Gregorio del Pilar warship and an AW109 helicopter. The commodore of US Destroyer Squadron 7, Captain Sean Lewis, stated that "sailing and operating together demonstrates our commitment to improving our interoperability and continued coordination".

On February 11, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) accused [Chinese vessels of "dangerous" manoeuvres](#) during a nine-day patrol near a reef off the coast of the country. The PCG reported the presence of four Chinese maritime militia vessels that "shadowed" the Philippines ship "on more than 40 occasions". The Chinese Coast Guard vessels "performed dangerous and blocking manoeuvres at sea against BRP Teresa Magbanua four times, with the Chinese Coast Guard vessels crossing the bow of the Philippine Coast Guard vessel twice", according to the official statement.

Other Developments

[Myanmar junta activates conscription law following battlefield losses](#)

[South China Sea: Philippines to put military base near Taiwan in high gear to tackle tensions with Beijing](#)

[Japan to help improve maritime capabilities of 4 ASEAN states amid South China Sea row](#)

East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly voted to [abolish all agreements promoting economic cooperation](#) with South Korea on February 8, 2024. The country also abolished the special law on the operation of the Mount Kumgang tourism project, a symbol of economic cooperation between the two Koreas. South Korea's Unification Ministry responded by stating that "North's action was not surprising and would only deepen its isolation".

On February 12, North Korea developed a [new control system for a multiple rocket launcher](#) that would lead to a "qualitative change" in its defence capabilities. This comes after North Korea successfully carried out a "ballistic control test firing of 240mm-calibre multiple rocket launcher shells" on February 10, as reported by state news agency KCNA. Leader Kim Jong Un reiterated that Pyongyang would not hesitate to "put an end" to South Korea if attacked, calling Seoul the North's "most dangerous and first enemy state and invariable arch-enemy" on February 9.

China's Foreign Minister [Wang Yi held a telephone conversation](#) with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul on February 6. During the call, the South Korean Minister urged China to play a "constructive role" in curbing Pyongyang's military threats and to help North Korean defectors not get sent back home against their will. Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed hope that South Korea will pursue a "positive, objective and friendly" policy towards Beijing.

Other Developments

[Taiwan thanks world, China's military shows simulated attacks in New Year messages](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE's President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed met in Abu Dhabi on February 13, 2024. The two leaders reviewed various facets of [India-UAE's comprehensive strategic partnership](#) and witnessed the exchange of MoUs/agreements on investment, connectivity, fintech, and digital infrastructure. On February 14, Prime Minister Modi will address a gathering of world leaders at the World Government Summit in Dubai, and he will also inaugurate a [Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi](#).

Eight former [Indian Navy officers](#) who were sentenced to death for allegedly spying for Israel have been released by Qatar. On February 12, India thanked the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, for enabling the release and homecoming of Indian nationals. An official visit by Prime Minister Modi to Qatar is scheduled for February 14-15.

Saudi Arabia warned of serious repercussions if [Israel targets Rafah](#), a last resort for Gaza civilians, amidst reports that Israel is planning a ground invasion of the city. The European Union's foreign policy chief, [Josep Borrell, urged the US](#) to stop sending weapons to Israel as "too many people" are being killed in Gaza.

Even as the [Israeli Special Forces rescued two hostages](#) from a building in Rafah, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant cautioned that such operations should not be counted on to free the remaining 134 hostages. Meanwhile, senior officials from the US, Israel, Egypt, and Qatar have reportedly resumed [ceasefire negotiations in Cairo](#).

Other Developments

[IRGC fires ballistic missile from warship for first time](#)

[China displays FC-31 fighter model at Saudi defence show in bid to increase exports as Middle East nations explore options](#)

[What's in US Senate's \\$95 billion aid bill to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan?](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

Home Minister of India, Amit Shah, has said the [India-China border dispute along the Line of Actual Control \(LAC\)](#) in Ladakh was an attempt to repeat the 1962 war with India. While speaking in the Indian Parliament, Amit Shah reiterated the Union Government's stand that India has "not lost out on any territory" in the military standoff against the Chinese troops.

Following an EU proposal to sanction dozens of firms accused of aiding Russia's war in Ukraine, [China said it firmly opposes "illegal sanctions"](#). "China firmly opposes illegal sanctions or 'long-arm jurisdiction' against China on the grounds of cooperation between China and Russia", the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

The [value of Chinese companies listed on US stock exchanges](#) fell significantly last year, a US Congressional review has revealed. The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission published a report revealing that 256 Chinese companies are now listed on the New York Stock Exchange, Nasdaq, and NYSE American exchanges worth a combined US\$848 billion. That value of these 252 companies Chinese companies on US markets slid 17.5 per cent from 2022

Other Developments

[The BRI Is Back on in Nepal With Funding for Hydropower Plant](#)

[Bangladesh elections mark a pro-China tipping point in South Asia](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan secured [a fifth consecutive term](#), winning 92 percent of the votes in elections held on February 7, 2024. The turnout was 67.6 percent in the snap election, which was called a year following Azerbaijan's recapture of the Nagorno-Karabakh region from Armenian separatists last September. However, the election observers from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have [questioned the validity of Azerbaijan's presidential election](#), stating the election was "not competitive" and "was held in a restrictive environment".

Uzbekistan and Belarus [signed agreements and contracts](#) exceeding \$1 billion in value during the President of the Republic of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko's [official visit](#) to Uzbekistan on February 8, 2024. To this end, an agreement was reached to establish a joint foreign trade company, implement mechanisms supporting export-import supplies and introduce an electronic system for product certification. The heads of state outlined priority areas for cooperation and agreed to create favourable conditions for transportation and effective use of multimodal corridors leading to South Asia's markets.

The president of Kyrgyzstan, [Sadyr Japarov has lashed out at the US government](#) over its criticism of proposed changes to a Kyrgyz law that will severely complicate the operations of local non-governmental groups in the country. President Japarov said in his February 12 note to US Secretary Antony Blinken that the concerns voiced by Washington were based on "unreliable sources" that speculate on their difficulties and persecution, which, in turn, force sponsoring foreign structures to follow their lead, engage in wastefulness, wasting money of taxpayers in the United States and European Union countries". The Kyrgyz leader was responding to a letter sent to him last month by Blinken who expressed his misgivings over the 'foreign representatives law', which was approved in the Kyrgyz parliament in October.

Other Developments

[Kazakhstan and UK Forge Partnership on Climate Initiatives](#)

[Kazakhstan Aims For Tricky Economic Reboot After Cabinet Shuffle](#)

[Taliban-Appointed Diplomat Takes Charge Of Afghanistan's Embassy In Uzbekistan](#)

[US Department of State Hosts Inaugural Critical Minerals Dialogue with Central Asia](#)



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