



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

February 21, 2024



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Delhi Policy Group

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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- *The 6th Regional Dialogue of Secretaries of Security Councils/National Security Advisers on Afghanistan was held in Bishkek on February 16.* Source: [X/@sidhant](#)

East Asia- *Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction in Tokyo on February 19, 2024.* (Source: [Prime Minister's Office of Japan](#))

West Asia- *India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi, UAE on February 14, 2024.* Source: [Official X Handle/Narendra Modi](#)

Central Asia- *The fifth European Union (EU) – Central Asia meeting was held in Bishkek on February 14, 2024.* Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

The two-day [close door conference](#) on Afghanistan was hosted by the United Nations (UN) in Doha, Qatar on February 18-19. The conference was held to negotiate the global community's engagement with the de facto authorities, assess the human rights situation in Afghanistan, and garner consensus among nations on appointing a new representative for Afghan conflict resolution. Delegates from approximately 25 countries and international organisations participated in the deliberations. The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in a post-conference briefing, mentioned that countries agreed to prevent further crisis escalation in Afghanistan, but added that a long road lies ahead.

The 6th Regional Dialogue of Secretaries of Security Councils/National Security Advisers on Afghanistan was held in Bishkek on February 16th. During the meeting, Deputy National Security Adviser of India, Vikram Misri, raised [concerns](#) about large drug shipments coming from Afghanistan and potential instability due to the presence of terrorists from banned groups such as LeT and JeM on Afghan soil. Meanwhile, the World Bank Group said its executive board endorsed a new approach to aiding Afghanistan that will deploy [USD 300 million](#) from the bank's International Development Association fund.

The Taliban deputy minister of foreign affairs Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai said that Afghanistan will never recognize the [Durand Line](#) as a border, hence, the requirement of visas and passports to travel "to Afghanistan" is not acceptable to the Afghanistan people. Asif Durrani, Pakistan's special envoy to Afghanistan, has [dismissed the Taliban's stance](#), underscoring Islamabad's rigid position on the historic border dispute.

After days of negotiations, on February 20, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) announced that they have agreed to establish a [new coalition](#) government in Pakistan. PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari declared that PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif is set to reassume the role of Prime Minister, while PPP co-chairman Asif Zardari is slated to become the next President of the country.

Other Developments

[Work on IP pipeline to begin in Pakistan](#)

[India allows Nepali visitors to obtain Indian SIM cards](#)

[India wants to elevate defence ties with Bangladesh](#)

[India's projects in Maldives gain pace, despite strained security ties](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The Philippine Air Force conducted a [joint patrol with the US Pacific Air Forces](#) over the western part of the Philippines on February 19, 2024. This was Phase 2 of the Third Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) within the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone. In its official statement, the Philippine Air Force said "this cooperative activity aims to bolster cooperation between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and their US counterparts". The Chinese military's Southern Theatre Command rebuked the air patrol as a "publicity stunt" and accused the Philippines of disrupting order in the South China Sea by enlisting countries outside the region.

[Singapore and Indonesia signed a letter of intent](#) on cross-border collaboration on the capture and storage of carbon dioxide (CCS) on February 15, 2024. This comes after Indonesia issued a presidential regulation in January, allowing CCS operators to allocate 30 percent of their storage capacity for imported carbon dioxide. Mr. Jodi Mahardi, Indonesia's Deputy Coordinating Minister, stated that "the outline deal marked a significant milestone in our efforts towards sustainable development and environmental stewardship".

The [Philippines accused China of "dangerous" manoeuvres](#) near the Scarborough Shoal on February 17. The Philippines alleged that Chinese coast guard ships repeatedly blocked a Philippine vessel delivering supplies to fishermen to a reef in the South China Sea. This comes after a senior official from the Philippine Coast Guard, Commodore Jay Tarriela, stated at a forum in Manila on February 14 that 'the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has not been told to tone down its assertive transparency strategy to counter Beijing's grey-zone tactics in the South China Sea'.

Other Developments

[Thousands in Myanmar seeking to leave after junta announces draft](#)

[Asia's biggest air show kicks off in Singapore with Israeli firms present – but no Russians](#)

East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

[Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal visited Tokyo](#) to attend the Japan-Ukraine Conference for the Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction on February 19, 2024. At the conference, Japan pledged 15.8 billion yen (USD 105 million) in new aid for Ukraine to fund demining and other urgently needed reconstruction projects in the energy and transportation sectors, according to the Japanese Foreign Ministry. PM Kishida stated that "Japan has stood with and continues to stand with Ukraine". He announced the new bilateral tax treaty and the start of negotiations for an investment treaty.

On February 14, Taiwan's coast guard reported that [a Chinese speedboat entered prohibited waters](#) near Kinmen's Beiding islet, home to a military garrison. Two out of the four people on board died when the boat overturned after it tried to flee from a Taiwanese coast guard vessel. Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council reported the incident stating "We deeply regret that the mainland crew members refused to cooperate with our law enforcement work this time and an unfortunate incident occurred". China's Taiwan Affairs Office stated that Taiwan's "rough and dangerous" treatment of Chinese fishermen was the main reason for the "wicked" incident.

[North Korea tested a new surface-to-sea missile](#), Padasuri-6, or "Sea Eagle-6", on February 14. This news comes after South Korea reported that North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles off its east coast on February 14. The North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un also visited "major" munitions factories and learned in detail about the modernization of production, according to KCNA.

Other Developments

[Taiwan minister says China coast guard triggered panic by boarding Taiwanese tourist boat](#)

[China to send coast guard ships as tensions rise over Taiwanese islands](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On February 14, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the '[BAPS Hindu Mandir](#)' (Temple) in Abu Dhabi reflecting the spiritual dimension of India-UAE relations. Further, Prime Minister Modi visited Doha on February 15 and met with Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. The two leaders discussed a wide range of topics including [economic cooperation](#), investments, energy partnership, space collaboration, urban infrastructure, and people-to-people ties. Meanwhile, on February 17, India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, met with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Faisal bin Farhan, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference. Their discussion focused on [bilateral strategic partnership](#), including connectivity initiatives and the current situation in West Asia.

Amidst the raging conflict between Israel and Hamas, on February 20, the US vetoed a draft [UN Security Council resolution](#) calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. To secure the release of the remaining Israeli hostages held by Hamas, Washington is pressing the UNSC to call for a temporary ceasefire. On his part, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's Prime Minister, reiterated that Tel Aviv "[will not pay the delusional costs](#) that Hamas is demanding for the return of the remaining hostages". Moreover, Israel's War Cabinet member, Benny Gantz, warned that "if hostages are not home by Ramadan, [fighting will continue](#), including around Rafah".

During his remarks regarding Israel's military goal to eliminate Hamas, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, stressed that he [did not consider Hamas to be a terrorist organisation](#). Adding that, it would be difficult to dislodge Hamas without a negotiated solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Other Developments

[US readies new weapons shipment to Israel; Embassy says no human rights concerns](#)

[Brazil doesn't intend to retract Lula's Holocaust comparison – sources](#)

[South Africa asks World Court to find Israeli Occupation illegal](#)

[Iran Unveils Air Defence Systems as Middle East Tensions Soar](#)

[China spotlights drones at Saudi defence show to lure Middle Eastern buyers as conflicts in Gaza and Red Sea escalate](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

[China is reportedly pressing ahead with the construction of border villages](#) in the disputed territory with Bhutan, despite the ongoing border talks between the two countries. At least three villages have been built in the mountainous region separating the two countries, with some doubling in size. The rapid expansion began as a poverty alleviation scheme, but, serves a dual national security role, the report quoted the ruling Chinese Communist Party officials as saying.

[China's interest in working with the European Union](#) to uphold free trade, practice multilateralism, and promote an equal and orderly multi-polar world and inclusive economic globalisation, was reiterated by its foreign minister during a visit to Spain. Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China regards the EU as "an important force in the multi-polar pattern" and supports European integration, and the development and growth of the EU as well as realizing strategic autonomy, according to a foreign ministry statement.

Chinese State Councillor and [Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong and US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas](#) agreed to implement the important consensus reached at the San Francisco meeting between the two heads of state on February 19. During their meeting in Vienna, the two officials had candid, in-depth and constructive communication, advancing bilateral cooperation in drug control and law enforcement, and addressing each other's concerns.

Other Developments

[Security officials identify Indian social media influencers peddling Chinese propaganda, warn govt](#)

[Chinese companies revive Mao Zedong-era militias](#)

[New US and China plays pose fresh headache for India](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The [fifth European Union \(EU\) – Central Asia meeting](#) focusing on Afghanistan took place in Bishkek on February 14, 2024. Discussion centred around the situation in Afghanistan, with particular emphasis placed on finding effective ways to interact with the country's de facto government. The head of the Kazakh delegation, Ambassador for Special Tasks, Talgat Kaliyev, outlined Kazakhstan's vision of the prospects for cooperation with Afghanistan in the trade and transport sphere.

On February 16, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Murat Nurtileu met with the Secretary General of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, Imangali Tasmagambetov. The parties exchanged views on the events planned to be held in Kazakhstan within the framework of the [country's chairmanship of the CSTO in 2024](#). During the discussion, special attention was paid to several organisational issues of the upcoming the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting of the CSTO scheduled for June 2024. The main areas of cooperation within the organisation, including the development of political cooperation and the issues of countering threats, were discussed.

The Ministry of Energy of Kyrgyzstan and Rosatom company are considering the [construction of a small nuclear power plant \(SNPP\)](#) in Kyrgyzstan consisting of two units with a capacity of 50 MW each. On February 20, the Kyrgyz Deputy Energy Minister said "Construction of a small nuclear power plant can be located in remote, isolated regions of the country" and therefore, ensure stable electricity tariffs for the country.

Other Developments

[UK Inaugurates International Climate Change Fund for Central Asia](#)

[Hyderabad: Consul of Republic of Kazakhstan invited for World Business Angels Investment Forum](#)

[President Erdogan Expected To Pay Official Visit To Kyrgyzstan In Summer](#)

[Kazakhstan Hopes For New Surges In Grain Exports To China](#)



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