



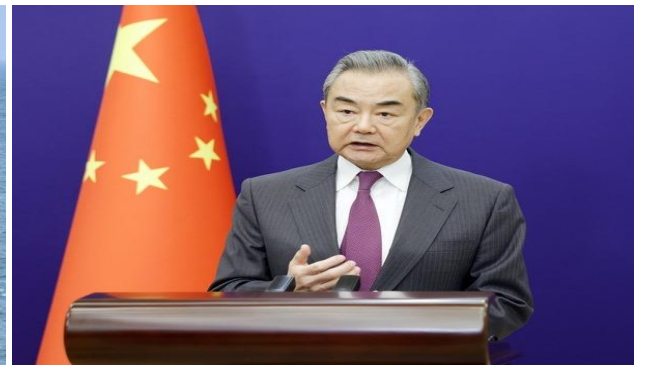
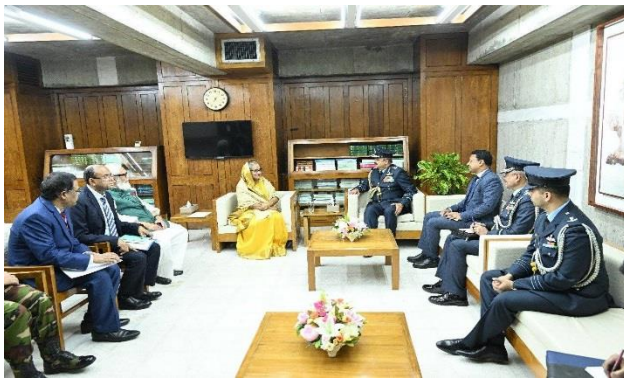
# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## India's Proximity Archives

February 28, 2024



Volume II, Issue 9 | February 28, 2024

Delhi Policy Group

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

[www.delhipolicygroup.org](http://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](mailto:sanket@dpg.org.in).

### Cover Image:

**South Asia** - On February 27, 2024, Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, India's Chief of Air Staff, met with Hon'ble PM Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka. Source: [X/@IAF MCC](#)

**Southeast Asia** - An Opening Ceremony of multinational military exercise Cobra Gold 2024 was held in Sattahip, Chonburi, Thailand on February 26, 2024. Source: [U.S. Indo-Pacific Command/Official X Account](#)

**East Asia** - The Coast Guard of East China's Fujian Province held a maritime patrol in waters near Kinmen on February 25, 2024. Source: [Global Times](#)

**China** - Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi addresses the High-level Segment of the 55th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on February 26, 2024. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs PRC](#)

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## South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

From February 22 to 25, the Coast Guards of India, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka conducted a four-day [trilateral exercise](#) called 'Dosti-16' in Male. Bangladesh participated as an observer. The aim of the exercise was to identify emerging maritime challenges in the Indian Ocean Region and enhance maritime security and interoperability. Five Coast Guard ships from three countries participated in the exercise.

The initial group of Indian [technical staff](#) who will handle Maldives' aviation platforms have arrived in the country. The team plans to replace military personnel in Maldives who will depart by March 10. The [Indian navy vessel](#) will arrive in Addu City on February 28 to transport the helicopter back to India and deliver its replacement, as stated by the Maldives Defence Ministry.

India's Air Chief Marshal, VR Chaudhari, [visited Dhaka](#) from February 26-28. During the visit he held meetings with all three service chiefs of Bangladesh and called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. During the meeting, PM [Sheikh Hasina said](#) that cooperation between Bangladesh and India is necessary as they are close-door neighbours. CAS VR Chaudhari has assured Prime Minister Hasina of extending all types of cooperation to build 'Smart Armed Forces' in 'Smart Bangladesh'.

Amidst ongoing political chaos in Pakistan, PML-N leader [Maryam Nawaz](#) took oath as the Chief Minister of Punjab on February 26. Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate Syed Murad Ali Shah won the election of the [Chief Minister of Sindh](#) for a third consecutive term on February 26. As part of the formation of the coalition government in [Balochistan](#), the PPP and PML-N on February 27, discussed the allocation of portfolios in the forthcoming provincial cabinet.

### Other Developments

[Pakistan 'to seek USD 6bn in new IMF programme'](#)

[Taliban execute two convicted murderers in football stadium](#)

[New Pakistan charge d' Affairs to India takes charge](#)

## Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

[‘Cobra Gold-2024’](#), Southeast Asia's longest-running military exercise commenced on February 26. The exercise was co-hosted by Thailand and the United States and will be concluded on March 8. It witnessed the participation of thirty countries including Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, and Malaysia. India will join humanitarian assistance training exercises along with China. The annual drill is aimed at enhancing interoperability, strengthening relations among the participating nations, as well as handling cyber security threats and national disasters.

On February 22, the Philippines accused a China Coast Guard vessel and three other Chinese ships of harassing a [Filipino government vessel](#). The Chinese vessels came within 100m and practised “dangerous moves” to block the vessel. The Chinese state media reported on February 24 that China’s coast guard repelled the Philippines vessel “when the vessel illegally intruded into waters adjacent to China’s Huangyan Island”. Philippines Coast Guard spokesperson, Commodore Jay Tristan Tarriela, characterised the allegations as [“inaccurate”](#) saying “the vessel continues to patrol the Bajo de Masinloc. So that's not true.”

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Philippines reported that Chinese and Vietnamese trawlers have been using the [toxic substance](#) called ‘Bajo de Masinloc’ in Scarborough Shoal. The BFAR spokesperson Nazario Briguera accused Chinese fishermen of using cyanide to “intentionally destroy Bajo de Masinloc to prevent Filipino fishing boats from fishing in the area”. Philippines President Marcos Jr. reacted to the news pledging legal action if proved that Chinese boats had used cyanide to “intentionally destroy” the fish-rich Scarborough Shoal.

### Other Developments

[Bangladesh resists growing calls to accept more Rohingyas from Myanmar](#)

[Singapore and Malaysia sign pact to target telecom scammers](#)

## East Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

China's Fujian Coast Guard [conducted patrols](#) in waters near Taiwan-administered Quemoy, also known as Kinmen Island, on February 25, 2024. Large vessels that mainland China's Coast Guard uses to sail around the contested Diaoyu Islands were sent on a [law-enforcement patrol](#) where two mainland fishermen died earlier this month fleeing Taiwan's coastguard. A Taiwanese minister told reporters that five Chinese coast guard ships entered prohibited or restricted waters of Taiwan.

According to [a statement issued by China's Coast Guard](#), the fleet carried out tasks including vessel checks, fishing boat protection and issuing warnings. It stated that the operation aimed to strengthen law enforcement in critical maritime areas, effectively maintain order and safeguard the safety and property of fishermen. The February 25<sup>th</sup> Chinese patrol also comes a week after [six Chinese Coast Guard officers](#) boarded a Taiwanese tourist boat to check its route plan, certificate and crew licenses.

The Foreign Ministers of Japan, South Korea, and the United States held a [trilateral meeting](#) on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting in Rio de Janeiro on February 22, 2024. The ministers agreed to pursue closer cooperation in addressing North Korea's steady development of nuclear and missile capabilities, and its expanding military cooperation with Russia. US Secretary of State, [Antony Blinken said](#), "Cooperation and coordination with our closest allies is more important than ever", citing regional challenges like China's "increasingly assertive actions". Additionally, the three diplomats also discussed efforts to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and the ongoing Israel-Hamas War.

According to media reports a [Russian arms](#) maker is importing components with the help of Belarus for precision instruments made in Japan and Taiwan that are essential to tank production. Belpol, an exiled Belarus opposition organisation based outside the country, found that a person linked to Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko's government founded the Shenzhen 5G High-Tech Innovation in China's Guangdong province in 2022. The company started to procure precision instruments parts for motors, sensors, and other equipment needed to make tanks and other weapons.

## Other Developments

[South Korea flips script on north by winning over Cuba](#)

[South Korea and Japan need new Joint Declaration, Yoon adviser says](#)

[Japan won't 'Provoke Russia' by bringing up Navalny's death, even as it continues backing Ukraine](#)

## West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On February 22, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, presented a document entitled ["The Day After Hamas"](#) laying out principles regarding the management of Gaza following the war with Hamas. To manage Gaza's civil affairs, Israel intends to install "local officials" with administrative experience who do not have ties to countries or organisations that support terrorism. The Israeli military will continue to wage war in Gaza until Hamas and Islamic Jihad are destroyed, the hostages abducted on October 7<sup>th</sup> are returned, and long-term security threats are removed. Meanwhile, Israel's Knesset (Parliament) backed a government decision rejecting [unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state](#).

President Biden cautioned Israel that, although it has the overwhelming support of the vast majority of nations, it could lose this support due to its [conservative government](#) with ministers such as Itamar Ben-Gvir. On his part, Prime Minister Netanyahu cited a Harvard-Harris poll showing that 82 percent of the [American public supports Israel](#). On February 27, the Qatari Foreign Ministry informed that the [ceasefire talks in Gaza](#) have not yet achieved a breakthrough.

On February 24, [the US and UK conducted strikes on Houthi sites](#) in Yemen, the fourth such joint operation by the allies as the Houthi rebels continue to attack commercial vessels in the Red Sea. The Biden administration officials are concerned that the [Houthis are continuing attacks](#) despite US strikes. Amidst this, the [US imposed new sanctions](#) on a deputy commander of Iran's Quds Force (IRGC-QF) and a member of the Houthi militia.

A body that deals with financial crime, the [Financial Action Task Force](#) (FATF), has removed the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from its grey list. This could result in a boost in investor sentiment and can help the UAE attract more foreign investment.



## Other Developments

[Saudi Arabia eyes 7.5m Indian visitors by 2030, offers 96-hour free visa](#)

[Iran marginally reduces its highly enriched Uranium stocks](#)

[Israel facilitated the development of Hamas, claims EU's Borrell](#)

[Houthi Attacks on International Shipping – Statement by US Department of State](#)

## China

by

Angana Guha Roy

India and China held the 21st round of [military talks](#) on February 19. The discussions sought complete disengagement in the remaining areas along the LAC in eastern Ladakh as an essential basis for restoration of peace and tranquillity in the India-China border areas. Further, India's Ministry of External Affairs said that the two sides shared their perspectives on disengaging from the remaining friction points along the LAC. Both sides agreed to maintain communication on the way ahead through the relevant military and diplomatic mechanisms.

On February 27, 2024, [the National People's Congress](#) (NPC) Standing Committee adopted a revised law on Guarding State Secrets. The revised law reportedly includes a provision that requires authorities to designate as "work secrets" any matters that are not technically state secrets but would affect national security or public interest if leaked. This could create further uncertainty for foreign businesses in China.

On February 26, 2024, Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, addressed the high-level segment of the [55th session](#) of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) via video conference. He called upon the UNHRC to prioritise development, uphold fairness and justice, reject attempts to use human rights as a pretext to interfere in other countries' internal affairs, and oppose acts of hegemonism and power politics.

### Other Developments

[Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit Serbia this year.](#)

[Why has Sri Lanka banned Chinese research vessels?](#)

## Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

Azerbaijan has signed a [contract to purchase](#) Pakistan-Chinese Fighter Jets, JF-17 Thunder Block III (also known as FC-1 Xiaolong), equipped with enhanced radar systems and state-of-the-art weaponry. According to reports from the Air Operation Syndicate, citing sources in Islamabad, these new aircraft would [replace Azerbaijan's](#) current fleet of Russian-made MiG-29 fighters. This move comes as Armenia is also increasing its defences, particularly against [Azerbaijan's aerial threat](#). Armenia has acquired equipment from India and France such as the Akash surface-to-air missiles.

Novaya Gazeta Europe, a Russian socio-political newspaper, published a report on the ongoing anti-aircraft and ballistic missile tests at [The Kapustin Yar](#) Missile Training Ground in Astrakhan Oblast, Russia. These missiles are said to fly towards Kazakhstan and land in the Bokeyord Nature Reserve, after which they are believed to be used in Ukraine. The journalists stated, "After the tests, the missile will fly to kill Ukrainians, but first they are tested on the Kazakhs". According to the residents, the landing of the missiles in the area results in adverse environmental effects. They reveal that the missiles are discharging fuel into the steppes, and debris is falling near their homes, which is causing the death of humans and livestock, especially when the fires break out. The testing of the missiles is leading to severe health consequences, and people of all ages are reportedly succumbing to the effects. As the land is being leased to Russia, the Kazakh government has not checked the radiation levels recently, but the last inspection revealed that the radiation levels were "several times higher than the permissible norms".

Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi met with Turkmenistan Foreign Minister Rasit Meredow during his visit to Turkmenistan on February 26. The two ministers discussed [bilateral relations](#), enhancing diplomatic ties in Ashgabat, and progress on the TAPI pipeline project, as well as Turkmenistan's investment. The statement issued by the Taliban foreign ministry stated that Muttaqi expressed hope for the prompt commencement of the TAPI project on Afghan soil. Muttaqi also called for Turkmen investment in the Torghondi-Herat and Andkhoy-Shabarghan railway projects up to Mazar-e-Sharif.

## Other Developments

[King Salman Receives Written Message From Tajikistan's President](#)

[Mixed Messages After Armenian, Azerbaijani Leaders Meet In Munich](#)

[French Defence Minister Visits Armenia Amid Azerbaijan Tensions](#)

[UNICEF, EU, Kazakhstan Collaborate to Aid Children Returning from Conflict Zones](#)

[Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan Committed to Strengthen Relations, Boost Trade Turnover](#)



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