



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

March 27, 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 Shreyas Deshmukh, Sanket Joshi, Anshita Shukla, Jayantika Rao T.V, and Divya Rai, Research Associates. Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Sanket Joshi at sanket@dpg.org.in.

Cover Image:

South Asia: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Mother and Child Hospital in Thimphu, built with the assistance of the Government of India in Thimphu during his visit to Bhutan on March 23, 2024. Source: [flickr/MEA](#)

Southeast Asia: Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India and President Bongbong Marcos of the Philippines met in Manila, Philippines on March 26, 2024. Source: [Dr. Jaishankar/ Official X Account](#)

West Asia: US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant met at the Pentagon on March 26, 2024. Source: [Official X Handle/Yoav Gallant](#)

Indian Ocean Region: On March 23, 2024, the Indian Navy's vessel INS Kolkata arrived in Mumbai with the 35 pirates it had captured during an operation off the coast of Somalia. Source: [Press Information Bureau, Government of India](#)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Following Bhutanese Prime Minister, Tshering Tobgay's [visit to India](#) from March 14-18, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi [visited Thimphu](#) from March 22-23. He [held talks](#) with Tshering Tobgay, his counterpart, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, [the current King of Bhutan](#), and Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth King of Bhutan. PM Modi was conferred the 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo', Bhutan's highest civilian decoration. In a [Joint Statement](#), both sides agreed to continue "close coordination and cooperation with each other on issues relating to their national interests," and promote connectivity in its broadest form. India announced a [grant 100 billion Indian Rupees](#) assistance in the 13th plan of Bhutan.

An independent [Joint Vision Statement](#) on "India-Bhutan Energy partnership" was also released by the two countries in which they "noted the stellar contribution of clean energy partnership in the development of hydropower sector of Bhutan, and in providing energy security to the region." The successful visit resulted in the signing of [seven Memorandums of Understanding](#) between the two countries, laying the foundation for future cooperation.

Pakistan is reeling with [multiple major terrorist attacks](#) during the week, particularly targeting China funded infrastructure projects. On March 26, five Chinese engineers, including a woman, and their local driver were killed in a suicide attack in Shangla district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Pakistan's second largest airbase, [PNS Siddique](#) came under attack on March 25. The [Balochistan Liberation Army](#) (BLA) has claimed responsibility for the assault on the Naval Airbase in Turbat, citing opposition to Chinese investments in Balochistan's resources. Earlier on March 21, two security personnel and eight militants were killed as security forces foiled a militant attack on the [Gwadar Port Authority Complex](#).

Nepal Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha is on an [official visit](#) to Beijing from March 25 to April 1. This is his first foreign trip after the formation of the new government and taking over charge as Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He [held talks](#) with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi and other [leaders of the CPC](#), in which both sides agreed to sign the [BRI implementation plan](#) "as soon as possible".

Other Developments

[Bangladesh, Bhutan sign three new MoUs](#)

[Nine agreements signed on China-Sri Lanka cooperation](#)

[Economic conditions in debt-stricken Sri Lanka improving, IMF says](#)

[Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu seeks debt relief from India amid tensions](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar concluded his second official two-day visit to Manila, Philippines on March 27. He met with Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo and called on President Bongbong Marcos. The [two sides discussed](#) their shared interests in ensuring maritime safety and Quick Impact Projects in agriculture, health and capacity building. Dr. Jaishankar also [visited INS Samudra Paheredar](#) docked at Manila Bay in the Philippines as part of a broader initiative aimed at demonstrating Indian Coast Guard Marine Pollution Response capabilities.

Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India made an [official visit to Singapore](#) from March 23-25. During his visit, he called on Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore, and met with Lawrence Wong, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister; Teo Chee Hean, Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security; and Mr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister of Foreign Affairs. The two sides discussed enhancing cooperation in areas of fintech, digitalization, green economy, skills development, and food security.

On March 23, the Philippine Coast Guard accused China's coastguard of ['impeding and encircling'](#) a Philippine vessel. The incident occurred in the Second Thomas Shoal and Spratly Islands waters and caused "significant damage and injury to personnel on a civilian boat hired to resupply troops". On March 25, the Philippine Foreign Ministry summoned China's envoy to protest the "aggressive actions" of China in the South China Sea. The Philippine [security chiefs also convened a high-level meeting](#) to prepare recommendations on ways forward in the dispute to put to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Other Developments

[Vietnam president resigns after just one year, government says](#)

[Myanmar's next election may not be held nationwide, junta chief Min Aung Hlaing says](#)

[Philippines to build new islands port near Taiwan without US help, says governor](#)

East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

A [North Korean delegation](#) led by Kim Song Nam, head of the International Department of the ruling Workers' Party Central Committee, visited Beijing on March 21, 2024. The delegation met with Chinese officials led by Wang Huning, China's fourth-ranked leader. The two sides committed to further developing bilateral ties. During the meeting, Mr. Huning stated that "no matter how the international situation may change, the China-DPRK friendship, a strategic choice of both sides, will never waver". Mr. Kim also held meetings with Cai Qi, head of the Secretariat of the Communist Party of China, and Liu Jianchao, who leads the Chinese Communist Party's body in charge of managing ties with foreign political parties.

Japan approved the updated guidelines of the ["three principles on the transfer of defense equipment and technology"](#) on March 26, 2024. The new guidelines allow worldwide export of next-generation fighter jets set to be jointly developed with Britain and Italy, easing Japan's strict defense equipment transfer rules. The export will only be allowed to nations that have signed pacts with Japan on defence equipment and technology transfers. According to the government, each future individual case will need separate Cabinet approval before sales are made, according to the government.

On March 26, Taiwan conducted ["overall air defence combat plan exercises"](#) using surface-to-air missiles, and air, land, and naval forces. It used domestically made Sky Bow and United States-made Patriot surface-to-air missiles in conjunction with aircraft and navy ships, according to the official statement by Taiwan's air force command. The drills aimed to "inspect and verify the joint air defence combat command and control of the three branches".

Other Developments

[North Korea rejects negotiations with Japan over summit](#)

[New Hong Kong security law comes into force amid fears for freedoms](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On March 25, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution demanding an [immediate ceasefire in Gaza](#) for the month of Ramadan, the unconditional release of hostages, and "the urgent need to expand the flow" of aid into Gaza. Fourteen member states of the UNSC voted in favour of the resolution, while the US abstained, [indicating a growing divide](#) between President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu. The Israeli Prime Minister's Office stated that the US [is retreating from its consistent position](#) since the beginning of the war, which hurts both the war effort and the release of the hostages.

On the other hand, on March 26, 2024, US Defence Secretary Lloyd J. Austin and Israel's Defence Minister Yoav Gallant met in Washington to reaffirm their [shared interest in defeating Hamas](#). The meeting focused on several major issues, including protecting civilians in Rafah in the event of a military operation, maintaining regional stability, and enhancing bilateral defence cooperation.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen have continued their attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea. On March 23, the [Chinese oil tanker MV Huang Pu was targeted by a ballistic missile](#) launched by the Houthis; although no casualties were reported, the ship issued a distress call. Following this, the Houthis reassured China and Russia that their ships would be [granted safe passage through the Red Sea](#).

Other Developments

[Government allows UAE's Adnoc to export oil from Indian strategic storage](#)

[Hamis rejects US hostage deal compromise, 'doesn't meet demands'](#)

[Rockets pound north after IDF hits northeastern Lebanon in deepest strikes yet](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that his country [must compromise](#) and hand over four frontier villages to Azerbaijan and return to its Soviet-era borders. He warned that the alternative is another round of bloody fighting between the two nations. On a visit to the frontier, Prime Minister Pashinyan said that the government has decided to follow a policy of prevention of war – "we must not allow a war to start", further arguing that Armenia could face an attack "by the end of the week" if it does not cede the villages. Armenia hoped that they could form part of an exchange which Azerbaijan rejected.

President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev [strongly denounced](#) the recent terrorist attack targeting civilians at the Crocus City Hall, in Moscow on March 22. During an operational meeting of the Security Council on [March 23](#), President Tokayev affirmed Kazakhstan's solidarity with Russia in the fight against terrorism and assured that Kazakhstan stands ready to assist Russian law enforcement agencies in any necessary capacity. The Security Council convened to assess the strategies and coordination efforts of law enforcement agencies and local executive bodies in responding to extreme situations.

Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov faces a high-stakes decision on whether to [sign new legislation](#) that critics warn will significantly impair how human rights defenders and independent media, among others, can work. Kyrgyzstan's parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of a "foreign agents" bill that mirrors legislation adopted in Russia over a decade ago. The law is designed to control the activities of nonprofit and non-governmental organizations that receive funding from abroad by compelling them to register as "foreign representatives," leading to closer scrutiny of their activities by the authorities. In February, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrote to Japarov to raise concerns that the law would impact programs on health care and education funded by the U.S government and international partners, to the detriment of Kyrgyz citizens.

Other Developments

[Kazakh Foreign Minister To Visit China From March 28 To 30](#)

[Uzbekistan And Turkmenistan Review Regional And Global Situation](#)

[Experts See Central Asia Emboldened by Russia's Struggles in Ukraine](#)

[Islamic State 'recruiting from Tajikistan and other central Asian countries'](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

On March 23, the Indian Navy's ongoing maritime security operation '[Op Sankalp](#)' entered its 100th day. During this time, the Indian Navy has displayed an unwavering commitment to "securing the seas" and protecting the maritime community from numerous non-traditional risks occurring in the region as a result of the Israel-Hamas conflict. Since December 23, over 5000 personnel have been deployed at sea for over 450 ship days (with more than 21 ships deployed) and 900 hours of flying by maritime surveillance aircraft to combat maritime threats. Indian Navy's response to security incidents highlights the importance of 'Safety of Life at Sea' for all seafarers, regardless of their nationality.

On March 27, the [UK Littoral Response Group \(LRG\) arrived in Chennai](#) as part of their overseas deployment in the Indian Ocean region. This was the outcome of the talks held during the two-day visit of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to the UK. During the visit, Rt Hon Grant Shapps, the UK Defence Secretary, announced that the Royal Navy's high-readiness Littoral Response Group (LRG) and Carrier Strike Group (CSG) will be deployed in the Indian Ocean region in 2024 and 2025, respectively, to operate in coordination with Indian forces. An LRG is a [Royal Navy task group consisting](#) of at least two amphibious warfare ships, a Royal Marines company, and supporting forces that are principally responsible for amphibious combat in the littoral zones.

Prior to the arrival, the LRG, led by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Argus and RFA Lyme Bay, conducted maritime drills with the Indian Navy. They will now receive necessary repairs at the Larsen & Toubro shipyard in Kattupalli, near Chennai, marking the first time a Royal Navy vessel will undergo maintenance in India.

Other Developments

[India, Mozambique, And Tanzania held the second edition of the Trilateral Exercise, IMT TRILAT-2024, on March 21-29, 2024.](#)

[ICG Ship Samudra Paheredar arrives in Manila Bay, Philippines, as part of its overseas deployment to ASEAN countries.](#)

[A Kalvari class submarine makes history with its first voyage to Campbell Bay, India's southernmost port in the Nicobar group of islands.](#)



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