



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## India's Proximity Archives

April 3, 2024



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**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, Central Asia and Indian Ocean Region 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](mailto:sanket@dpg.org.in).

### Cover Image:

**South Asia:** *Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high-level security meeting on March 27, following the terrorist attack on Chinese nationals working on the Dasu dam project. Source: [Dawn](#)*

**Southeast Asia:** *Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India, with Prime Minister Anwar Bin Ibrahim of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on March 27, 2024. Source: [Dr. Jaishankar/Official X Account](#)*

**East Asia:** *Prime Minister Kishida received a courtesy call from His Excellency Prabowo Subianto, President-elect of the Republic of Indonesia, at the Prime Minister's Office, Tokyo, Japan on April 3, 2024. Source: [Prime Minister's Office of Japan](#)*

**Central Asia:** *President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev met with the Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Zhang Ming on March 28. Source: [The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)*

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## South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

US President Joe Biden [felicited](#) Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, on April 29, in the first communication between President Biden and Pakistan's leadership since he assumed office in 2021. President Biden recalled areas in which the US is helping Pakistan, such as health security, economic growth, and access to education. PM Shehbaz Sharif responded, [on March 31](#) seeking enduring ties with the US.

China has demanded a [thorough probe](#) into the terrorist attacks and security for its citizens after five Chinese nationals working on the Dasu dam project were killed in a suicide bombing in Bisham, Pakistan on April 26. [Chinese investigators](#) arrived in Pakistan on April 29 to join an investigation. Meanwhile, after the Tarbela Dam, Chinese companies [suspended civil work](#) on the Dasu and Diamer-Bhasha Dams. Approximately, 991 Chinese engineers working on both projects have stopped operations. Local staff of both projects have been directed to stay home till further orders.

A [full court meeting](#) of the Supreme Court judges of Pakistan was held in Islamabad on April 27 to deliberate on a letter written by six Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges about the alleged interference of intelligence agencies as well as executive in judicial matters. Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) and bar associations of Sindh, Lahore, Islamabad, Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa high courts condemned the alleged interference, urging the top judge to conduct a complete investigation into the matter.

After recent negotiations, Afghanistan and Pakistan [finalised a trade agreement](#) under which the requirement of visas and passports for border crossing of drivers and support staff for the movement of commercial goods has been removed. The two sides also agreed to finalise the long-pending Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) within the [next two months](#).

## Other Developments

[Russia says it is working on removing the Taliban from its terrorist list](#)

[Nepal Deputy PM Shrestha says he proposed new corridors to China](#)

[Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina slams opposition's 'Boycott India' call, questions sincerity amid allegations of interference](#)

[3 million children in Afghanistan will suffer malnutrition this year, warns World Food Programme](#)

## Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar, made an [official visit to Malaysia](#) from March 27-28, 2024. He called on the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Anwar Bin Ibrahim, and held bilateral meetings with Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamad Bin Haji Hasa, and Minister of Digital, Gobind Singh Deo. The two sides discussed bilateral cooperation in areas including political, trade and economic, defence, digital, culture and education. Prime Minister Ibrahim reiterated his commitment to facilitate the establishment of the [Indian Institute of Technology \(IIT\) branch campus in Malaysia](#).

Prabowo Subianto, Indonesia's President-elect, made his [official foreign visit to Beijing](#) on April 1, 2024. During his visit, he met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and discussed ways of enhancing cooperation in fields such as the economy, trade, and poverty alleviation. Prabowo highlighted that he "fully supports the development of closer Indonesia-China relations and wishes to continue President Joko's policy of friendship with China". He described China as a key partner in defence cooperation for regional peace and stability.

On April 2, [Philippines National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano](#) held a telephone conversation with the US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan. The two sides discussed "coercive, aggressive and deceptive actions" by Beijing in the South China Sea. The Philippines NSA "expressed his appreciation for the United States' continued assurances and reaffirmation of its ironclad commitment" to their alliance. This comes after the Philippines Defence Ministry stated that the country "will not be cowed into silence, submission or subservience" due to the ["illegal and uncivilised activities"](#) by China in the South China Sea.

### Other Developments

[Myanmar junta chief calls for unity and says military holding power 'temporarily'](#)

[Chinese warships were spotted again at Cambodia's naval base](#)

## East Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

United States President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping had their [first direct conversation](#) since November, on April 2. The [White House](#) described their talk as a “constructive discussion” on various bilateral, regional, and global issues, including areas of cooperation and areas of difference, while the [Chinese readout](#) described the discussion as “candid and constructive”. There was, however, little forward movement in resolution of irritants from both sides.

On March 31, China [released a fourth list](#) of 30 new names of various places in Arunachal Pradesh amid Beijing's stepped-up assertions in recent weeks to re-emphasise its claim over the Indian State. The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs, which released the list of standardised geographical names, claims it will take effect on May 1. The implementation measures stipulated in Article 13 that “place names in foreign languages that may harm China's territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorisation”. China claims that “Zangnan has been China's territory since ancient times”.

After welcoming Indonesian President-elect Prabowo Subianto, [Beijing welcomed foreign ministers](#) from other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), like Laos, Vietnam and East Timor. East Timor's Bendito Dos Santos Freitas, Laos' Saleumxay Kommasith and Vietnam's Bui Thanh Son are all due to stay in China from April 2 to 5 and are expected to hold talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. [Wang Wenbin](#), a spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said that “China hopes to achieve more practical results in its bilateral ties” with critical regional players. According to the [State of Southeast Asia 2024 survey](#), compiled by the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 50.5% of respondents opted for China, and 49.5% preferred the U.S. if ASEAN had to pick sides.

Indonesia's president-elect, [Prabowo Subianto, held a meeting with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan](#) in Tokyo on April 3, 2024. Prabowo expressed his intent to pursue deeper security and economic cooperation. This comes after his meeting with China's President Xi Jinping in Beijing on April 1. PM Kishida stated that he “would like to advance our bilateral relationship and cooperation in regional and international affairs”. The two sides [agreed to](#)

[enhance cooperation](#) and improve in areas including defence, manufacturing, industry and the economy, stated Prabowo.

## Other Developments

[China Begins Live-Fire Military Drills Near Myanmar Border](#)

[North Korea Says It Test-Fired New Solid-Fuel Hypersonic Missile](#)

[China To Import More From France, Foreign Minister Says Amid Europe EV Probe](#)

[Taiwan Builds Up Mobile Defences To Fight Off Possible Chinese Landing](#)



## West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

IRGC Quds Force Commander Mohammed Reza Zahedi and seven other officers were killed in an alleged Israeli airstrike on the [Iranian Embassy complex in Damascus](#), Syria on April 1. Iran warned of a "serious response" stating that due to Washington's support for Israel, the US was "answerable". Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant asserted that Israel is engaged in a [multi-front war](#) and will operate throughout the Middle East to prevent the enemies from gaining strength.

The Israeli and Egyptian mediators have reportedly developed an updated [proposal regarding hostage negotiations with Hamas](#). "Israel expects the mediators to act more forcefully against Hamas to move the negotiations forward towards a deal". Amidst this, seven aid workers were killed during an [Israeli airstrike in Gaza](#), which Prime Minister Netanyahu described as "unintentional".

The US National Security Advisor [Jake Sullivan is scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia](#) on April 4 to meet Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman. Washington remains determined to pursue Saudi-Israeli normalisation even as it remains elusive. Meanwhile, [Abdel Fattah el-Sisi](#) was sworn in for his third term as Egypt's President. He was re-elected in December 2023 with 89.6 percent of the vote.

### Other Developments

[US pushes alternatives to Rafah invasion in Hamas war talks with Israel](#)

[Security Council Hears Briefing on Situation Following Attack against Iranian Diplomatic Premises in Syria](#)

[The precision strike in Syria was an important proof of Israel's strength - editorial](#)

## Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [March 28](#), President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev held a meeting with Zhang Ming, Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), on the sidelines of the Boao Asian Forum. During the meeting, issues of development of the SCO and its further improvement were discussed in detail. The President said that the Kazakh side attaches special importance to the upcoming summit of the organisation under the theme of "Strengthening Multilateral Dialogue - Striving for Sustainable Peace and Development".

According to Tajikistan's Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment, there has been a [surge of migrant workers leaving Russia](#) for Tajikistan after the March 22 concert hall attack near Moscow. Four of the suspected gunmen are Tajik citizens and were arrested along with seven other suspects, some of whom also come from the ex-Soviet Central Asian nation. A Tajik Security source said that Tajikistan detained nine people this week suspected of having links to the mass shooting and also to the militant Islamist State group that claimed responsibility. The Russian Central Bank has said that staff shortages and resulting jump in wages were among risks to inflation that have compelled it to keep the key interest rate elevated. The Russian Central Bank has said that staff shortages and resulting jump in wages were among risks to inflation that have compelled it to keep the key interest rate elevated.

During a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hossein Amir Abdollahian on [March 28](#), Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedow said that Iran is "one of the most important partners" of his country in the energy and transport sectors. Berdimuhamedov also praised the joint Turkmen-Iranian group on economic cooperation for taking "specific measures to develop cooperation in the electricity and transport sectors". The two ministers [expressed their keen interest](#) in finding new methods of cooperation in the fuel and energy complex that are in line with modern requirements and in stepping up relations in the export and transit of energy resources.

## Other Developments

[Central Asia – China Secretariat Launches in Xian](#)

[Kyrgyzstan Adopts Law Targeting Foreign-Funded Ngos](#)

[President Zardari Calls for Transit Trade Deal with Turkmenistan](#)

[President of Kazakhstan met with Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress](#)

## Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

The Indian Navy conducted another [successful anti-piracy operation](#) on March 29, recapturing the hijacked Iranian fishing vessel "Al-Kambar" and forcing the surrender of nine armed pirates. The crew, comprising 23 Pakistani nationals, was safely rescued. The pirates are being brought to India for further legal action in accordance with the Maritime Anti-Piracy Act of 2022.

On April 02, advocating India's vision of SAGAR, the Indian Navy hosted the [second edition of the high-level virtual interaction MAHASAGAR](#). This edition saw participation from Heads of Navies/ Maritime Agencies & Senior Leadership from IOR littorals, Bangladesh, Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka & Tanzania. MAHASAGAR is the Indian Navy's outreach initiative for a high level virtual interaction between Maritime Heads for Active SAGAR. Building upon the previous edition, this edition Admiral R Hari Kumar, the Chief of Naval Staff and participating countries exchanged views on the ongoing situation in the Western IOR & need for information sharing towards collaborative mitigation of common maritime challenges. The [inaugural edition](#) took place on November 29, 2023, with an overarching theme "Collective Maritime Approach towards Countering Common Challenges".

**On April 2**, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ship Samudra Paheredar, a specialized pollution control vessel made a [port call at Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam](#), as part of overseas deployment to ASEAN countries. The ICG ship visited Manila Bay, Philippines, earlier on March 25. The visit by the vessel is a part of a larger effort to showcase the capabilities of the Indian Coast Guard's Marine Pollution Response unit as well as the region's common concern and commitment over marine pollution in the ASEAN area. The Indian Coast Guard is currently on its third consecutive deployment to an ASEAN nation. Last year, ICG Pollution Control Vessels visited Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia as part of the same initiative.

## Other Developments

[LSAM 18 - 'Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile Barge' built by MSME Shipyard was delivered at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai.](#)

[Admiral Adoong Pan-Iam Commander-in-Chief Royal Thai Navy interacted with Admiral R Hari Kumar, during his official visit to India](#)

[The prime minister of Sri Lanka, Dinesh Gunawardena, paid an official visit to China and participated at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024.](#)



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