



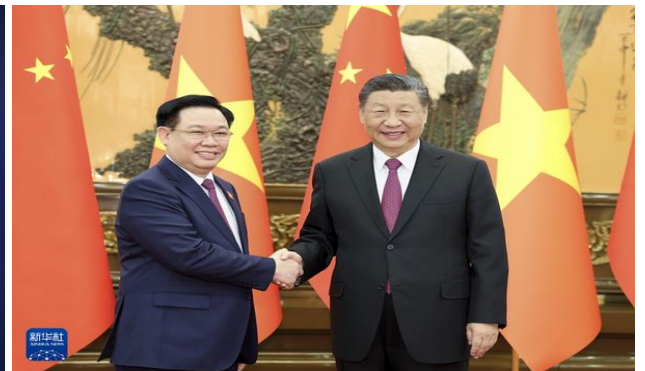
Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

April 10, 2024



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Delhi Policy Group

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

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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.

Cover Image:

Central Asia: *President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, EU High Representative, Josep Borrell, Secretary of State of the United States of America, Antony Blinken, and Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, met in Brussels to reaffirm support for Armenia's sovereignty, democracy, territorial integrity, and socio-economic resilience on April 5, 2024. Source: [The European Commission](#)*

East Asia: *President Xi Jinping meets with the Chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam, Vuong Dinh Hue, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, on April 8, 2024. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China](#)*

Southeast Asia: *On 7 April 2024, Philippines, Japan, Australia, and the U.S successfully conducted the first Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) within the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone. Source: [Department of Defense. Australia Twitter](#)*

Indian Ocean Region: *On April 9, the India Coast Guard ship Samudra Pehredar made port call at Maura, Brueni. Source: [Indian Coast Guard Twitter Handle](#)*

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Shahbaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, paid his first visit abroad to Saudi Arabia from April 6-8 and [held discussions](#) with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. According to the [joint statement](#), "both sides affirmed their commitment to expediting the first wave of investment worth USD 5 billion" to Pakistan. The [minerals sector](#), particularly the Reko Diq gold and copper mines, is anticipated to receive a direct investment of USD 1 billion.

Pakistan has [started construction](#) on its section of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline. Tenders have been issued by officials, and consultants have been asked to re-validate the survey. To prevent arbitration and a projected fine of USD 18 billion, Pakistan needs to construct an 80-km pipeline. The project was originally scheduled to finish by December 31, 2014, and become operational on January 1, 2015, but it has been delayed since then.

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party of Nepal staged a protest in Kathmandu on April 9, calling for the addressing of its [40-point demands](#). The demands include the reinstatement of monarchy and a Hindu state, as well as the scrapping of federalism. A clash broke out between the demonstrators and security personnel after protesters attempted to march towards the restricted zone.

On April 4, Nepal's parliament [endorsed the BIMSTEC Charter](#). Apart from Nepal, the other six member countries of BIMSTEC have the BIMSTEC Charter endorsed by their respective parliaments. However, the BIMSTEC charter can only come into effect after the parliamentary approval.

On April 6, Nepal's Revenue Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Ram Prasad Ghimire, said that his country has proposed a [customs mutual assistance arrangement](#) with India, to simplify trade-related activities between the two countries. The agreements will allow for the exchange of information, intelligence, and documents, ultimately assisting the countries in the prevention and investigation of customs offences. According to him, a separate integrated revenue policy will be prepared for the upcoming fiscal year.

Other Developments

[Political parties are banned in Afghanistan: Taliban Justice Ministry](#)

[Pakistan's Second Round of Afghan Migrants Expulsion Draws Concern](#)

[U.P. ATS arrests two Pakistani nationals for illegally entering India via Nepal](#)

[India's essential commodities quota for Maldives demonstrates strong bilateral ties: gov't](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The Philippines, Japan, Australia, and the U.S. [conducted a joint maritime exercise](#) in the South China Sea on April 7, 2024. The exercise was intended to “uphold the right to freedom of navigation and overflight and respect for maritime rights under international law”, according to the [joint statement](#). The Philippine military stated that the exercise involved communication exercises, division tactics, and other drills.

On April 7, the Chinese military conducted a “[joint naval and air strategic patrol](#)” under the People's Liberation Army's Southern Theatre Command. The military stated that “all military activities that disrupt the South China Sea and create hot spots are under control”.

Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister, [Lawrence Wong, commenced his visit to Germany](#) on April 8, 2024. During his visit, he called on German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, met Finance Minister Christian Lindner, and had lunch with Vice-Chancellor and Economy Minister Robert Habeck. Wong stated that the two sides had a “good exchange of views on how Singapore and Germany can navigate an increasingly complex world as like-minded countries seeking to strengthen multilateralism and a rules-based world order”.

Other Developments

[Myanmar junta slams UN's 'one-sided' human rights claims](#)

[Vatican foreign minister travels to Vietnam in unprecedented visit](#)

East Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

Vuong Dinh Hue, Vietnam's top legislator and potential presidential contender, made [an official visit to China](#) at the invitation of the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China, Zhao Leji, from April 7 to April 12. The visiting dignitary met with Chinese President Xi Jinping on April 8. [President Xi](#) emphasised the importance of upholding the socialist system and maintaining national stability and development for both China and Vietnam, underscoring that the salient feature of China-Vietnam relations is their shared destiny and values and that their traditional friendship can be accurately described as "comrades-plus-brothers". President Xi also urged authorities in Hanoi to exercise ["political wisdom"](#) in managing ties with Beijing".

On April 9, Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, who is in China for a two-day official visit, met his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi. [According to the statement released by the Russian Foreign Ministry](#), Lavrov expressed gratitude to China for their support in upholding the "sovereign rights of Russians". He also noted that the recent election in Russia underscored the profound trust that the Russian people place in their leader and his domestic and foreign policies, which include their commitment to enhance strategic cooperation and partnership with China. During the meeting, both ministers also agreed to [discuss ways to deepen security co-operation](#) across Europe and Asia to counter attempts by the United States to impose its will on the region. According to the New York Times, Lavrov said, "There is no place for dictatorships, hegemony, neo-colonial, and colonial practices, which are now being widely used by the United States and the rest of the 'collective West'."

[Lavrov's visit](#) came a few days after Janet L. Yellen, the Treasury Secretary, [warned to take "significant measures"](#) if Chinese companies supplied material support for Russia's conflict in Ukraine. It also took place as President Biden was set to host the leaders of Japan and the Philippines on Wednesday to boost economic and security ties to counter China's growing assertiveness in Asia.

[South Koreans began voting for a new parliament](#) on April 9, in an election widely seen as a midterm referendum on President Yoon Suk Yeol's administration. Despite Yoon still having three years left in office, his People Power Party (PPP) has struggled to achieve its agenda in a legislature dominated by the opposition Democratic Party (DPK). Yoon is under pressure

to address various domestic issues, including rising food prices, a rapidly ageing population and an ongoing doctor's strike. If the PPP fails to secure a strong representation, Yoon could leave office with little show for his time, other than his foreign policy achievements, mainly related to his success in building relations with Japan and the United States.

Other Developments

[Vietnam aims to start work on high-speed rail lines to China by 2030](#)

[Kishida kicks off state visit to U.S., with allies set for 'historic' defense upgrade](#)

[Kishida Kim summit unlikely to happen soon, Japan envoy to U.S. says](#)

[Canada's domestic spy agency found China interfered in last two elections, probe hears](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On April 8, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that a date had been set for an [invasion of Rafah](#) in southern Gaza. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken informed Washington that Israel had not shared any specific date for the offensive. Since Rafah is the last refuge for around 1.4 million displaced Palestinians, the US has asked Israel for a credible plan to protect [civilians in the area](#). Meanwhile, Israeli officials informed that there had been no significant progress in the [hostage negotiations in Cairo](#).

Since November 2023, Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels have reportedly [attacked 90 Israeli, US, and British commercial vessels](#) in the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, and Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the Houthis shed light on their attacks on the southern Israeli city of Eilat.

On April 8, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian inaugurated a [new site for consular services](#) following an Israeli airstrike on the Iranian consulate complex in Damascus, Syria. Following the airstrike in Syria, Iranian officials warned Israel that none of its embassies were safe, accusing the [US of giving Israel the go-ahead to attack the Iranian consulate](#). Herzi Halevi, Chief of General Staff of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), stressed that Israel is prepared for any response through cooperation with the US and strategic partners in the region.

On April 8, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) instructed its membership committee to review the [Palestinian Authority's \(PA\) application for full membership](#). It is expected that the US will veto any resolution calling for full Palestinian statehood at the UN, insisting that Palestine must first negotiate statehood with Israel.

Other Developments

[What military support does the US give Israel?](#)

[Russian oil dominates India's oil imports; share of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the US falls](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [April 5](#), the European Union and the United States held a [joint EU-US-Armenia high-level meeting](#) in support of Armenia's resilience. The unusual format of the tripartite meeting has been viewed as an attempt to help [pull Armenia out of Russia's](#) orbit and support its economy in the face of growing tensions in the region. Azerbaijan, a key natural gas exporter to the EU and a country that has recently engaged in a series of conflicts with Armenia, expressed strong [objections](#) to the trilateral meeting.

Following the talks in Brussels, President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced a landmark plan to help pull Armenia out of Russia's orbit and support its economy in the face of growing tensions in the region by allocating [270 million euros to support](#) businesses and industry in the South Caucasus country over the next four years as part of "a new and ambitious partnership agenda". President Ursula stated "We will invest in key infrastructure projects. For example, the Black Sea electricity cable is a new transmission route that is full of opportunities. It can notably bring clean, renewable energy into Europe. We are ready to support it. In parallel, we will continue investing in Armenia's renewable energy production and better interconnections with Georgia". We are ready to support it. In parallel, we will continue investing in Armenia's renewable energy production and in better interconnections with Georgia". While [no military component was discussed](#) during last week's meeting, a senior pro-government lawmaker in Yerevan hopes Armenia will soon be granted access to security assistance.

[India-Kazakhstan held the 5th meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism](#) in Astana, Kazakhstan on April 8. The Indian delegation was led by Mr. K.D. Dewal, Joint Secretary (CT), Ministry of External Affairs of the Republic of India, and the Kazakhstan delegation was led by H.E. Mr. Talgat Kaliyev, Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Both sides exchanged views on the terrorist threats in their respective regions, including state-sponsored, cross-border terrorism in South Asia and terror activities in the Af-Pak region. They also emphasised the importance of strengthening counter-terrorism cooperation through the exchange of information, capacity building, training programmes, and cooperation at multilateral forums, such as the UN, EAG, and SCO.

From April 2-3, the [Shanghai Cooperation organisation \(SCO\) held its 19th Security Council Secretaries](#) meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan. Under the chairmanship of Kazakhstan, Secretaries of the security councils, and heads of executive bodies of the security councils from SCO member states and observer states (the Republic of Belarus and Mongolia) attended the meeting. SCO Secretary-General Zhang Ming condemned the various terrorist attacks in Russia, Iran, and Pakistan that occurred this year, and said, "At present, the international security landscape is complex and unstable, with traditional and non-traditional security threats intermingled. Geopolitical risks are on the rise, and terrorism, extremism, and separatism persistently evolve, posing serious threats to global and regional peace and stability. Combatting terrorism remains a top priority for the organisation, and we are committed to enhancing cooperation among nations in these efforts".

Other Developments

[Uzbekistan, Georgia agree to enhance cooperation](#)

[Tajikistan rejects Russian claim that Ukraine is recruiting its citizens](#)

[pm Pashinyan trying to put an end to Armenia-Russia relations hanging by a thread](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

On April 5, the US Navy and Cochin Shipyard (CSL) inked a [Master Shipyard Repair Agreement \(MRSA\)](#), making CSL the third Indian shipyard to do so after Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Shipyard at Kattupalli. The MSRA will enable American naval vessels operating in the Indian Ocean region to undergo repair works at CSL's facilities.

After Chabahar, India [assumed the rights to operate a second overseas port](#), Sittwe in Myanmar. A proposal by Indian Ports Global Limited (IPGL) to take over the entire operations of the Sittwe Port, located in Myanmar's Rakhine State, has been approved by the Ministry of External Affairs. IPGL (a joint venture between Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) and Deendayal Port Trust) is tasked with equipping and operating container and multi-purpose terminals at Chabahar Port in Iran.

Sittwe Port aims to [enhance connectivity with north-eastern states](#) and serves as a strategic point in the Bay of Bengal. The port is an important component of the ambitious connectivity project between India and Myanmar, which aims to link the seaports of Kolkata in eastern India and Sittwe in Myanmar. Additionally, the project will connect Sittwe Port to Paletwa in Myanmar through the Kaladan river waterway and Paletwa to Zorinpui in Mizoram through a road component.

On April 9, using the recently operational ["C-Dome" Defence System from a Sa'ar 6-class corvette](#), the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) successfully intercepted an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in the Gulf of Eilat. The C-Dome, a naval version of the Iron Dome air defence system, is mounted on Israel's most sophisticated warships, the Sa'ar 6-class corvettes. Since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war, a Sa'ar 6-class corvette group comprising four corvettes constructed in Germany for the Israeli Navy has been deployed in the Red Sea area. This significant achievement marks a new milestone in the IDF's defence capabilities.

Other Developments

[On April 9, the India Coast Guard ship Samudra Pehredar made port call at Maura, Brueni.](#)

[From April 1-2, a two-day Coastal Security Exercise Sagar Kavach involving all maritime security agencies was conducted in Lakshadweep.](#)

[On April 9, Admiral R Hari Kumar unveiled 350 m long offshore patrol vessel pier, Pier-3 in Karawar.](#)



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