



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

April 17, 2024



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Delhi Policy Group

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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.

Cover Image:

South Asia: Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud held meeting with Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif during his visit to Islamabad on April 16, 2024. Source: [The Express Tribune](#)

Southeast Asia: Kishida Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan, with the President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, and President of the Republic of the Philippines, Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., at the Japan-U.S.-Philippines Summit in Washington D.C. on April 11, 2024. Source: [Prime Minister's Office of Japan](#)

Indian Ocean Region: Indian Navy's MARCOs seized 940 kgs of contraband narcotics in Western Indian Ocean. Source: [Combined Maritime Forces Twitter Handle](#)

Central Asia: Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi, Secretary General of GCC and Bakhromjon Aloyev, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan made a statement on the outcome of the 2nd ministerial meeting of GCC-Central Asia Strategic Dialogue, Tashkent, Uzbekistan on April 15, 2024. Source: [Middle East Monitor](#)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On April 15-16, a Saudi delegation led by Foreign Minister Faisal Bin Farhan Al Saud [visited Pakistan](#) to prepare for the Saudi Crown Prince's visit and initiate talks on specific investment projects. In a [joint press conference](#), the Saudi foreign minister stated, "We are fully committed to enhancing our investment in Pakistan". During Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Riyadh on April 8, Saudi Arabia had agreed to [increase deposits](#) in the State Bank of Pakistan by USD 2 billion, ultimately reaching USD 5 billion.

On April 13, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) with coalition of six other opposition parties announced a [countrywide movement](#) for the rule of law, under the banner of Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP). The movement will hold public meetings, engage bar associations, university students and other parties for mustering their support for the campaign against the PML-N-led coalition government.

The 39th meeting of the Working Group on Afghanistan under the [CSTO Ministerial Council](#) was held on April 10. During the meeting the participants noted the persistence of unfavourable trends in the socio-economic and security spheres and the risks of terrorist and drug threats emanating from Afghanistan's territory. Earlier on April 8 Imangali Tasmagambetov, the Secretary-General of the CSTO, met with Roza Otunbayeva, head of the UNAMA and discussed [political developments](#) in Afghanistan.

Sri Lanka on April 16 rejected [international bondholders' proposal](#) to restructure more than USD 12 billion in debt. According to the government statement, some of the proposal's "baseline" assessments and a lack of a contingency option in the case of continued economic weakness were the two main reasons the deal was not agreed. Sri Lanka has already reached an "in principle agreement" with its [bilateral creditors](#), including India and Paris Club members.

Other Developments

[UN contact group on Afghanistan stalled](#)

[India hails Afghanistan's move to restore property rights of Hindus, Sikhs](#)

['Pledge fulfilled...': Maldives President Muizzu says as Batch 2 of Indian troops leave island](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The United States President Joe Biden, Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Philippines President Marcos Jr convened their [first-ever trilateral](#) summit in Washington D.C. on April 11. During the summit, President Biden reiterated that "the United States defense commitments to Japan and to the Philippines are ironclad". The three leaders [signed various initiatives](#) including inviting Philippine and Japanese Coast Guard members onto a U.S. Coast Guard vessel during a trilateral patrol in the Indo-Pacific, building humanitarian assistance and disaster relief logistics hub at one of the nine US military bases in Philippine, and a new infrastructure project called the PGI Luzon Economic Corridor.

The [inaugural U.S-Philippines 3+3 Meeting](#) was convened in Washington D.C. on April 12. The US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo, Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro, and National Security Advisor Eduardo M. Año. The two sides reiterated their shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific and discussed ways to enhance coordination regarding shared challenges in the South China Sea, including repeated harassment of lawful Philippine operations by China.

India and the Philippines held the [Fourth Joint Consular Committee Meeting](#) in Manila on April 12. The Indian delegation was led by Muktesh K. Pardeshi, Secretary of Consular, Passport, Visa and Overseas Indian Affairs and the Philippines side was led by Jesus S. Domingo, Under Secretary for Civilian Security & Consular Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs. The two sides discussed issues of mutual concern including e-Visas, bilateral agreements (MLAT, SSA, TTSP), issues related to students, and community welfare.

Other Developments

[Marcos says he will not hand Duterte to ICC over drug war](#)

[Thailand asks Myanmar junta to reduce violence, prepares for exodus of people after fall of border town](#)

East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

U.S. President Joe Biden and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida held a [bilateral summit](#) on April 10, 2024. The two sides signed 70 new agreements to enhance cooperation in areas of defense, space, economic security, artificial intelligence, fusion energy, and disaster relief. The joint statement titled "[Global Partners for the Future](#)" was issued on the occasion.

Chairman of China's National People's Congress Standing Committee, Zhao Leji, led a delegation to DPRK for a '[goodwill visit](#)' from April 11-13, where he attended the 'China-DPRK Friendship Year' opening ceremony, which marks 75 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries. [The Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson](#), Mao Ning said that, the visit by Zhao Leji, who ranks third in the ruling Communist Party hierarchy, "reflects the deep friendship between the two countries and the great importance China attaches to its relations with the DPRK". On April 13, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met Zhao Leji in Pyongyang. During the meeting, Kim Jong Un expressed his willingness "to strengthen cooperation in various fields and exchange of experience in state governance with China". F, deepen traditional friendship, and write a new chapter in the DPRK-China relationship". The three-day trip comes amid [speculation about a potential meeting](#) between Chinese President Xi Jinping and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un later this year.

For the first time in nearly 18 months On April 16, the U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chinese Defense Minister Adm. Dong Jun [held discussion](#) via video conference. They discussed Sino-US defence relations, regional and global security concerns and China's moves in the South China Sea. In the official statement by China's Ministry of Defence, [Adm. Dong stated](#), "The US side should recognise China's firm position, respect China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea, and take practical actions to safeguard regional peace".

Other Developments

[China says Hong Kong must 'tightly hold' national security line](#)

[Japan reboots 'Mutually Beneficial' China ties in new Diplomatic Bluebook](#)

[How a North Korean missile researcher became a South Korean MP](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On April 13, Iran launched a [barrage of missiles and drones](#) targeting military facilities in Israel in response to a suspected Israeli attack on Iran's consulate in Damascus, Syria. Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi stated that the IRGC has taught an "unforgettable [lesson to the Zionist enemy](#) [Israel]" and that the military operation was a "legitimate act of self-defence". President Biden condemned the Iranian attack and reaffirmed the [US's "ironclad commitment" to the security of Israel](#). Moreover, he informed that nearly all of the incoming drones and missiles were destroyed by the US and Israel.

As hostilities escalated in West Asia, on April 14, India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, expressed the [importance of exercising restraint](#) and returning to diplomacy during a telephone conversation with Iran's Foreign Minister, Hossein Amirabdollahian. EAM Dr. Jaishankar also discussed the release of 17 Indian crew members aboard the MSC Aries, an IRGC-seized cargo vessel with Israeli connections.

A United Nations Security Council (UNSC) committee has [failed to reach a unanimous decision](#) on whether the Palestinian Authority (PA) should become a full member. While the Palestinian Authority is expected to ask the UNSC to vote on a draft resolution recommending Palestine's full membership, the US is likely to veto any such resolution. The US Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield emphasised that Palestine's full membership in the UN would not result in a two-state solution and that the US was working on the ground to bring about [peace between Israel and Palestine](#).

Other Developments

[How the U.S. forged a fragile Middle Eastern Alliance to repel Iran's Israel attack](#)

[Attack on Iranian embassy violated international rules: Chinese FM](#)

[Middle East skies 'open' to Israel planes amid tension with Iran, Defence Minister says](#)

[2 Hezbollah commanders killed in IDF strikes as attack drones injure 3 in north](#)

[Russia's Putin urges restraint in call with Iran's Raisi as tensions soar](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The fifth edition of India-Uzbekistan [Joint Military Exercise](#) Dustlik commenced at Termez District in Uzbekistan on April 15 and will continue till April 28. During the 14-day exercise, the Indian Armed Forces and the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan will undergo comprehensive joint training sessions. The [aim](#) of this yearly exercise is to foster military cooperation and enhance combined capabilities to execute joint operations in mountainous and semi-urban terrain.

Members of the GCC and Central Asian countries met in Tashkent for the [Second Ministerial Meeting of the Strategic Dialogue](#) on April 15 to discuss ways to strengthen "comprehensive cooperation" between the two regions. The Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar and President of the current session of the Ministerial Council, Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan Bakhtiyor Saidov headed the meeting. The [ministers discussed](#) strengthening mutually beneficial and comprehensive cooperation between the two regions in the trade, economic, investment, transport and communications, cultural and humanitarian, environmental, and tourism. They also reviewed the implementation of the agreements reached within the framework of the first summit of leaders of Central Asia and the GCC states, held on July 19, 2023, and the "Joint Action Plan for 2023-2027 for Strategic Dialogue and Cooperation". The leaders also exchanged views on current aspects of the international and regional agenda, particularly the current situation in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Kazakhstan's President, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, [visited Armenia](#) on April 15, where he met Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Both leaders expressed their strong commitment to enhancing their multifaceted ties and signed ten documents, including a trade and economic cooperation roadmap for 2024-2025. During a [joint press conference](#), President Tokayev also welcomed the aspiration of Armenia and Azerbaijan to sign a peace treaty. Furthermore, he extended support by saying, "Kazakhstan is ready to provide maximum assistance and its platform for negotiations between the two countries".

The Council of Foreign Ministers of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was held in Minsk on April 12, to discuss pressing international issues and deepening cooperation within the CIS. Belarusian Foreign Minister, [S. Aleinik](#)

[stressed](#) the importance of constructive dialogue, especially within the CIS in the current crisis of international relations. Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Murat Nurtleu also participated in the seventh meeting of the [heads of foreign affairs agencies](#) in Central Asia, he emphasised the importance of intensifying efforts for regional security, combating terrorism, and fostering cooperation in economy, trade, green energy and ecology, transport, logistics, science, education, and culture.

Other Developments

[Kazakhstan exceeds oil production quota under OPEC+ agreement](#)

[Tajikistan denounces "torture" of Tajik suspects in Moscow attack, urges fair trial](#)

[Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan prepare for high-level talks to develop strategic partnership](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

On April 13, INS Talwar, operating in support of the Canadian-led Combined Task Force (CTF) 150, carried out its first [drug interdiction](#) as a CMF member. The ship seized 940 kg of drugs. With 42 participating countries, Combined Maritime Forces is the largest international alliance in the world.

On April 13, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards seized the [MSC Aries, a Portuguese-flagged cargo ship](#), 50 nautical miles (92km) northeast of Fujairah, an area near the Strait of Hormuz. The crew consists of Indian, Filipino, Pakistani, Russian, and Estonian nationals. Following the incident, Dr. S. Jaishankar spoke to Iran's Foreign Minister on April 14 to discuss the release of the 17 Indian crew members of MSC Aries. This latest seizure of a civilian vessel without provocation constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and an act of piracy by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

The [ICC International Maritime Bureau \(IMB\)](#) has raised concerns about the continued acts of maritime piracy off the coast of Somalia in its first quarter report for 2024. The report highlights two successful hijackings, emphasizing the ongoing threat posed by Somali piracy occurrences. In the first three months of 2024, there were 33 instances of armed robbery and piracy against ships, a marked increase from the 27 incidents reported during the same period in 2023. Out of these, 24 vessels were boarded, six experienced attempted attacks, two were hijacked, and one was fired upon.

Other developments

[A Bangladeshi ship that was seized off the Somali coast was released after being held for over a month.](#)

[Following recent mishaps involving its frigate, Belgium postponed its Red Sea deployment.](#)

[BJP in their 2024 election manifesto vows to expand Bharat's defence footprint across strategic locations and partner with friendly countries to protect Bharat's and the Indian Ocean Region's security interests.](#)



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