



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## India's Proximity Archives

April 24, 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 and President of Iran Ebrahim Raisi held bilateral talks in Islamabad on April 22, 2024. Source: X/ [@ForeignOfficePk](#)

**Southeast Asia:** Indonesian President Joko Widodo and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Jakarta on April 18, 2024. (Source: [Joko Widodo/Official X Account](#))

**Central Asia:** President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart, awarded the President of Kyrgyzstan, Sadyr Japarov, with the 1st class "Dostyk" order on April 19, 2024. Source: [The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)

**Indian Ocean Region:** The Indian Navy held Poorvi Lehar (XPOL 2024) exercise on the East Coast on April 20. Source: [PIB](#)

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## South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi [visited Pakistan](#) from April 22 to 24 and held [bilateral talks](#) with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Both countries decided 'in principle' not to provide a safe haven to terrorist organisations within their country, to increase cooperation in border management, and to prevent smuggling and drug trafficking. President Raisi also held a meeting with Pakistan Army Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir.

PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif is on a [visit to China](#) from April 22-26. The details of the nature of his unannounced visit remained unknown, as the political party and the Pakistan foreign office did not share any details about it. According to the media reports the visit is of a 'personal nature', during which Nawaz Sharif will undergo a "medical check-up" and hold meetings with some Chinese companies regarding development works in Punjab. Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar is also accompanying him.

On April 22, The Election Commission of Maldives announced [the interim results](#) of the 20th Parliamentary elections which was held on April 2. In the elections, the ruling party Peoples National Congress secured a majority with 66 seats out of 93 seats. The main opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) secured 12 seats, and independent candidates, including government-endorsed candidates, won 11 seats. The swearing-in ceremony for the 20th Parliament will be held on May 28.

Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani visited Bangladesh on April 23 from where he travelled to Nepal for a state visit scheduled for April 23-24. During the [bilateral meeting](#), Bangladesh and Qatar signed 10 deals, including agreements on cooperation on ports, and overseas employment and welfare. In Nepal, the Emir held [bilateral talks](#) with President Ram Chandra Paudel in which they discussed matters related to bilateral interests and diplomatic relations.

### Other Developments

[Pakistan offers over USD 32bn projects for Saudi investment](#)

[India's Minister of External Affairs Dr. S Jaishankar meets UN Assistance Mission Chief, discusses current situation in Afghanistan](#)

## Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The Philippines and the United States commenced a [three-week joint combat training exercise, named Balikatan](#), on April 22, 2024. The exercise involves training in maritime security, air and missile defense, dynamic missile strikes, cyber defense and information operations and witnessed the participation of a total of 16,700 troops from the Philippines and the U.S. Fourteen countries will join the drills as observers including India, Japan and countries from ASEAN and Europe.

The first [ASEAN Future Forum 2024](#) was convened in Hanoi on April 23, 2024. The forum is expected to create a platform for stakeholders to contribute ideas and initiatives on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)'s future vision, according to Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Do Hung Viet. The forum was attended by government leaders and ministers of ASEAN states and other 400 registered delegates. Dr. S. Jaishankar delivered [virtual remarks](#) at the Forum and reaffirmed that "ASEAN is at the heart of our Act East Policy and is a crucial pillar in India's wider Indo-Pacific vision".

Indonesian [President Joko Widodo held a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi](#) in Jakarta on April 18, 2024. The two sides discussed strengthening cooperation in areas of economy, trade, food security and energy. Wang Yi also reaffirmed China's support in operating the Jakarta-Bandung High-speed Railway at a high level and advancing major flagship projects such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Corridor. During Wang Yi's visit to Indonesia, he held meetings with Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi and Defense Minister and President-elect Prabowo Subianto. China's Foreign Ministry reported that the two countries have agreed to set up [a 2+2 dialogue between foreign ministers and defense ministers](#) to deepen diplomatic and defense ties.

### Other Developments

[Chinese warships at Cambodian base for months, CSIS analysis shows](#)

[ASEAN calls for halt to violence on Thai-Myanmar border](#)

[US sends land-attack missile system to Philippines for exercises in apparent message to China](#)

## East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

China's Minister of Foreign Affairs [Wang Yi, made an official visit to Papua New Guinea](#) from April 20 to April 21, 2024. In meetings with PNG Prime Minister James Marape and Foreign Minister Justin Tkachenko, the two sides agreed to maintain high-level exchanges, start negotiations on a free trade agreement as soon as possible, enhance cooperation in multiple sectors and further raise the height and quality of their comprehensive strategic partnership. Wang Yi at the [joint press conference](#) stated that "China's engagement and cooperation with the South Pacific Island countries is dedicated to mutual support and assistance to achieve common development, without any geopolitical self-interest".

The US and South Korea conducted the [largest combined air exercises](#) on the Korean Peninsula on April 23, 2024. The 15-day annual exercise, named Korea Flying Training, is aimed at training to "deter, defend and defeat" enemies. Rachel Buitrago, a U.S. Air Force spokesperson, stated that exercises are purely defensive in nature and are conducted with no specific adversary in mind.

North Korea conducted its [first nuclear counter-attack drills](#), according to the state news agency KCNA on April 23. The country's artillery forces tested the nationwide nuclear management system, called "nuclear trigger" on April 22. On April 22, the South Korean military reported North Korea had fired several short-range ballistic missiles towards the sea. KCNA stated that the drills were a protest against the "provocative and invasive" military exercise conducted by the US and South Korea. North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un, oversaw the stimulation drills and praised the readiness of "the world's best" tactical nuclear attack weapons.

### Other Developments

[Xi Jinping orders biggest Chinese military reorganisation since 2015](#)

[High-level North Korea agriculture delegation visits Russia](#)

[G7 pledges swift aid for Ukraine, seeks to calm Middle East](#)



## West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

During a United Nations Security Council meeting on April 18, the [US vetoed a Palestinian request](#) to become a full member of the UN, while Britain and Switzerland abstained. Palestine will remain a non-member observer state. The US reiterated its support for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, acknowledging that such a solution can only be achieved by direct negotiations between the parties. Meanwhile, on April 23, the US Congress passed a bill that included USD 26 billion in [wartime aid to Israel](#) and humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza.

According to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the US aid bill demonstrates that both Democrats and Republicans support Israel and are committed to [defending Western civilisation](#). For his part, President Biden asserted that the national security package underscores American leadership and the [determination to uphold democracy and freedom](#) in the face of oppression and tyranny.

As tensions between Israel and Iran escalated, [explosions were reported](#) near the airport in the Iranian province of Isfahan on April 19. It is to be noted that, Isfahan hosts the Natanz uranium enrichment site. On the other hand, Iran-backed Lebanese militant group [Hezbollah launched drone attacks on Israeli bases](#) in the city of Acre in retaliation for the killing of one of its fighters.

### Other Developments

[Partnerships in fintech, aviation, clean energy tech to drive India, UAE growth story: CEPA Council Director](#)

[China's foreign minister says admitting Palestinian state to UN is move to rectify injustice](#)

[UAE launches military exercise with 10-nation participation](#)

[Israeli military intelligence chief resigns, citing October 7 failures](#)

[Netanyahu vows imminent 'painful blows,' diplomatic pressure on Hamas to free hostages](#)

## Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On April 18, the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, welcomed the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Japarov for an official visit. The leaders chaired the [sixth meeting of the Supreme Interstate Council of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic](#) on April 19 and announced the [signing of a historic agreement](#) intended to deepen and expand relations between their countries, unlocking broader opportunities for the advancement of interaction. According to [President Tokayev](#), the agreement is expected to have a positive impact on both countries' economies and is indicative of their shared commitment to fostering growth and development in the region.

British Foreign Secretary, David Cameron began his [official visit to Central Asia](#) with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on April 22. Minister Cameron will also be visiting Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Mongolia as part of the British government's ambition to increase engagement with this pivotal region. [In Tajikistan](#), Cameron met with the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon and discussed issues of cooperation between Tajikistan and the UK. David Cameron is the [first British Foreign Secretary](#) to visit Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan and the first to Uzbekistan since 1997. It is also the first visit to Mongolia at this level in over a decade. This trip follows a damning [report published by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the UK Parliament](#), which concluded that the UK's high-level ministerial engagement with Central Asia's governments has been persistently inadequate and interpreted by partners as demonstrating "a lack of seriousness" from the British government. Before embarking on his official visit, [Foreign Secretary Cameron highlighted](#) that his intention was to end the circumvention that Russia is using Central Asia to side-step sanctions. The Foreign Secretary warned that items which could be used to build Russian President Vladimir Putin's war machine should not be exported from the UK to neighbouring states only to be sent on to Moscow.

The Armenian Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, is facing protests for his decision to hand [four villages to Azerbaijan](#). He argued that the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan "need to convert the theoretical peace agenda into an actual peaceful reality". The deal for the villages, a precursor to a wider agreement on borders between the two countries, has been praised by international diplomats as a landmark moment; however, for Armenia, Pashinyan's decision is regarded as "too many unilateral and unreciprocated concessions".



## Other Developments

[Armenia and Azerbaijan Engulfed in Legal Disputes at the Hague](#)

[Tajikistan Striving To Convince The World That It Can Contain Terrorism](#)

[Turkmenistan And The Republic Of Korea Discussed Expanding Partnership](#)

## Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

The Indian Navy (IN) conducted [Exercise Poorvi Lehar](#) (XPOL 2024) on the East Coast on April 20. The exercise aimed at readiness to tackle security challenges in the region witnessed the participation of ships, submarines, aircraft, and special forces. In addition, assets from the IAF, Andaman and Nicobar Command, and Coast Guard also participated.

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the Royal Oman Police Coast Guard (ROP CG) held their [5th Annual High-Level Meeting](#) on April 23 in New Delhi. The meeting marked a significant milestone in the collaborative efforts of the two nations to combat transnational illegal activities at sea and advance regional cooperation. The discussions centred on implementing the Sea Rider initiative, cross-ship visits, professional connections between pollution reporting centres, and strengthening bilateral contacts through a capacity-building plan.

[EU will become an observer](#) in the Djibouti Code of Conduct/Jeddah Amendment. The aim of the regional cooperation framework is to combat illicit marine operations such as piracy, armed robbery, and human trafficking in the North-Western Indian Ocean, which includes the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

### Other developments

[As part of Germany's participation in the EU's military Red Sea operation "Aspides," the frigate "Hessen" will be replaced by the "Hamburg" mission.](#)

[Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi appointed as the next Chief of the Naval Staff of the republic of India.](#)



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