



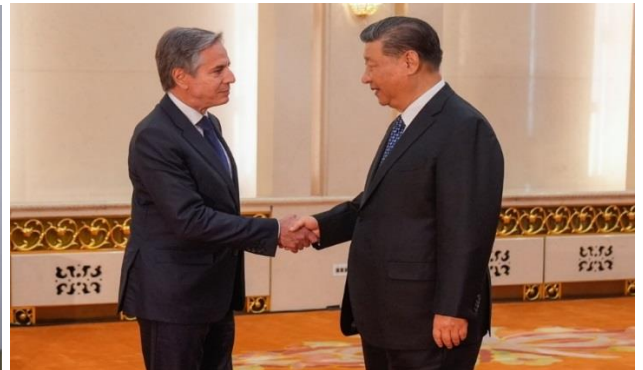
Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

May 1, 2024



Volume II, Issue 18 | May 1, 2024

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:

Southeast Asia: Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore and Indonesian President Joko Widodo at the Singapore-Indonesia Leaders' Retreat in Bogor, Indonesia on April 29, 2024.

Source: [PM Lee/Official X Account](#)

East Asia: US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on April 26, 2024.

Source: [Antony Blinken/Official X Account](#)

West Asia: India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met UAE's Minister of State for International Cooperation Reem Al Hashemi on April 30, 2024, in New Delhi.

Source: [Official X Handle/Dr. S. Jaishankar](#)

Central Asia: India's Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane participated in the SCO Defence Minister's meeting held in Astana, Kazakhstan, on April 26, 2024. Source: [Ministry of Defence Government of India](#)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Bangladesh Prime Minister [Sheikh Hasina visited Thailand](#) from April 24-29 and met the Prime Minister of Thailand Srettha Thavisin. Following the meeting, five MOUs related to trade, investment and education, and a Letter of Intent (LOI) to commence negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) were signed. Regional cooperation mechanisms under the BIMSTEC framework and the Rohingya issue were also discussed.

Iranian President [Ebrahim Raisi visited Sri Lanka](#) on April 24. President Raisi is the first Iranian leader to visit Sri Lanka since former President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad visited the country in 2008. President Raisi inaugurated a power and irrigation Uma Oya project, in the central Badulla district, which was constructed with Iranian technical assistance, and valued at USD 514 million. Both countries also signed [five MOUs](#) during the visit.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif [visited Saudi Arabia](#) on April 28-29 to attend an event of the World Economic Forum. This was his second visit to Saudi in a month. He was accompanied by Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb. The visit was more of a bilateral in nature as Pakistan is trying to [ensure multibillion Saudi investments](#) in its energy and mining sector. PM Sharif held separate meetings with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, Minister for Investment Khalid Al-Falih, Minister for Finance Mohammad Al Jadaan, and Minister for Industry Bandar bin Ibrahim Alkhourayef. Meanwhile, the Competition Commission of Pakistan approved Aramco's 40 percent equity [stake acquisition](#) in Gas and Oil Pakistan Ltd.

Other Developments

[State Bank of Pakistan receives USD 1.1 billion tranche from IMF](#)

[Giving food, cash to 6 million people monthly in Afghanistan, says WFP](#)

[Iran begins project of sealing borders with Afghanistan](#)

[China exempts regular visa fee for Nepali travellers](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong met Indonesian President Joko Widodo for the [Singapore-Indonesia Leaders' Retreat](#) in Bogor, Indonesia on April 29. The Indonesian Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, President-elect of Indonesia, and Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Lawrence Wong, the Prime Minister (Designate) were also present. The two leaders signed agreements on the Realignment of the Boundary between the Jakarta Flight Information Region (FIR) and the Singapore FIR, the Treaty for the Extradition of Fugitives, and the Defence Cooperation Agreement.

On April 30, the Philippines accused China of [disputing a humanitarian mission](#) by Manila. The Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) reported that four vessels of China's Coast Guard shot water cannons eight times toward Philippine vessels near Scarborough Shoal. The incident led to a collision between the two sides. A BFAR ship, the BRP Datu Bankaw, was hit four times and suffered damages, including damages to the ship equipment. The Philippine Coast Guard said, "they were not deterred and will persist in carrying out their legitimate operations to support Filipino fishermen and ensure their safety", in its official statement.

Other Developments

[Myanmar rebel group says it withdraws from key town on Thai border](#)

[Prabowo vows to fight for all Indonesians, calls for unity among political elites](#)

East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

US Secretary of State [Antony Blinken met Chinese President Xi Jinping](#) and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing on April 26. He held substantive discussions on advancing counternarcotics cooperation to disrupt the global flow of synthetic drugs into the United States, enhancing military-to-military communication to avoid miscalculation and conflict, and launching talks on managing the risk and safety challenges posed by advanced forms of artificial intelligence. The two sides also discussed China's support for Russia, Taiwan, bilateral economic relations, and people-to-people ties.

North Korea's minister for external economic relations, Yun Jong Ho, made an [official visit with a delegation to Iran](#). The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani stated that the two sides discussed bilateral trade. The official state media of North Korea, KCNA, did not provide any details regarding the trip. However, it is suspected that the countries are cooperating on ballistic missile technology.

On April 27, Taiwan's Defence Ministry [detected 22 Chinese military aircraft](#), including Su-30 fighters near the median line of the Taiwan Strait. Twelve of these crossed the median line, a day after U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken ended a visit to China. Taiwan's defence ministry reported that the aircraft was involved in "joint combat readiness patrols" with Chinese warships, adding that Taiwanese aircraft and ships responded "appropriately".

Other Developments

[South Korea and Cuba to open diplomatic missions, decades after cutting ties](#)

[EU launches investigation into Chinese medical device market](#)

[Japan's ruling party loses special election in blow to PM Kishida](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

As part of the deepening of the [India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership](#), India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met with UAE's Minister of State for International Cooperation Reem Al Hashemi on April 30 in New Delhi. The two sides discussed several regional and international issues including ways to enhance cooperation in BRICS, G20, and other international fora.

Amidst the continuing conflict between Israel and Hamas, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a meeting with Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Riyadh on April 29. Secretary Blinken discussed joint work between [the US and the Gulf Cooperation Council](#) to prevent the conflict from spreading and to establish a more just and lasting peace in the region. In light of Iran's missile attack on Israel and the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, Blinken emphasised the importance of an "integrated air and missile defence system" and maritime security. Meanwhile, the US Central Command has released images of a [floating pier being constructed by the US military](#) off the coast of Gaza to deliver humanitarian aid.

At a World Economic Forum event in Riyadh, Secretary Blinken urged Hamas to [accept Israel's truce proposal](#), which calls for the release of approximately 40 of the roughly 130 hostages held in Gaza in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. If Hamas accepted the proposal, a period of "sustained calm" would ensue - Israel's concession to Hamas' demand for a permanent ceasefire. Amidst this, on April 30, the Chinese Foreign Ministry informed that rival Palestinian factions – Fatah and Hamas held talks in Beijing on [promoting intra-Palestinian reconciliation](#).

Other Developments

[Key insights from 1st day of WEF special meeting in Saudi capital](#)

[UN chief calls for independent probe into Gaza mass graves](#)

[US lawmakers threaten retaliation against UN court over potential Israel arrest warrants](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The annual meeting of the Defence Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was held in Astana from April 25 to 26. Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane led the Indian delegation. The SCO Defence Ministers agreed, among other initiatives, to develop the idea of '[One Earth, One Family, One Future](#)', rooted in the ancient Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. In his address, Secretary Aramane stressed the imperative of adopting a zero-tolerance stance against terrorism in all its manifestations.

On April 27, at a [trilateral meeting](#), Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan agreed to enhance transit and transport infrastructure in Afghanistan. At the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Seri Zhumangarin, emphasized the need for calculations and reorientation of traffic flows, highlighting the potential benefits of the upcoming infrastructure development initiatives. During the negotiations, an agreement was made to develop more favourable and competitive tariff conditions for the [swift passage of container trains](#) from China through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, and onward to Pakistan, India, and Middle Eastern countries. According to [preliminary calculations](#), the delivery times for goods via the proposed conditions from Xi'an in China to Turgundi and Andhkoy in Afghanistan will be reduced to just 10-12 days, at a cost significantly cheaper than current modes of transport.

Continuing his official visit to Central Asia, the UK's Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, David Cameron, met Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Murat Nurtleu on [April 24](#). Cameron's trip in 2013 marked the first British Prime Minister to visit Kazakhstan. Cameron and Nurtleu signed a historic Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the two countries. The agreement seeks to strengthen bilateral relations in key sectors, such as foreign policy and security, trade and investment, protection of intellectual property, energy and raw materials partnership, transportation, environment protection and climate change, banking and financial services, employment and social policy, science and education. Speaking about the [broader purpose of his visit](#) to the region, Cameron emphasised the desire for partnership with the region stating "we are here, so you have a choice".

Other Developments

[The New Kid on the Block – Azerbaijan's New Role in Central Asia](#)

[Kazakh, Tajik Governments Ready to Strengthen Strategic Partnership](#)

[Antony Blinken Backs Armenia, Azerbaijan Peace Moves In Leader Calls](#)

[UK: Foreign Secretary Cameron criticised for hiring luxury jet for Central Asia tour: Report](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

On April 26, Indian naval destroyer [INS Kochi responded to a maritime security incident](#) involving an attack on Panama-flagged crude oil tanker MV Andromeda Star. Aerial reconnaissance by helicopter was conducted to evaluate the situation after INS Kochi intercepted Andromeda Star. All 30 crew members, including 22 Indian citizens, are reported to be safe, and the ship is continuing with its scheduled journey to the next port.

The Indian Navy conducted maritime partnership exercises with both the [UK's Littoral Response Group](#) and [the Royal Netherlands Navy](#) in the earlier week to strengthen maritime partnerships and promote regional stability.

On April 26, 2024, the Indian Navy's indigenous stealth frigate INS Sahyadri participated in a Maritime Partnership Exercise with the Royal Navy's RFA Argus and RFA Lyme Bay, which are part of the UK Littoral Response Group South.

Additionally, on April 29, 2024, the Indian Navy's guided missile frigate INS Trishul participated in an exercise with the Royal Netherlands Navy Ship HNLMS Tromp.

[6th Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile Barge](#), LSAM 20, for the Indian Navy was launched on April 29 at Thane. This barge, built by MSME Shipyard, M/s Suryadipta Projects Pvt Ltd, plays a crucial role in enhancing the Indian Navy's operational capabilities by facilitating the transportation, embarkation, and disembarkation of articles and ammunition to IN ships both alongside jetties and at outer harbors.

Other Developments

[On April 30, Houthis carried out a joint operations targeting MSC Orion.](#)

[The Turkish Navy warship TCG Kinaliada visited Somalia.](#)



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