

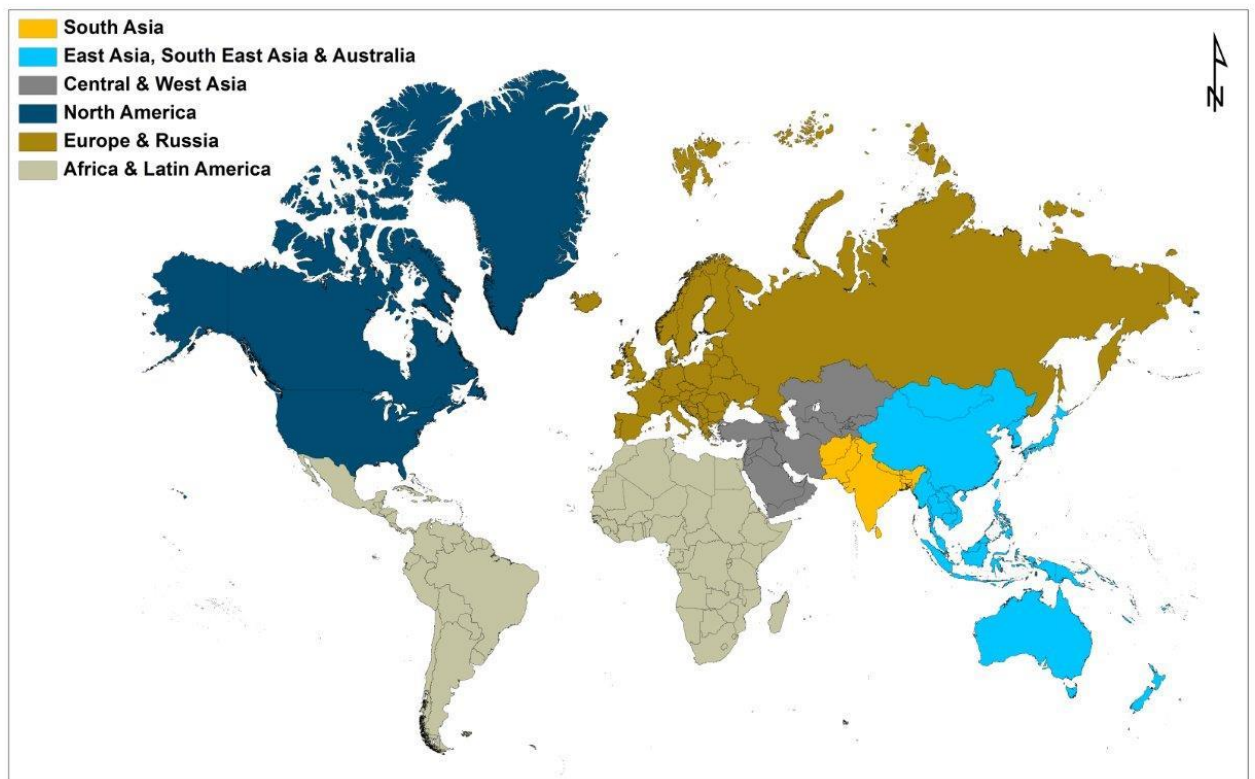


Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH



Volume V, Issue 8 | February 19, 2021

Delhi Policy Group

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

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ABOUT US

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South Asia

India

[China officially admits five military officers, soldiers killed in clash with Indian Army in Galwan](#)

February 19, 2021, The Indian Express

A total of 20 Indian soldiers died in the Galwan Valley clash, regarded as the worst in over four decades at the India-China border. Five Chinese military officers and soldiers were killed in last year's Galwan Valley clash in eastern Ladakh with the Indian Army, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) officially acknowledged for the first time on Friday

[Indian Navy denies it has joined Iran-Russia naval exercise in Indian Ocean](#)

February 18, 2021, Times Now

The Indian Navy has denied that it is participating in an exercise along with the navies of Iran and Russia in the northern part of the Indian Ocean. Earlier, there were reports that the Indian Navy too has joined the exercise named 'Iran-Russia Maritime Security Belt 2021'.

[India-China LAC disengagement | Satellite images show Chinese troops emptying camps along Pangong Tso](#)

February 17, 2021, Money Control

Satellite imagery of some areas on the northern bank of Pangong Tso from February 16 supplied by Maxar Technologies show that multiple Chinese military camps, which could be seen there in late January, have been removed.

[Third Scorpene class submarine delivered to Indian Navy](#)

February 16, 2021, The Hindustan Times

The Mazagaon Dock Limited (MDL) delivered the third Scorpene-class submarine to the navy after two years of sea trials. The submarine was launched in January 2018 for sea trials and will be commissioned as INS Karanj, said a naval officer.

[India plans policies to boost blue economy and explore Arctic region for energy and climatic research](#)

February 19, 2021, The Times of India

India has planned to focus on emerging economic and strategic axis spread from the East Coast of Africa to the Western Pacific Ocean - called the Seychelles-Singapore-Samoa (SSS) axis - as part of its long-term strategy to utilise oceanic resources under the country's proposed Blue Economy policy.

[Indian and Indonesian Navies Conduct Exercise in Arabian Sea](#)

February 18, 2021, NDTV

The Indian and Indonesian navies carried out a military exercise in the Arabian sea to enhance operational interoperability and overall cooperation.

[Deendayal Port to sign MoUs worth Rs 3,824 cr at Maritime India Summit 2021](#)

February 18, 2021, Business Standard

Deendayal Port Trust, one of the 12 major ports in the country, said it will sign 15 MoUs for an estimated investment of Rs 3,823.70 crore at Maritime India Summit next month.

[EAM Jaishankar to visit Maldives, Mauritius this week to review bilateral ties](#)

February 18, 2021, The Hindustan Times

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will make a visit to the Maldives and Mauritius later this week to review bilateral ties and development cooperation; especially measures aimed at helping the Indian Ocean states overcome the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

[Stop vaccine nationalism, encourage internationalism: India at UNSC](#)

February 17, 2021, The Indian Express

Addressing the UN Security Council, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar outlined nine points for consideration of the international community to help the world put the Covid-19 pandemic decisively behind it and to emerge more resilient.

[India pushing ahead with key Kaladan transit project in Myanmar](#)

February 17, 2021, The Hindustan Times

India is pushing ahead with the Kaladan transit project in Myanmar's Rakhine state as it is seen as key to improving connectivity with the landlocked northeastern states. The Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project, being implemented with an Indian grant of \$484 million, includes development of Sittwe port in Myanmar, an inland water terminal at Paletwa on the Kaladan river and creating road connectivity from Paletwa to Zorinpui in Mizoram.

[Russia FM Lavrov, Indian FS Shringla discuss upcoming Putin visit, Afghanistan](#)

February 18, 2021, Zee News

Indian foreign secretary Harsh Shringla and Russian Foreign minister Sergey Lavrov held talks with a focus on the upcoming India-Russia annual summit for which Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit India and other key regional issues like Afghanistan.

[Pakistan, other neighbours back India's 5-point plan to deal with pandemic: Sources](#)

February 19, 2021, The Times of India

Seeking greater integration between South Asian and Indian Ocean Island countries following the pandemic, PM Narendra Modi proposed a special visa scheme for doctors and nurses to facilitate their quick and unhindered movement within the region during health emergencies and called for a regional air ambulance agreement for medical contingencies.

[Covid Diplomacy pitch by PM Modi: Visa for medics, air ambulance](#)

February 19, 2021, The Indian Express

Applauding the "spirit of collaboration" among South Asian and Indian Ocean island countries as "a valuable takeaway from this pandemic", Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggested the creation of a regional platform for collating and studying data on the effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccines, a special visa scheme for doctors and nurses to travel within the region during health emergencies, and a regional air ambulance agreement for medical contingencies.

[Strong India-Australia Ties Key Role in Shaping Post-Covid World: PM Modi](#)

February 19, 2021, NDTV

The strong India-Australia partnership will play an important role in shaping the post-Covid world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said and expressed confidence that the two countries would take the lead in providing circular economy solutions.

Pakistan

[Pakistan's debt, liabilities jump to Rs44.98tr](#)

February 19, 2021, The Express Tribune

Pakistan's total debt and liabilities surged almost 10% to a staggering Rs44.98 trillion in the year ended December 31, 2020 due to increase in expenditures during the Covid-19 pandemic. The total debt and liabilities stood at Rs40.95 trillion a year ago on December 31, 2019.

['Pakistan not to allow duty-free cotton from India'](#)

February 13, 2021, The News

Pakistan will not allow import of duty-free cotton from India in order to bridge the shortfall in the local market, Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce Razak Dawood said. Pakistan's cotton production fell 34 percent during the current

fiscal year and the government left with no other option but to import cotton for meeting domestic requirements of the country.

[Accord reached with IMF for release of \\$500m](#)

February 17, 2021, Dawn

With energy tariffs jacked up, Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have reached a staff-level agreement for disbursement of \$500 million as they finalised modified 'ambitious policy actions' on expenditure cuts and revenue measures for revival of \$6 billion fund programme disrupted since February 2020.

[Fire 'catastrophe' destroys hundreds of fuel tankers on Afghanistan-Iran border](#)

February 15, 2021, Dawn

Hundreds of oil and gas tankers were destroyed by fire in a "catastrophe" at Afghanistan's biggest trade crossing with Iran, causing millions of dollars of losses. The huge blaze, which broke out at Islam Qala port, 120 kilometres from the western city of Herat, has been contained and an investigation launched into its cause.

[Army holding war games to validate concept of defence in desert: ISPR](#)

February 14, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan Army said that its troops are holding war games in the Thar desert. The exercises codenamed 'Jidar-ul-Hadeed' that began on Jan 28, the ISPR said, would conclude on Feb 28. Troops assigned to Karachi Corps are taking part in the drills. The troops are "practising tactical drills and procedures" as part of the exercises.

[Taliban have no authority to decide cases in Pakistan: SC](#)

February 13, 2021, Dawn

The Supreme Court has held that the Taliban had no legal authority to decide cases and their decision was not applicable to Pakistan, which was a sovereign country, the applicable law of which applied to every inch of its territory. The judgement was issued by a two-judge SC bench consisting of Justice Qazi Faez Isa and Justice Maqbool Baqar on a petition filed by Gul Nawaz and others against the 2019 Peshawar High Court order in a land dispute case.

Afghanistan

[PIA chief seeks more flights to Kabul](#)

February 17, 2021, Dawn

The PIA CEO requested Afghanistan's Civil Aviation Authority to allow increase in the airline's flights to Kabul and approve its flights from Kandahar and Mazar-i-Sharif to further strengthen ties between the two countries.

[Germany says troops may stay longer in Afghanistan](#)

February 13, 2021, DW News

Germany's military deployment in Afghanistan as part of NATO should be extended beyond its expiration date in March, according to Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. Maas called for a new parliamentary mandate in order to be prepared for "different scenarios."

[Taliban Controls 52% of Territory in Afghanistan: Survey](#)

February 13, 2021, Tolo News

A survey by an Afghan news agency shows that the Taliban controls at least 52 percent of the country's territory while 59 percent of the population lives in areas under the government's control. The survey conducted by Pajhwok Afghan News shows that the Afghan government controls 46 percent of the territory. The survey was conducted between November 30 to February 3.

[Taleban fighters close in on Afghan cities, pushing the country to the brink](#)

February 15, 2021, The Strait Times

The Taleban have been encroaching on key cities around Afghanistan for months, threatening to drive the country to its breaking point and push the Biden administration into a no-win situation just as the United States' longest war is supposed to be coming to an end. Around the northern city of Kunduz, despite the winter's fierce cold, the Taleban have taken outposts and military bases, using small armed drones to terrorise Afghan troops.

[Russian Envoy Calls for Transitional Govt in Afghanistan](#)

February 17, 2021, Tolo News

Russian Special Envoy for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov in an interview said that Moscow prefers that all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan agree on the establishment of an inclusive and transitional coalition government.

[No decision on any NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan, Stoltenberg says](#)

February 18, 2021, Reuters

NATO defence ministers at a meeting on February 18 made no decision on whether or when to pull out of Afghanistan, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said, adding that the allies faced a dilemma as violence increases again.

[Kabul Hosts Intel Conference for Regional Nations](#)

February 18, 2021, Tolo News

Kabul hosted a conference for leaders and representatives of intelligence organizations from regional countries to discuss the insurgency. The regional counter-terrorism conference was held with the participation of the intelligence chiefs of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan and CIA.

Bangladesh

[Bangladesh eyes investment gain as Japanese firms exit China](#)

February 16, 2021, The Economic Times

Japan incentivizing its companies to shift manufacturing facilities out of China and adding Bangladesh to a list of preferred destinations for relocating the factories may give the South Asian nation's economy a boost.

[Bangladesh, India relations attained a new height with PM Modi's govt in India, says Foreign Minister Dr. Momen](#)

February 19, 2021, News on Air

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen has said that the relationship between Bangladesh and India has attained a new level with the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Speaking exclusively to Prasar Bharti Spl. Correspondent in Dhaka, Dr. Momen said that Bangladesh and India have a rock-solid relationship.

[India's longest bridge to bring NE closer to rest of India, Bhutan, Bangladesh](#)

February 18, 2021, The Times of India

PM Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for building the country's longest bridge—Dhubri (Assam)-Phulbari (Meghalaya) bridge over Brahmaputra river, which will provide a third alternative link to Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Barak valley region of Assam with the rest of the country as well as reduce the time and distance to travel to Bhutan and Bangladesh.

Nepal

[Petrol price hike impact: Cheap fuel smuggled in from Nepal](#)

February 18, 2021, The Hindustan Times

The rising price of petrol has led to an interesting development in states which border India's neighbouring country Nepal. Petrol is cheaper by around ₹22 there.

[Nepal to buy 2 million doses of Covid vaccine from India](#)

February 18, 2021, The Times of India

Nepal approved the emergency use of a Covid-19 vaccine developed by an affiliate of China's Sinopharm, a government official said, the second vaccine cleared after Oxford-AstraZeneca's product.

Bhutan

[Top Bhutan general, judges detained in alleged overthrow plot](#)

February 18, 2021, Al Jazeera

A top general and two judges in Bhutan have been detained by the police over an alleged plot to overthrow the country's top military officer and chief justice.

Sri Lanka

[Pact with Sri Lanka on Trincomalee oil farm stands, says India](#)

February 19, 2021, The Hindu

A day after Sri Lanka's Minister of Energy remarked that the government would "re-acquire" World War-era oil tanks in the eastern city of Trincomalee – which were leased out to an Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) subsidiary in 2003 – India said the bilateral understanding on jointly developing and operating the tank farm stood.

[Sri Lanka cancels Imran Khan's planned address to its Parliament: Report](#)

February 18, 2021, The Hindustan Times

Sri Lanka has cancelled Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's planned address to its Parliament during his upcoming visit to Colombo, according to media reports.

[Sri Lanka to Re-Acquire 99 Oil Tanks leased to Indian Oil: Minister](#)

February 17, 2021, NDTV

Sri Lanka will re-acquire the World War II-era oil storage tanks leased out to Indian Oil Corporation in the eastern port district of Trincomalee, Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila has said.

[Sri Lanka considering India's grant instead of China project](#)

February 16, 2021, The Hindu

In an apparent bid to displace a Chinese company that had won the contract to install renewable energy systems in three small islands off Jaffna Peninsula in northern Sri Lanka, India has offered a grant of \$12 million to execute it, Colombo-based media reported.

East & South East Asia

China

[China honors servicemen martyred, injured in defending western border](#)

February 19, 2021, Xinhua Net

China's military authorities have honored two officers and three soldiers, including four who received the awards posthumously, for defending the country's western border.

[China slams Canada over its so-called detention declaration](#)

February 19, 2021, China Daily

China accused Canada of rallying some countries to issue a so-called declaration against arbitrary detention, saying that using "megaphone diplomacy" or ganging up to suppress China is futile and will only lead to a dead end.

[China rebukes West for questioning impartiality of WHO's origin-tracing mission](#)

February 18, 2021, China Daily

A Chinese spokesperson rebuked some Western politicians for questioning the impartiality of the recent coronavirus origin-tracing study by a World Health Organization (WHO) mission in China, saying being impartial does not mean "being at the behest of the West."

[China refutes rumors about Myanmar situation](#)

February 18, 2021, China Daily

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson refuted rumours about China on the situation in Myanmar, saying that Internet rumours are nothing but that, aiming at destroying and provoking China-Myanmar relations and friendship.

[China Blocked Jack Ma's Ant IPO After Investigation Revealed Likely Beneficiaries](#)

February 17, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

Well-connected Chinese power players, including some with links to political families that represent a potential challenge to President Xi, were behind layers of opaque investment vehicles. The information added to concerns about financial risk and anger at Ma's outspoken criticism.

[PLA Navy commissions final Type 056A corvettes specialized in coastal defense](#)

February 17, 2021, Global Times

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy recently commissioned its last batch of Type 056A corvettes specialized in coastal defense, with the total number of the Type 056 series reaching 72, as analysts predicted that China could then shift focus to produce more larger warships as part of the country's aim to build a blue-water navy.

[Hong Kong's Freedoms: What China Promised and How It's Cracking Down](#)

February 17, 2021, Council on Foreign Relations

Before the British government handed over Hong Kong in 1997, China agreed to allow the region considerable political autonomy for fifty years under a framework known as "one country, two systems." In recent years, Beijing has cracked down on Hong Kong's freedoms, stoking mass protests in the city and drawing international criticism. Beijing imposed a national security law in 2020 that gave it broad new powers to punish critics and silence dissenters and could fundamentally alter life for Hong Kongers.

[China played leading role in spreading Covid-19 conspiracies, investigation finds](#)

February 15, 2021, The South China Morning Post

It took just three months for the rumour that Covid-19 was engineered as a bioweapon to spread from the fringes of the Chinese internet and take root in millions of people's minds. By March 2020, belief that the virus had been human-made and possibly weaponised was widespread, multiple surveys indicated. As the pandemic swept the world, it was China – not Russia – that took the lead in spreading foreign disinformation about Covid-19's origins.

[Japan protests intrusion by Chinese ships in waters near Senkakus](#)

February 15, 2021, The Mainichi

Japan lodged a protest Monday over an intrusion by Chinese vessels in waters near the Senkaku Islands, urging them to promptly leave the area, the government's top spokesman said. Two Chinese coast guard vessels entered Japanese territorial waters near the uninhabited islands in the East China Sea around 1:30 p.m., Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told a press conference. The Japan-administered islands are claimed by China, which calls them Diaoyu.

[PLA destroyer flotilla joins multinational drills in Pakistan with US, Russian navies](#)

February 12, 2021, Global Times

A Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy flotilla led by a Type 052D destroyer started participating in a multinational exercise in Pakistan, a unique platform experts said that provides opportunities for Chinese and Russian navies to come together with their counterparts from the US and other Western countries.

[China Refuses to Give WHO Raw Data on Early Covid-19 Cases](#)

February 12, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

Chinese authorities refused to provide World Health Organization investigators with raw, personalized data on early Covid-19 cases that could help them determine how and when the coronavirus first began to spread in China, according to WHO investigators who described heated exchanges over the lack of detail.

Japan

[U.S. consults Japan, S Korea on N Korea policy](#)

February 19, 2021, Japan Today

The United States consulted jointly with South Korea and Japan, allies often at odds with each other, as President Joe Biden reviews how to move forward on North Korea.

[Blinken to hold virtual 'Quad' meeting with Australia, India, Japan](#)

February 18, 2021, Japan Today

U. S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet virtually with his counterparts from Japan, Australia and India in the "Quad" framework, a grouping seen as part of efforts to balance China's growing military and economic power.

[Putin indicates Russia will not negotiate territorial dispute with Japan](#)

February 16, 2021, Japan Today

Russian President Vladimir Putin told local media he will adhere to the country's constitution which was revised last year to bar the transfer of territory to a foreign power, indicating Moscow will not engage Tokyo in negotiations over the nations' long-running territorial dispute.

[Japan, U.S., India, Australia call for return of democracy in Myanmar](#)

February 19, 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

Foreign ministers of the so-called Quad grouping of countries seen as a forum to stand up to China in Asia agreed that democracy must be restored quickly in Myanmar and to strongly oppose attempts to upset the status quo by force, Japan's foreign minister said.

[Suga has long way to go to meet U.S. base pledge to Okinawans](#)

February 18, 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

As chief Cabinet secretary, Yoshihide Suga was in charge of easing Okinawa Prefecture's disproportionate burden of hosting U.S. bases in Japan.

[With Trump out, Japan avoids hike in costs to host U.S. forces](#)

February 18, 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

Japan has temporarily landed a cheaper deal to host U.S. forces with U.S. President Joe Biden's new administration after sweating out years of Donald Trump's demands that it pay more to do so.

[Tamaki wants U.S. bases in Okinawa reduced from 70% to 50%](#)

February 17, 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki has set a numeral target for reducing the "burden rate" of U.S. military facilities in his prefecture from about 70 percent to 50 percent or less.

[Aegis Ashore alternative only available for a third of the year](#)

February 17, 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

An undisclosed problem has emerged over the alternative for the Aegis Ashore missile defense system, and the resource strain it would cause could even hamper Japan's other maritime operations.

Korea

[Kim Jong-un using 'president' as official English title](#)

February 18, 2021, The Korea Times

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is now using "president" as his official title in English, instead of "chairman" as he has used in the past, according to the North's state media.

[US charges North Korean hackers in \\$1.3 billion theft scheme](#)

February 18, 2021, The Korea Times

The US Justice Department charged three North Korean military intelligence officials in a campaign of cyberattacks to steal \$1.3 billion in crypto and traditional currencies from banks and other targets.

[Reviving multilateral negotiations emerge as alternative to breaking deadlock on North Korea](#)

February 18, 2021, The Korea Times

The need for expanded talks has been highlighted particularly with the launch of the Biden administration. Two-way talks between North Korea and the U.S. are likely to remain sidelined under President Biden who has ordered a meticulous review of the North Korea policy of the previous administration and the rare exchanges between his predecessor and Kim.

[U.S., Korea 'Nearing Agreement' on USFK Cost-Sharing](#)

February 15, 2021, The Chosun Ilbo

Drawn-out negotiations between Seoul and Washington over sharing the upkeep of American troops in Korea seem to be nearing an end now that ex-U.S. President Donald Trump and his excessive demands are out of the way.

[Top nuke envoys of S. Korea, Japan hold phone talks on peninsula peace, denuclearization](#)

February 16, 2021, Korea Times

South Korea's chief nuclear envoy, Noh Kyu-duk, spoke by phone with his Japanese counterpart to discuss cooperation for complete denuclearization and lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula, the foreign ministry said.

[S. Korea exploring ways to help ease food shortage in N. Korea](#)

February 19, 2021, The Korea Herald

South Korea is exploring various ways to provide food and fertilizer to North Korea in humanitarian assistance as Pyongyang is believed to be faced with worsening food shortages, the unification ministry said.

Southeast Asia

[Singapore Business Chamber in China key to Relations Between the Two Countries: Alvin Tan](#)

February 14, 2021, The Straits Times

The Singapore Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China (SingCham) has played an active and important role in deepening social and economic relations between the two countries, Minister of State for Trade and Industry and Culture, Community and Youth Alvin Tan said.

[Vietnam Orders L-39Ng Jets From Czech Republic](#)

February 15, 2021, Janes

Czech defence exporter Omnipol announced the sale on 15 February, noting that the L-39NG version of the L-39 Albatross will be delivered from 2023 through to 2024.

[Indonesian MCMVs Make Sweeping Progress](#)

February 15, 2021, Shepherd Media

A \$204 million contract for the 62m-long ships was concluded in January 2019, and a steel-cutting ceremony was held on 26 November 2020. Featuring a non-magnetic steel hull, the MCMV design is based on the Frankenthal class operated by the German Navy. Once commissioned, they will allow retirement of the navy's two Pulau Rengat-class minehunters built in the Netherlands. These entered service in March 1988, so they are already long in the tooth.

[EAM Jaishankar Pitches for Connectivity from Arabian Sea to South China Sea](#)

February 16, 2021, DNA

India's external affairs minister Dr S Jaishankar has pitched for connectivity from "Arabian Sea to South China Sea" even as New Delhi and Tokyo work together in tandem. Speaking at an event in Guwahati, EAM said, "approach to create connectivity to and within Assam, beyond to the North-East, then to neighbouring Myanmar and Bangladesh, but eventually push all the way by road, by sea, by air to Vietnam, to Japan."

[Myanmar Military Denies Coup, Guarantees New Election](#)

February 16, 2021, NDTV

Myanmar's military junta guaranteed that it would hold an election and hand over power, denied its ouster of an elected government was a coup or that its leaders were detained, and accused protesters of violence and intimidation.

[Myanmar Coup: Indonesia Rallies ASEAN partners, US And China For Solution To Political Crisis](#)

February 16, 2021, SCMP

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi travelled to Brunei in an initial effort to rally fellow members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to formulate a "better" response to the political turmoil in Myanmar.

[Indonesia's Investment Race Shaken Up By China As Japan Fades](#)

February 16, 2021, Nikkei Asia

China and South Korea have rapidly accelerated investment into Indonesia, official data shows, while Japan recedes as a source of capital for Southeast Asia's biggest economy.

[China Sought To Reassure Philippines Over New Coastguard Law, Envoy Says](#)

February 16, 2021, SCMP

China has again sought to ease tensions with the Philippines over its controversial new coastguard law, saying it is not aimed at the Southeast Asian nation or any other country, according to Manila's top envoy in Beijing.

[Top Indian Firms To Present Investment Plans For PH at PCCI forum](#)

February 16, 2021, Inquirer.net

Indian companies will present their investment interests in the Philippines, particularly in major infrastructure projects, according to the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI).

[Singapore-India Ties Can Expand Through People To People Engagement: Piyush Goyal](#)

February 19, 2021, NDTV

Union Minister Piyush Goyal delivered the keynote address at India-Singapore CEO Forum and inviting businesses from both sides to bring in sparkle into India and Singapore's partnership, he said that "ours is a strong and productive partnership, which can be taken to higher levels."

[Philippines Threatens 'Serious Consequences' To Rising Chinese Aggression](#)

February 15, 2021, Business World

After China passed a new coast guard law allowing it to shoot at vessels in territories claimed by the communist nation, the Philippines has threatened to order its navy to shoot back at any possible Chinese aggression.

[Myanmar protesters urge China to condemn coup. Will Beijing act?](#)

February 18, 2021, Al Jazeera

Chanting "Shame on you, China" and holding up banners in English, Chinese and Burmese, dozens of pro-democracy protesters gathered at the Chinese embassy in Yangon to denounce what they called Beijing's backing for Myanmar's military coup on February 1.

Central & West Asia

Central Asia

[Turkmen Leader's Son Takes On New Roles; Rapid Rise Renews Talk Of Succession](#)

February 12, 2021, RFE/RL

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov has appointed his son Serdar to the posts of deputy prime minister and chairman of the Supreme Control Chamber, renewing speculation the autocrat is grooming his son to be his successor. State media outlets reported on February 12 that according to the presidential decrees signed the day before, Serdar Berdymukhammedov also became a member of the State Security Council.

[More than just friends? New Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan agreement on joint energy production in the Caspian Sea](#)

February 17, 2021, The Times of Central Asia

The newfound cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan on joint development of a disputed oil and natural gas field may lead to the possibility for Ashgabat to start natural-gas exports to Europe and an increased interest of international energy companies in the Caspian and Central Asia regions.

[Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan to bolster strategic partnership](#)

February 18, 2021, Anadolu Agency

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan discussed ways to strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries. As part of his official visit, Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov met with his Kazakh counterpart Muhtar Tleuberdi in the capital Nur-Sultan. Discussing global issues, the two also underscored the importance of expanding bilateral relations.

[Kazakhstan Registers Locally Produced Russia's Sputnik V Vaccine](#)

February 18, 2021, Caspian News

Central Asia's largest and wealthiest country is to become the first country in the world to locally produce Russia's Sputnik V vaccine after a local pharmaceutical company received the authorization. Kazakhstan's Health Ministry gave the green light to Karaganda Pharmaceutical Complex (KPC) to make the jab, which is expected to be used as part of Kazakhstan's mass vaccination campaign.

[Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan sign program of co-op between foreign ministries](#)

February 18, 2021, Trend News Agency

The signing of the Program of Cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the period of 2021-2022 took place during a meeting between Foreign Ministers of Turkmenistan – Rashid Meredov and Uzbekistan - Abdulaziz Kamilov.

[Statistics show Central Asia underreporting COVID deaths](#)

February 19, 2021, Central Asia News

Across Central Asia, on the surface, life is getting back to normal. Masks are becoming a rarity. Social-distancing efforts, never great to begin with, have largely been tossed aside. Official COVID infection and death statistics attest to this normality. There is little, the official numbers suggest, to worry about. But new research shows that official death figures in many parts of Central Asia and the former Soviet Union are vast undercounts.

West Asia

[US Says It is Ready for Direct Talks with Iran over Nuclear Deal](#)

February 19, 2021, Middle East Eye

The United States has said it would accept a European invitation to engage in direct talks with Iran to revive the 2015 nuclear deal.

[In a First, Indian, Saudi Arabia Armies to Undertake Joint Bilateral Exercises](#)

February 12, 2021, WION

In a significant development, Indian and Saudi Armies will undertake joint bilateral exercises. This will be the first such exercises of both the Armies together. The Indian forces contingent will be travelling to Saudi Arabia for the exercises which will be taking place in the next financial year.

[India at UN: Fully Support Iraq's Request for UN Observation of Polls](#)

February 17, 2021, Business Standard

India has strongly backed Iraq's request for the UN observation of parliamentary elections in the country in October, saying it endorses any process that respects the Gulf nation's sovereignty and strengthens the democratic exercise.

[US and Israel Announce Work on New Arrow 4 Air Defense System amid Iran Tensions](#)

February 18, 2021, The Times of Israel

Israel and the US have begun developing the Arrow 4, the latest generation in the family of Israeli anti-ballistic missiles and an essential part of the country's multi-layered defense system.

[Rocket Attack in Iraq Kills a U.S. Military Contractor](#)

February 15, 2021, The New York Times

A rocket attack on the airport in the northern Iraqi city of Erbil killed a civilian contractor with the American-led military coalition and wounded six others, including a U.S. service member, according to a coalition spokesman.

[NATO Announces Expanded Mission in Iraq on the Heels of Deadly Rocket Attack](#)

February 18, 2021, CNBC

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg announced that the 30-member alliance will expand its security training mission in Iraq in order to prevent the war-torn country from becoming a safe haven for international terrorists.

[Israel Wants India by its side against ICC ruling, Delhi Silent](#)

February 11, 2021, The Indian Express

Israel is pushing "good friend" India to take a stand against a ruling last week by the International Criminal Court claiming jurisdiction over Palestinian territories, but Delhi, still navigating its way through the big shifts in West Asia, is reluctant to be drawn in.

[Islamic State Regrouping in Northern Iraq and Relying on Women Operatives](#)

February 04, 2021, Middle East Eye

Islamic State group (IS) militants have been regrouping in northern Iraq and become heavily reliant on women to secure logistical support for their operatives in the Hamrin Basin.

[Iran Keen to Lift Whole Leaf Teas from India, Ready to Pay Good Price](#)

February 18, 2021, The Economic Times

Iranian buyers have initiated negotiations with Indian tea traders to procure whole leaf teas to meet the country's domestic demand.

[Qatar Investment Authority Plans to Open Office in India: Indian Ambassador](#)

February 14, 2021, The Peninsula Qatar

Ambassador of India to Qatar, Dr. Deepak Mittal, said Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) plans to open an office in India. He said despite pandemic, trade volume between the two countries recorded robust growth which is expected to reach about \$11bn by the end of Indian financial year in March this year.

[India Provides 2000 Tonnes of Rice to War-torn Syria as Humanitarian Aid](#)

February 12, 2021, Hindustan Times

India is giving 2,000 tonnes of rice to Syria to strengthen food security, the latest in a string of measures to help the war-torn country where conflict and economic collapse over the past decade has left most of the population in poverty.

United States

United States

[At Quad meeting, US reaffirms commitment to 'free' Indo-Pacific](#)

February 18, 2021, Hindustan Times

The Biden administration reiterated Washington's commitment to an annual meeting of the foreign ministers of the Quad countries – with India, Japan and Australia – and its central cause of ensuring a "free and open Indo-Pacific region".

[US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discusses China-related issues with fellow 'Quad' diplomats](#)

February 19, 2021, South China Morning Post

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a virtual meeting with his counterparts from Australia, India and Japan, a group of Pacific allies known as "the Quad" that Washington sees as a vital countering force against an increasingly assertive Beijing.

[Biden's Rough Start With the World](#)

February 15, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

It hasn't been the most promising start. Less than a month into Joe Biden's presidency, and his administration is already engaged in spats with China, Russia and Iran. It is also discovering that U.S. allies are not quite as happy with Mr. Biden's Feb. 4 announcement that "America is back" as many Democrats might have hoped.

[Biden To Announce \\$4 Billion For Global COVID-19 Vaccine Effort](#)

February 18, 2021, NPR

President Biden is set to announce a total of \$4 billion in contributions to COVAX, the vaccine alliance trying to distribute COVID-19 vaccines to 92 low- and middle-income countries, a senior administration official told reporters.

[Israel and US begin Arrow-4 development](#)

February 18, 2021, Defense News

Israel and the United States have begun developing the Arrow-4 missile defense system that includes next-generation interceptors and will replace the Arrow-2 over the next decades, according to a statement from Israel's Defense Ministry.

[Biden will pay the WHO \\$200 million as he reverses Trump's attempts to withdraw from the organization](#)

February 18, 2021, Business Insider

The United States will pay the World Health Organization \$200 million by the end of the month as the Biden administration moves to reverse Trump's attempts to withdraw from the international body, Secretary of State Antony Blinken has confirmed.

[Blinken tells EU counterparts U.S. is ready to open talks with Iran](#)

February 18, 2021, Axios

Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his counterparts from the E3 — France, Germany and the U.K. — in a video conference that the U.S. is prepared to engage in discussions with Iran in an attempt to reach an agreement on returning to full compliance of the 2015 nuclear deal, according to a joint readout of the call.

[Blinken says he gets 'occasional dig' from other countries about US democracy](#)

February 16, 2021, The Hill

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said his foreign counterparts occasionally knock U.S. efforts to promote democracy abroad after the Jan. 6 riot on Capitol Hill. While Blinken said the remarks have been "gentle," they nonetheless underscore the deep stain the riot has left on America's reputation on the international stage.

[Austin aims for new tone in first US post-Trump NATO meeting](#)

February 17, 2021, Stars and Stripes

On the eve of a major NATO meeting, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said he would bring a new level of respect to the way Washington works with allies, but also called on members to meet their defense spending obligations.

[Biden to Speak to National Security and Military Leaders At Munich Conference](#)

February 18, 2021, NPR

President Biden is set to give his first address to a foreign — yet familiar — audience at the virtual Munich Security Conference .

[White House demands transparency from WHO, China on early Covid findings](#)

February 13, 2021, Politico

The Biden administration has "deep concerns" about the World Health Organization's early Covid-19 investigation, national security adviser Jake Sullivan said, calling on China to release data from the beginning of the outbreak.

Europe & Russia

Europe

[France to boost cyber defense after hospital malware attacks](#)

February 19, 2021, Associated Press

French President Emmanuel Macron unveiled a plan to better arm public facilities and private companies against cybercriminals following ransomware attacks at two hospitals this month and an upsurge of similar cyber assaults in France.

[The EU says it's going to get tough on trade – and that could have ramifications for U.S., China](#)

February 18, 2021, CNBC

The European Union will take a new approach to international trade, recognizing that it's time to stand up for itself after challenging times with countries like the U.S.

[Myanmar's coup opponents welcome new British, Canadian sanctions](#)

February 19, 2021, Reuters

Opponents of Myanmar's coup welcomed new sanctions from Britain and Canada as protesters took to the streets, marking two weeks of daily demonstrations against the Southeast Asian country's military for seizing power.

[Britain pushes G7 for faster vaccine development, sets 100-day target](#)

February 19, 2021, Reuters

Britain will challenge fellow G7 countries to help speed up the development of future vaccines to 100-days when Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosts a virtual meeting of leaders including U.S. President Joe Biden.

[Italy's new PM Draghi promises sweeping reforms, urges national unity](#)

February 17, 2021, Reuters

Prime Minister Mario Draghi called on Italians to pull together to help rebuild the country following the coronavirus pandemic and promised his new government would introduce sweeping reforms to revitalise the battered economy.

[Soaring EU-Xinjiang trade in textile machinery, tomatoes piles pressure on Brussels to act on alleged forced labour](#)

February 17, 2021, South China Morning Post

From the ancient ports of southwest Italy to the industrial heartlands of Germany, European companies are enjoying strong trade with China's Xinjiang region amid increasing pressure on Brussels to act against allegations of forced labour and other human rights abuses there.

[Macron urges US, EU to rapidly divert COVID vaccines to Africa](#)

February 18, 2021, Al Jazeera

Current imbalance in access to vaccine doses is 'politically unsustainable', French president says.

[EU to impose sanctions on Russians over Navalny by March summit, diplomats say](#)

February 18, 2021, Reuters

The European Union is set to impose travel bans and asset freezes on allies of Russian President Vladimir Putin in March, possibly in the run-up to an EU summit, after a meeting of envoys gave approval for punitive measures, diplomats said.

[European powers, US warn Iran against 'dangerous' inspections limit](#)

February 18, 2021, France 24

Following a meeting hosted by France, European powers and the US warned Iran it would be "dangerous" to limit UN nuclear agency inspections and asked Tehran to return to full compliance with a 2015 nuclear deal.

Russia

[Kremlin 'Interested' After Musk Invites Putin to Clubhouse Chat](#)

February 15, 2021, The Moscow Times

SpaceX and Tesla CEO Elon Musk on February 14 invited President Vladimir Putin to a "conversation" on the popular invitation-only audio chat app Clubhouse. The next day, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called Musk's tweets an "interesting proposal," but noted that "Putin doesn't personally use social media" and "we need to understand what he has in mind."

[Russia tightens 'foreign agents' law for groups receiving overseas funding, to 'prevent interference' from hostile governments](#)

February 16, 2021, Russia Today

Lawmakers in Moscow have voted through tough new measures and steep fines against organizations that they say exist to do the work of foreign states in Russia, as well as those who amplify and share their messages in the media. The country's parliament adopted in the second and third readings a new law upping administrative fines for violations of the laws governing organizations designated as 'foreign agents'.

[No preparations underway for Putin-Biden meeting so far – Kremlin](#)

February 16, 2021, TASS

There are no preparations underway for a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Joe Biden so far, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on February 15.

[Three months after Moscow-brokered Armenia & Azerbaijan truce, Nagorno-Karabakh proposes making Russian an official language](#)

February 17, 2021, Russia Today

The president of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic has submitted a bill to elevate Russian to the status of an official language. Moscow has grown closer to the region since the Armenia-Azerbaijan war in 2020.

[Russia Rejects Calls From Europe Court To Release Navalny](#)

February 18, 2021, The Moscow Times

Europe's rights court told Russia on February 17 to release jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny out of concern for his life, but Moscow swiftly rejected the call. Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most outspoken opponent, was arrested and jailed upon returning to Russia last month following months of treatment in Germany for a nerve agent poisoning he blames on the Kremlin.

[Russia's Kalashnikov may make AK-203 rifle in India](#)

February 18, 2021, The Hindu

Russian arms manufacturer Kalashnikov plans to start making its AK-203 assault rifle in India this year and wants to attract a wider audience with a hi-tech shotgun, chief executive Dmitry Tarasov said. It is targeting a 60% increase in annual revenue to more than 50 billion roubles (\$675.33 million) by 2025.

[Moscow ready to host intra-Afghan talks if requested, says diplomat](#)

February 19, 2021, TASS

Russia does not rule the possibility of a Moscow-format meeting on the Afghan peace settlement, and is ready to provide a venue for dialogue of the Afghan parties if it gets a request, a Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman said on February 18.

Africa & Latin America

Latin America

[Peru vaccine scandal: president says 487 officials got early Chinese shots](#)

February 16, 2021, SCMP

Peru's president announced that 487 officials, including the former ministers of foreign affairs and health, took advantage of their privileged positions to secretly receive early inoculations of a Chinese coronavirus vaccine that the government then bought for doctors and other health workers battling the pandemic.

[Bondholders criticize Argentina erratic economic policies, subordinated to politics](#)

February 18, 2021, Merco Press

Creditors have criticized the current Argentine government of the country for what it describes as "erratic" economic policies claiming they are impeding growth and weighing on bond prices five months after the government restructured some US\$ 65 billion in foreign bonds.

[Argentina's October midterm elections condition IMF debt deal](#)

February 16, 2021, Merco Press

Argentina's powerful vice-president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and her allies in the leftwing administration want to postpone a crucial US\$ 44bn debt deal with the IMF until the pandemic has eased, officials said, avoiding painful spending cuts before October's midterm elections.

[Latin America demand rich countries stop hoarding the Covid-19 vaccines](#)

February 18, 2021, Merco Press

Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard during a virtual meeting of the UN Security Council called on rich countries to stop hoarding vaccines against Covid-19 impeding the poor from being inoculated.

[Falklands defined as British Independent Overseas Territory by US Navy triggers reaction in Buenos Aires](#)

February 15, 2021, Merco Press

The Argentine government expressed deep concern following a report in the official twitter from the United States Commander Submarine Force Atlantic, (Comsublant) in which it reveals that it had recently operated in the South Atlantic, "with British support" from the Falklands, "in a display of the global reach of both nations."

[Uruguay and Paraguay presidents meet to address Mercosur issues in an open agenda](#)

February 17, 2021, Merco Press

Uruguay and Paraguay presidents, Luis Lacalle Pou and Mario Abdo Benítez will be holding an "open agenda" meeting in the Uruguayan international seaside resort of Punta del Este, where the Paraguayan leader arrived.

[European public roundly rejects Brazil trade deal unless Amazon protected](#)

February 16, 2021, Mongabay

A new poll shows that the grand majority of Europe's people favors implementing effective protections of the Brazilian Amazon, ending deforestation there, before the EU agrees to ratify the free trade agreement with Mercosur (composed of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay).

Africa

[A Nigerian becomes the first African and the first woman to head the World Trade Organization](#)

February 15, 2021, Africa Times

Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria is now the first African and the first woman to serve as head of the World Trade Organization. She had been a former foreign minister and finance minister of Nigeria.

[Guinea declares new Ebola outbreak](#)

February 15, 2021, Reuters

Guinea declared a new Ebola outbreak when tests came back positive for the virus after three people died and four fell ill in the southeast - the first resurgence of the disease there since the world's worst outbreak in 2013-2016.

[South Africa plans to share COVID-19 vaccines with fellow African countries](#)

February 16, 2021, Reuters

South Africa plans to share 1 million AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine doses with other African countries.

[On heels of Sahel summit, another 35 die in Chad](#)

February 18, 2021, Africa Times

The communal fighting between farmers and herders in the southeastern part of Chad resulted in the death of 35 people. This development comes at a time when Chad is hosting the regional security summit with Sahel countries with France.

[Turkey moving to become a major player in Africa](#)

February 18, 2021, The Africa Report

Turkey is emerging as a strategic partner to the African Union. It has also enhanced its soft power in North Africa through Turkish dramas and renovation of Ottoman monuments in the past. Construction of hospitals, free medical operations and the donation of a fleet of buses in Conakry – the list of gestures of generosity from the state, NGOs or private companies is long.

[President appoints a new PM in the Democratic Republic of Congo \(DRC\)](#)

February 17, 2021, The African Report

After several weeks of negotiations, DRC's President Félix Tshisekedi has appointed Sama Lukonde Kyenge as prime minister. He replaces Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba, who was ousted at the end of January.

[Algerian President dissolves the Parliament and calls for an early election](#)

February 19, 2021, Africa News

Algerian President, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, has dissolved the parliament and called for an early legislative election. The incumbent government was under pressure in recent weeks due to an unprecedented protest movement against the military and President Tebboune.



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