



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

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Israel successfully tests “Iron Beam”

Israel successfully tested the new “Iron Beam” laser interception system on April 15, 2022. This is the world's first energy-based weapon system that uses lasers to neutralise the incoming enemy projectile (UAVs, rockets & mortars). It has reduced the cost of targeting incoming projectiles to US\$3.50 per shot and will be used complementary to the Iron Dome which is relatively more expensive. The system will significantly improve Israel's defensive as well as offensive capabilities and can be a game changer in dealing with rocket threats on its southern front. Iron Beam’s interceptions are silent and undetectable which makes it a unique aerial defence system. By announcing the test of Iron Beam close to the anniversary of the 11-day Israel-Gaza war, Israel indirectly tried to send a message to its adversaries of its technological prowess.

Government in Kuwait resigns

The Kuwaiti government resigned on April 5, 2022, amid escalating tensions with the parliament. The Prime Minister, Sabah Khaled Al Sabah, submitted the resignation to crown prince Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah. While no clear reason was given for the resignation, it came a week after the parliament questioned the prime minister. A group of lawmakers were unhappy with the functioning of the government, accusing them of following unconstitutional practices, “disrupting the interests of citizens” and non-cooperation

with legislative institutions. It was the third time a government resigned in Kuwait in the past year and half, which speaks volumes of the prevailing political instability in the country.

Turkish military operation in northern Iraq

The Turkish Armed Forces launched “Operation Claw Lock” on April 18, 2022 to eliminate Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) hideouts in northern Iraq. The military operation comes amidst increased Kurdish insurgency in south eastern areas in Turkey. Turkish security agencies have also stepped-up attacks against (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*) YPG in northern Syria, which Turkey considers a branch of PKK. While Turkey destroyed the ammunition depots, shelters and headquarters of the PKK in northern Iraq, it ensured that the territorial integrity of Iraq was not breached. The PKK’s terror activities have been condemned by countries thereby fetching it the designation of a terror organisation since 1980s by Turkey, the US and the European Union.

Attack on a bus carrying prison guards in Bursa

On April 20, 2022, the Osmangazi district of Bursa in Turkey witnessed an explosion in the early morning hours. The remote-controlled handmade explosive device left beneath an electric pole, detonated while a prison vehicle was passing by causing the death of a prison guard and leaving another in a critical condition. Claiming it to be a

terror attack, the Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Soyly visited the wounded personnel in the hospital and assured that the perpetrators of the terror attack would be apprehended and punished.

Clashes in Al-Aqsa Mosque

Clashes erupted between Palestinian worshippers and Israel Defence Forces (IDF) personnel at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on April 21, 2022. The Palestinian worshippers were protesting against allowing Jewish worshippers to visit the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount area. The clashes were followed by firing of rockets by Palestinian militants in Gaza into southern Israel which were intercepted and destroyed by the IDF. Furthermore, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh has warned Israel against permitting Jewish visitors to enter the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. The clashes with the Palestinians have raised concerns of the already struggling Israeli government that has lost majority in the parliament.

Saudi Ambassador returns to Lebanon

In a major move to reduce diplomatic tensions with Lebanon, Saudi Arabia returned its ambassador to Beirut on April 8, 2022. The decision came after Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati assured that his country will take the required steps to boost cooperation with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. The Saudi government along with the United Arab Emirate (UAE), Bahrain and Kuwait had

recalled their ambassadors from Lebanon in October 2021 in response to former Lebanese Information Minister George Kordahi's comment criticising the Saudi-led coalition military operation in Yemen. The reduction in diplomatic tensions will help Lebanon cope up with the economic crises, as trade with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is vital for the country's economy.

New presidential council in Yemen

A new presidential council took charge in Yemen on April 19, 2022. The swearing in of the members of the presidential council was held in the southern port city of Aden with Rashad Al Alimi appointed as its head along with eight other members from across the country as its officials. The council was formed to run the country after President Abdrabu Mansur Hadi stepped down earlier this month apparently under Saudi-GCC pressure. The UAE and United States (US) welcomed the new council and urged it to take concrete steps to end the years long conflict in Yemen.

Egypt adds India to its list of wheat import sources

Egypt's Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, El-Said Marzouq El-Qosair said that his country included India in its list of countries to import wheat. This comes within the framework of the Egyptian government's efforts to secure new sources of supply amid ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict. The conflict has raised concerns regarding food security in WANA region

that depends on wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine. Earlier an Egyptian delegation visited India to discuss the prospects of the latter exporting wheat and also visited various fields and grains stores in the country. The Russia-Ukraine crisis has created opportunities for India, the second largest producer of wheat in the world, to export wheat to various countries which have suffered due to supply disruptions.

India-France consultation on WANA

India and France held the first ever consultation on the Asia and North Africa Region on April 12, 2022, virtually. The consultation was co-chaired by Ambassador, Anne Gueguen, Director of Middle East and North Africa Directorate, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France and Dr. Pradeep Singh Rajpurohit, Joint Secretary (WANA), Ministry of External Affairs, India. During the consultation both sides had detailed discussion on “areas of mutual interest and exchanged views on major issues including the political, security, economic, and trade dimensions of WANA region.” Both the countries also agreed on further enhancement of their cooperation within the region and to have more periodic discussions.

India joins Combined Maritime Force

India has agreed to join the Bahrain-based US-led multinational Combined Maritime Force task force as associate partner on April 12, 2022. The development will

strengthen the regional security cooperation in western Indian Ocean, said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during a joint press conference after the India-US 2+2 ministerial dialogue in Washington. Furthermore, he thanked the secretaries and delegation for an enriching interaction and said it will play a crucial role in expanding India-US cooperation. He also updated that “India’s Department of Space and the US Department of Defence have finished a Space Situational Awareness agreement” (SSA).

UAE Business delegation visits J&K

A 12-member business delegation from the UAE arrived in Srinagar (India) on April 22, 2022. The delegation aims at exploring the business opportunities in Jammu & Kashmir and participated in a mega ceremony of Rs 38,082-crore industrial development proposals which took place on April 24 in the presence of Prime Minister Modi. Prior to visiting Jammu, the delegation also visited various tourist places, such as Gulmarg and Pahalgam, to understand the scope of investment in tourism and hospitality sectors.