



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

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Türkiye, Russia, Iran and Syria hold talks on Syria

In an effort to rebuild relations between Türkiye and Syria after years of conflict, defence ministers and intelligence chiefs from Iran, Russia, Syria and Türkiye held talks in Moscow to discuss ways to improve security in Syria and normalise ties between the two nations. The Syrian defence ministry requested the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Syria and the reopening of the strategic M4 highway, while all four countries expressed their commitment to preserving Syria's territorial integrity and facilitating the return of Syrian refugees. These talks marked the latest attempt to resolve the longstanding animosity between Türkiye and Syria.

Türkiye's first nuclear power plant to start operations this year

The Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant - Türkiye's first nuclear power plant constructed in partnership with Russia's Rosatom, is expected to commence operations later this year. Once completed, the plant, with a capacity of 4,800 megawatts, will rank among the world's biggest nuclear power plants. The Akkuyu plant is expected to produce 35 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, providing around 10 per cent of Turkey's electricity demand. The Akkuyu facility is a vital component of Türkiye's strategy to enhance its electricity generation from nuclear energy sources.

I2U2 business coalition for economic development

The I2U2 (India, Israel, United States and the UAE) signed a memorandum of

understanding on April 19, 2023, to establish a joint business coalition to promote the I2U2 initiative which focuses on economic development and food security in the face of global climate change. The coalition will attract private-sector partners to the initiative and deepen technological and private-sector collaboration between the four nations. The countries will convene various events in India, Israel, the UAE, and the United States to draw attention to the I2U2 initiative's potential and establish virtual working group meetings. The I2U2 initiative is of immense significance as it is becoming a significant element in regional economic integration.

Foreign Ministers of Iran and Saudi Arabia meet in Beijing

On April 6, 2023, foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and Iran met in Beijing following the landmark agreement signed on March 10, 2023. They signed the agreement to reopen embassies and emphasised on mutually eliminating the obstacles facing cooperation between them. It is a step towards building strong bilateral relations and regional peace and stability in the Gulf region. The Saudi-Iran rapprochement has been hailed as a diplomatic success for China in the US-dominated Gulf region.

Saudi, Omani delegation hold peace talks with Houthi leaders in Yemen

On April 9, 2023, Saudi and Omani delegations held talks with the Houthi officials in Sanaa. They met with the Head of the Houthi Supreme Political Council, Mahdi Al Mashat, who affirmed his stance on securing a just and honourable peace for the people of Yemen. Since 2014, the

conflict has been going on in Yemen, where the opposite factions are being supported by Iran and Saudi Arabia. This meeting highlights the success of Omani mediation between Riyadh and Sanaa, which run parallel to the UN peace efforts in Yemen. It also shows the success of the Iran-Saudi agreement to restart diplomatic relations. This is a significant step in an attempt to resolve almost a decade-long conflict in Yemen and regional peace.

Saudi Arabia assisting India in Operation Kaveri to evacuate citizens from Sudan

India's Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri V. Muraleedharan, reached Jeddah to oversee Operation Kaveri. India has initiated Operation Kaveri to evacuate its citizens from conflict-ridden Sudan. The Indian Air Force and Navy are conducting the operation to evacuate Indian nationals from Sudan. Indian nationals were evacuated to Jeddah, where they received the necessary assistance and medical examination before returning to India. The evacuation operation was carried out with the assistance of the Indian embassy in Saudi Arabia and the Saudi authorities.

Clashes in Jerusalem

Clashes occurred in the Al Aqsa compound in Jerusalem on April 4 and 5, 2023, between Palestinians and Israeli security forces. Around 50 people were injured and 400 people were arrested. Rockets were fired into Israel from the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. The clashes happened during a period of increased Israeli-Palestinian tensions during the religious festivals, including Easter, Passover and Ramadan.

Qatar and Bahrain to resume diplomatic ties

On April 12, 2023, Bahrain and Qatar both released formal statements announcing their decision to restore diplomatic ties. It happened in the Saudi capital of Riyadh following a meeting between their representatives at the headquarters of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). This move came two years after the lifting of the Arab boycott against Qatar. Although they have agreed to reopen diplomatic missions now, Bahrain also has territorial disputes with Qatar, which is likely to remain an impediment in the future. Nonetheless, their renewed engagement is a positive signal to their bilateral relations as well as regional harmony.

Israeli embassy in Turkmenistan inaugurated

On April 20, 2023, Israeli foreign minister Eli Cohen inaugurated the country's permanent embassy in Turkmenistan's capital Ashgabat. During his official visit, Cohen also met with Turkmen President Serdar Berdymukhamedov. Although an ambassador from Israel had been in Ashgabat for a decade, he was based out of hotels or temporary offices. This was the first visit from a top Israeli diplomat to Turkmenistan since 1994. This visit will strengthen Israel's position in Central Asia as this will be the third Israeli embassy in the region. Israel already has permanent missions in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Opening an embassy in Ashgabat is highly significant for Israel since it is just 25 km (16 miles) away from the Iranian border.