



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

- **Meeting held in Jeddah seeking a resolution to the Russia-Ukraine War**
- **Muraleedharan visits Kuwait**
- **India and the UAE conduct joint naval exercise 'Zayed Talwar'**
- **India's Navy Chief visits Oman**
- **Violence erupts in Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon**
- **US approves Israel's Arrow 3 missile defence system export to Germany**
- **Israel to increase natural gas export to Egypt**
- **The UAE and South Korea conduct Joint high-tech military drills**
- **US and Iraq hold Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue**
- **India makes first rupee payment for buying oil from the UAE**

Meeting held in Jeddah seeking a resolution to the Russia-Ukraine War

Saudi Arabia hosted a meeting of National Security Advisors and representatives from over 40 countries in Mecca on 5-6 August 2023 to find a peaceful resolution to the Russia-Ukraine War. The meeting, held in Jeddah, agreed to continue consultations and exchange opinions to find a way to restore peace between Russia and Ukraine. Ukraine has stated that, while differing viewpoints emerged, the talks provided a platform for an open conversation on building a just and lasting peace. Ironically, Russia, who was not invited to the meeting, stated that “without...taking into account its interests, no meetings on the Ukrainian crisis have the slightest added value.” While Saudi Arabia has adopted a balancing strategy between Russia and Ukraine, it has been mediating in the conflict between the two as well.

Muraleedharan visits Kuwait

Shri V. Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, visited Kuwait from August 23-24, 2023. During the visit, he held meetings with the Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister of Kuwait, Sheikh Talal Khalid Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al Jaber Al Sabah, and Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah. The discussions aimed to strengthen the bilateral relations, particularly in economic areas. Both sides emphasised the diversification of trade and bilateral investments. Muraleedharan expressed gratitude for Kuwait’s support for the welfare of the Indian community in

Kuwait and addressed community-related issues. He engaged with the large Indian community in Kuwait, attending gatherings and meetings with community and professional groups. He inaugurated the *Shilaphalakam* at the Indian Embassy premises, honouring the sacrifices of Indian freedom fighters.

India and the UAE conduct joint naval exercise ‘Zayed Talwar’

India and the UAE concluded a joint naval drill named Zayed Talwar, held off the UAE coast from August 8-11, 2023. The exercise involved Indian naval ships INS Visakhapatnam and INS Trikanth to enhance collaborative operational capabilities. The drill followed the deployment of INS Chennai to the Red Sea for exercises and port calls. Both nations have mutually committed to boosting naval cooperation to collectively address issues like piracy, smuggling, human trafficking and bolstering maritime security. Additionally, they have agreed to collaborate on joint initiatives for humanitarian aid and disaster relief, if the need arises.

India’s Navy Chief visits Oman

India’s Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral R. Hari Kumar, visited Oman and met with the senior military leadership of Oman. Omani Minister of Royal Office, General Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nuamani, commended India’s advancements in defence manufacturing and expressed his country’s potential to benefit from these strides. Discussions with Oman’s Royal Navy Commander emphasised the strategic partnership between the nations. Admiral

Kumar discussed bilateral defence cooperation and thanked Oman for assisting Indian Navy ships in port calls. He also visited military institutions, including the Military Technical College and Maritime Security Centre. The visit coincided with the arrival of INS Visakhapatnam, an indigenously designed guided missile destroyer, in Oman.

Violence erupts in Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon

The United Nations reported that over 2,000 individuals have been forced to flee due to violent clashes between rival factions at a Palestinian refugee camp, Ein El Hilweh, in Lebanon. The conflict involved Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement and Islamist groups, resulting in 11 casualties. The Ein El Hilweh camp, the largest camp in Lebanon, houses more than 63,000 registered refugees, though actual numbers might be higher. The camp's security relies on internal factional arrangements, as it falls outside the Lebanese security force's jurisdiction. The recent violence began after an Islamist group member was killed, escalating to the death of a Fatah commander and his associates. Despite initial ceasefires, clashes resumed, injuring numerous people and damaging schools. The situation improved slightly after a second ceasefire, but tensions persist. The Palestinian presidency strongly condemned the fighting and prioritised the camp's security. Lebanese soldiers were also injured during the confrontations, and the UN agency for Palestinian refugees suspended operations in the camp. In Lebanon, around 489,000 Palestinian

refugees are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

US approves Israel's Arrow 3 missile defence system export to Germany

The US government has granted approval for Israel to export its jointly developed Arrow 3 missile defence system to Germany, marking Israel's largest-ever single defence deal. The Arrow 3, a cutting-edge long-range missile defence system capable of intercepting ballistic missiles outside Earth's atmosphere, was co-developed by the Israel Missile Defense Organisation and the United States Missile Defence Agency. It is manufactured by Israel Aerospace Industries and can neutralise various warheads from distances up to 2,400 kilometres. Israel's Defense Ministry stated that senior Israeli and German defence officials will sign a commitment letter, with Germany making an initial payment of around US\$ 600 million for manufacturing setup. The total US\$ 3.5 billion contract is expected to be signed by the end of 2023, aiming to address Germany's defence needs amidst geopolitical challenges like the Russia-Ukraine war.

Israel to increase natural gas export to Egypt

Israel has announced plans to raise its natural gas exports to Egypt from the Tamar field in the Mediterranean. Israel's Energy Minister Israel Katz stated that after securing gas supply for the domestic market, approval was granted to enhance exports to Egypt, strengthening diplomatic

ties and increasing state revenue. The decision entails boosting production at the Tamar field to 6 billion cubic meters per year starting in 2026, marking a 60 per cent increase in gas production. Of the 6 billion cubic meters produced, 3.5 billion will be exported to Egypt. Currently, Israel exports about one-third of its annual natural gas output of 28 billion cubic meters to Egypt and Jordan. While Jordan uses the imported gas domestically, Egypt liquefies and exports the acquired gas. In June 2022, the EU, Egypt and Israel signed a MoU focusing on collaboration in areas such as trade, transportation and the export of natural gas to the EU.

The UAE and South Korea conduct Joint high-tech military drills

The UAE and South Korea conducted joint high-tech military drills to enhance bilateral military cooperation. The exercises were held at the Korea Combat Training Center (KCTC) and involved around 2,500 troops, including an armed forces platoon from the UAE and a unit from the 22nd Infantry Division of South Korea. The drills, which included the use of cutting-edge technologies for realistic ground training, featured defence and attack operations against specialised counterforce units. This marked the UAE's first participation in exercises at the KCTC.

US and Iraq hold Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue

The US Department of Defence and the Iraqi Ministry of Defence held the first US-Iraq Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue in Washington DC from August 7-8, 2023. Minister of Defence Thabit Al Abbasi led

the Republic of Iraq delegation, while Assistant Secretary of Defence Celeste Wallander headed the US delegation. Discussions revolved around bilateral defence matters, aligning with the 2008 US-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement and an all-encompassing partnership. The delegates confirmed that no US forces hold combat roles in Iraq and that US military personnel remain in Iraq at the government's invitation for training, advising, assisting and intelligence sharing in the fight against ISIS. They reviewed the Defeat-ISIS campaign's achievements, ongoing efforts to prevent its resurgence, cooperation with Iraqi Security Forces and the need to repatriate displaced persons and detainees.

India makes first rupee payment for buying oil from the UAE

India and the UAE have taken steps to bolster their trade relationship by conducting bilateral trade settlements using their local currencies, such as the Indian rupee. Indian Oil Corporation made a payment in rupees for oil purchased from the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, showcasing the shift away from the US dollar. This move aims to simplify transactions, reduce conversion costs and enhance trade cooperation. India and the UAE formalised this approach in July this year, allowing trade settlements in the Indian Rupee. During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's UAE visit, both countries agreed on a real-time payment link for cross-border transfers. Additionally, a recent deal involved the sale of gold from a UAE exporter to an Indian buyer. This strategic move seeks to boost exports and navigate challenges in the global trade environment.