



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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Benjamin Netanyahu to form new government in Israel

The 25th parliamentary elections were held on November 1, 2022, making it the fifth election in the last four years. The final election results confirmed a victory for former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose Likud party secured 32 seats out of 120 in the Parliament. In addition, the Likud-led right-wing and ultra-nationalist bloc, which includes Religious Zionist (14), Shas (11) and United Torah Judaism (7), gained a majority in the parliament by securing 64 seats. The outgoing Prime Minister, Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid party won 24 seats and his bloc of right-wing, left-wing and Arab parties could only secure 51 seats. Israeli President Isaac Herzog has invited Netanyahu to form the government.

Saudi Arabia sponsors US\$ 1 billion economic reforms in Yemen

Under the sponsorship of Saudi Arabia, the Arab Monetary Fund has signed a US\$ 1 billion agreement with the government of Yemen to revive its failing economy. The deal was signed on November 27, 2022, in Riyadh and it seeks to form a comprehensive economic and monetary reform programme to improve governance. The reform programme also aims at reducing unemployment and poverty in Yemen. While talking about the project, the Finance Minister of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed Al Jadaan, said that the initiative will strengthen the banking sector, improve the role of the private sector and encourage long-term economic development.

Turkey launches airstrikes in northern Syria

Turkey has once again launched multiple airstrikes over northern Syria and Iraq. The

strikes were aimed at Kurdish groups that Turkey holds responsible for the bomb blast in Istanbul. Turkish President Erdogan said that the airstrikes on the People's Defence Units (YPG) are just the beginning and it would also start ground operations when "convenient" to secure its southern border. Pentagon's Spokesperson Air Force Brigadier General Pat Ryder said that strikes in Syria "directly threaten the safety of US personnel" working in Syria with the local partners to defeat ISIS. The Syrian Democratic Forces accused Turkey for using the Istanbul bombing as a "pretext to launch a long-planned cross-border offensive."

Middle East Green Initiative Summit held in Egypt

The second edition of the Middle East Green Initiative Summit was held in Sharm Al Sheikh on November 7, 2022, and was co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The summit was held parallel to the United Nations climate conference COP27 in Egypt and was attended by a number of leaders from West Asian and African countries along with international officials working with the environment and climate change sector. The leaders emphasised on the importance of collective action in achieving the desired goal of the Middle East Green Initiative. They acknowledged that the initiative would accelerate the work in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and reiterated the support for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The participants agreed to support efforts to reduce emissions in the West Asian region and "beyond by signing bilateral and multilateral agreements and MoUs in the field of clean energy". The leaders also re-emphasised the need of joint action to develop modern technologies for carbon capture, utilization, and storage and decarbonization technologies.

Qatar and China sign a 27-year LNG deal

QatarEnergy has signed a 27-year LNG deal with China's Sinopec. It is one of the longest LNG deals signed till date. QatarEnergy chief Saad Al Kaabi terms the deal as an important milestone as the first Sale and Purchase Agreement (SPA) is signed for the North Field Project. The deal talks about supplying 4 million tonnes of LNG to China for 27 years. The deal accounts for the single largest SPA in the LNG sector, till date. QatarEnergy also signed five deals for the North Field East (NFE), the first and larger of the two-phase North Field expansion plan in early 2022. Sinopec states that the supply contract is a key component for an integrated partnership in the NFE and hinted at the possibility of stake negotiations.

Syrian Foreign Minister Fayssal Mekdad visits India

The Syrian Foreign Minister Dr. Fayssal Mekdad visited India and met with his Indian counterpart Dr. S. Jaishankar in New Delhi on November 18, 2022. Dr. Jaishankar assured humanitarian support to Dr. Mekdad including supply of medicines and artificial limbs to Syria. He also delivered a talk on the current situation in Syria at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi. Dr. Mekdad highlighted the destruction of health and energy infrastructure in the country due to the war and stated that the government of Bashar Al Assad has achieved "resounding victory" against ISIS after the war imposed great hardships on the Syrian government. He highlighted the importance of a "new world order" that would be respected by all members of the United Nations. He elaborated upon Syria's growing challenges exacerbated by the Turkey-US nexus, economic sanctions and regional hostilities.

Foreign Minister of UAE visits India

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the UAE, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, was on a two-day visit to India and met with his Indian counterpart Dr. S. Jaishankar in New Delhi. Both the leaders reviewed the progress in the bilateral relations and appreciated the positive progress in ties between the two, especially, in the fields of "trade, investment, consular matters, education and food security." They highlighted the significant growth in bilateral trade as a result of "the CEPA Agreement which came into force in May 2022." Both the leaders agreed on the expansion of cooperation in the areas of energy, healthcare, defence, space, climate change, skills, fin-tech and start-ups. They also discussed the global situation, key regional issues as well as cooperation in the UN Security Council.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister visits India

Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs of Iran, Dr. Ali Bagheri Kani, visited India and met with External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar. The two sides held Foreign Office Consultations and discussed issues of mutual interest at bilateral, regional and international level. The key issues discussed during the meeting include Afghanistan, the International North-South Transport Corridor and ways of strengthening multilateral cooperation. They also reiterated their commitment to continue cooperation for the development of the Shahid Beheshti terminal of the Chabahar Port. The interaction was aimed at boosting trade exchanges and Indian investment in Chabahar.