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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

- **ISIS claims mosque attack in Oman**
- **NATO to establish first Middle East Liaison Office in Jordan**
- **Israel's Knesset passes resolution against Palestinian statehood**
- **India releases US\$ 2.5 million to UNRWA**
- **Palestinian factions sign Beijing Declaration to end division**
- **Syria's President Assad visits Russia**
- **Drone Attack on Tel Aviv marks escalation, Israel responds**
- **Netanyahu visits US**
- **Jaishankar visits Qatar**

ISIS claims mosque attack in Oman

ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack on a Shia mosque in Oman on 16 July 2024, resulting in at least nine deaths, including three attackers. The assault, which took place at the Ali bin Abi Talib mosque in Muscat, left four Pakistanis, an Indian and an Omani police officer dead. Omani authorities reported 28 people wounded, including some security personnel. The attackers, identified as “suicide attackers” by ISIS, exchanged gunfire with Omani security forces. The incident, which occurred during the Ashura period is a rare act of terrorist attack in Oman, known for its tolerance and stability, and has raised concerns about the resurgence of ISIS in the region.

NATO to establish first Middle East Liaison Office in Jordan

At the NATO Summit in Washington DC on 10 July 2024, the members adopted a new action plan to enhance engagement with the Middle East and North Africa, including establishing NATO’s first liaison office in Amman, Jordan. Building on the July 2023 Vilnius Summit Communiqué, this decision underscores NATO’s commitment to strengthening its strategic partnership with Jordan, recognising its role as a stabilising force and ally in combating transnational threats. The new office will foster closer political dialogue and practical cooperation, facilitating regular engagement and joint initiatives in strategic analysis, emergency planning, crisis management and more. This move represents a significant evolution in NATO-Jordan relations, reflecting nearly thirty years of cooperation through the Mediterranean Dialogue.

Israel’s Knesset passes resolution against Palestinian statehood

Israel’s parliament, the Knesset, on 18 July 2024, voted overwhelmingly to reject the establishment of a Palestinian state, highlighting the diminishing support for a two-state solution among Israelis. Out of the 120-member legislative body, 68 voted for the resolution, asserting that a Palestinian state would “pose an existential danger to the State of Israel.” Nine members opposed the resolution, while others abstained.

India releases US\$ 2.5 million to UNRWA

On 15 July 2024, India released US\$ 2.5 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), a contribution warmly welcomed by the agency at a particularly challenging time, especially in Gaza. This donation, part of India’s annual contribution of US\$ 5 million for 2024-25, supports UNRWA’s core programmes and services, including education, healthcare, relief and social services for Palestinian refugees. The funds were handed over by India’s Representative to Palestine to UNRWA’s Director of Partnerships. The UNRWA, which has been struggling to provide basic services amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, expressed gratitude for India’s continued support, as India has provided financial support of around US\$ 35 million till 2023-24.

Palestinian factions sign Beijing Declaration to end division

Several Palestinian factions, including rivals Hamas and Fatah, signed the *Beijing Declaration on Ending Division and Strengthening Palestinian National Unity* in Beijing, China, on 23 July 2024. The

reconciliation talks, hosted by China and involving 14 Palestinian factions, occurred as Israel continues its conflict with Hamas in Gaza. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi highlighted that the agreement emphasised the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of all Palestinians and outlined plans for post-Gaza war governance, the formation of an interim national reconciliation government and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine in accordance with relevant UN resolutions.

Syria's President Assad visits Russia

Syrian President Bashar Al Assad visited Moscow and met with Russian President Vladimir Putin on 24 July 2024. During the meeting, Putin highlighted the increasing regional tensions affecting Syria and the potential for enhanced economic and trade relations between the two countries. Assad acknowledged the historical challenges in Russian-Syrian relations but emphasised their resilience based on mutual trust. He described the meeting as crucial for discussing Eurasian and global events. According to reports, this meeting took place amid efforts to facilitate direct talks between Turkish and Syrian officials.

Drone Attack on Tel Aviv marks escalation, Israel responds

On 19 July 2024, Tel Aviv was struck by a drone attack claimed by the Houthi rebels, marking the first such incident in Israel's commercial centre. The attack killed one Israeli citizen and injured several others. The Houthis asserted that the drone could evade interception systems and vowed continued strikes until aggression against Gaza ceased. In retaliation, Israel conducted airstrikes codenamed Operation Outstretched Arm on Yemen's port of Al Hodeidah the following day, killing at least

six and injuring many. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu justified the strikes, stating that the port facilitated arms supplies from Iran to the Houthis. Besides, 12 children were killed in a Hezbollah rocket attack on July 27, in Majdal Shams. Israeli counterattack killed a senior Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr in Lebanon. On July 31, Hamas Politbureau chief Ismail Haniyeh was killed in Tehran. Iran has claimed that the attack has been perpetrated by Israel.

Netanyahu visits US

On 24 July 2024, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed a Joint Meeting of the US Congress, where he appealed for help to keep fighting the war against Hamas. The following day, 25 July, he met with the US President Joe Biden at the White House with families of American hostages. Netanyahu also met with the US Vice President Kamala Harris at the White House. On 26 July, Netanyahu travelled to Mar-a-Lago, Florida, for a meeting with former US President Donald Trump. In the meetings while Netanyahu appealed for more support from the US, the latter also urged Netanyahu to work towards achieving a cease-fire deal with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Jaishankar visits Qatar

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar paid an official visit to Qatar on 30 June 2024. During his visit, Jaishankar met with Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani. The discussions focused on reviewing bilateral relations across various sectors, including political, trade, investment, energy, security cultural and people-to-people ties, as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest.