



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

January 21, 2026

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South Asia:

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ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on strategic and international issues of critical national interest. DPG is a non-partisan institution and is independently funded by a non-profit Trust. Over past decades, DPG has established itself in both domestic and international circles and is widely recognised today among the top security think tanks of India and of Asia's major powers.

Since 2016, in keeping with India's increasing global profile, DPG has expanded its focus areas to include India's regional and global role and its policies in the Indo-Pacific. In a realist environment, DPG remains mindful of the need to align India's ambitions with matching strategies and capabilities, from diplomatic initiatives to security policy and military modernisation.

At a time of disruptive change in the global order, DPG aims to deliver research based, relevant, reliable and realist policy perspectives to an actively engaged public, both at home and abroad. DPG is deeply committed to the growth of India's national power and purpose, the security and prosperity of the people of India and India's contributions to the global public good. We remain firmly anchored within these foundational principles which have defined DPG since its inception.

India's Proximity Archives

India's Proximity Archives covers major developments in South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia, Central Asia and Indian Ocean Region of strategic relevance to India, compiled from open-source media. The research team includes Shreyas Deshmukh, Sanket Joshi, Jayantika Rao T.V, Divya Rai and Arshiya Chaturvedi, Research Associates. Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Sanket Joshi at sanket@dpg.org.in.

Cover Images:

Southeast Asia: Philippines Foreign Affairs Secretary, Lazaro held a bilateral meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu, on January 15, 2026. Source: [Republic of Philippines - Department of Foreign Affairs](#)

East Asia: Mark Carney, the Canadian Prime Minister with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People, Beijing, China on January 16, 2026. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China](#)

West Asia: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the UAE's President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan met in New Delhi on January 19, 2026. Source: [Official X Handle/Narendra Modi](#)

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◊ *Trump's 'Board of Peace' for Gaza*

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Prominent leaders of major political parties of Nepal, including KP Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', have [filed their nominations](#) for the upcoming elections set to take place on March 5. Former Kathmandu Mayor [Balendra Shah](#), a leader of the Rastriya Swatantra Party, submitted his candidacy on January 20. Having resigned from his mayoral position to run in the general elections, he announced that he will compete against the former prime minister KP Sharma Oli in the same constituency. Nepal's Election Commission implemented the [Election Code of Conduct](#), starting on January 19. Meanwhile, India provided Nepal with its first batch of [election-related assistance](#) on January 19.

Following the Gen Z revolution, major political parties in Nepal have resisted leadership changes. The emergence of Balendra Shah as a youth icon may present a significant political challenge to these parties.

A bombing at a Chinese restaurant in Kabul on January 19 resulted in seven deaths, among them a [Chinese citizen](#), and several injuries, according to the Taliban police. The attack was claimed by [Islamic State Khorasan](#). In the meantime, the Chinese government advised its citizens to postpone travel to Afghanistan and to stay alert if they are already in the country. According to Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun, [China urged](#) the Taliban to implement more effective measures to protect Chinese citizens, projects, and organisations, investigate the explosion thoroughly, and hold those accountable.

The Taliban may face increased pressure to control hostile groups due to frequent attacks on Chinese nationals in Afghanistan and neighbouring border areas, potentially prompting a greater intelligence presence from Beijing.

Other Developments

[Nepal, Bangladesh move to fast-track preferential trade agreement](#)

[Kabul-Appointed Diplomat Takes Charge of Afghanistan Embassy in Delhi](#)

[Defence pact between Pakistan Turkiye, Saudi awaits final approval](#)

[Islami Andolan Bangladesh exits Jamaat-led alliance, to contest polls independently](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [January 15](#), Japan and the Philippines signed a pact that would allow the tax-free provision of ammunition, fuel, food and other necessities when their forces stage joint training to boost deterrence against China's growing aggression in the region and to bolster their preparation for natural disasters. The Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), [signed](#) by Philippine Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro and Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu in Manila, comes against a backdrop of persistent tension in maritime Asia, particularly in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. During the ceremony, Japan also announced 2.53 billion yen (US\$ 15.9 million) of new security and economic development assistance to the Philippines. This included US [\\$6 million](#) in Official Security Assistance to fund the building of facilities to house rigid-hulled inflatable boats previously donated by Japan, and [funds](#) to expand internet access in parts of the Southern Philippines affected by the region's separatist conflict.

Japan and Philippines' new defence pact, strengthens their partnership to counter China's assertiveness while also boosting disaster readiness and expanding Japan's influence through military aid and development assistance.

On [January 20](#), Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan said the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will not endorse elections in military-ruled Myanmar, citing concerns over the lack of inclusive and free participation. Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan told Parliament that ASEAN leaders decided at their summit in October not to send observers to Myanmar because conditions for a credible election were not met, though some member countries chose to do so individually. Myanmar's Information Ministry said last month that ASEAN members Cambodia and Vietnam were among several nations that sent observers.

ASEAN's refusal to endorse Myanmar's elections reflects a cautious step toward defending democratic credibility, leaving Myanmar more isolated, while external powers may deepen their involvement in shaping outcomes.

Other Developments

[Philippines' Marcos faces first impeachment complaint](#)

[Cambodia raises annexation fears over Thai land seizures](#)

[Thailand and Cambodia want Malaysia to remain as peace facilitators, says Tok Mat](#)

East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

On January 16, [Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, on his official visit to China, met Chinese President Xi Jinping](#) in Beijing. President Xi noted that China-Canada relations have followed a positive development trajectory since the two leaders last met in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea, in October 2025. This has resulted in the resumption of cooperation across various fields and the achievement of many positive outcomes. Further emphasising that this positive momentum should be sustained with the two countries advancing their bilateral relations into a Strategic Partnership, Xi proposed four points to achieve this objective. These are mutual respect for sovereignty, integrity and choice of political path; shared development by expanding cooperation and reducing areas of discord; building trust through enhanced people-to-people exchanges; and close collaboration on multilateral platforms such as the UN, G20, and APEC to address various global challenges. Concurring with the four points proposed by Xi and reaffirming Canada's commitment to the One-China policy, the Canadian Prime Minister expressed his government's intention to advance bilateral ties into a Strategic Partnership.

Amid US-induced economic and larger geopolitical uncertainty, Canada and China are actively pursuing economic diversification and exploring greater strategic interdependence. However, the extent of this renewed engagement remains to be seen, given differing strategic priorities and constraints.

On January 17, [the South Korean Trade Minister responded to President Trump's January 14 proclamation](#) invoking Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 as having minimal repercussions for South Korean companies. The said proclamation imposed a 25% tariff on select advanced computing chips, such as the NVIDIA H200 and AMD MI325X, under national security rhetoric. The trade minister noted that this is because the memory chips that South Korean companies primarily export are currently excluded, but the government is closely monitoring for possible future expansion of the regulation. The tariff exempts chips and derivative devices imported for US data centres; however, the proclamation does allow for broader tariffs on semiconductors and related products to encourage domestic manufacturing in the near future. US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick also recently remarked that South Korean chipmakers and Taiwanese companies not investing in the US could face tariffs of up to 100% unless they commit to increasing production on American soil.



The US is leveraging its primacy in the semiconductor supply chain and imposing supply chain control, tariffs, and investment to actively shape global technology ecosystems, constrain strategic competitors and maintain its strategic superiority.

Other Development

[Japan PM Sanae Takaichi calls snap election on Feb. 8 to seek stronger mandate](#)

[Type 075 ship: The ace up Xi's sleeve? All about China's trump card for Taiwan takeover](#)

[U.S. and Japan turn to drones to help offset China's military advantages](#)

[18th Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue](#)

[North Korea's Kim fires vice premier, inspects machinery plant before key party congress](#)

[How Trump is making China great again, and forcing a reset of trade relationships](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

UAE's President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan paid an official visit to India and held a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 19. The two sides signed a [joint statement pledging to double bilateral trade](#) to USD 200 billion by 2032, a 10-year LNG deal, and a letter of intent to conclude the Strategic Defence Partnership. Major issues discussed in the meeting included India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), the UAE's support for India's BRICS chairmanship in 2026, a zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism, and cooperation in the food security and space sectors.

The visit of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to New Delhi underscores the continued strengthening of the India-UAE multifaceted partnership, based on mutual respect and strategic autonomy.

On January 15, US President Donald Trump announced the formation of the 'National Committee for the Administration of Gaza' (NCAG). According to a White House statement, the [NCAG will be led by Dr. Ali Sha'ath](#), a former Deputy Minister of Transportation in the Palestinian Authority (PA). The Gaza Board of Peace includes President Donald J. Trump (Chairman) and appointed members, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Steve Witkoff, Jared Kushner, Tony Blair, Marc Rowan, Ajay Banga (President of the World Bank), and Robert Gabriel. Nickolay Mladenov will serve as High Representative for Gaza and a link between the Board of Peace and NCAG. Major General Jasper Jeffers has been appointed as Commander of the UN-mandated International Stabilisation Force (ISF) in Gaza.

Hamas' disarmament and Israel's withdrawal from Gaza will be crucial to NCAG's governance and security plans as Phase Two of the US's Gaza peace plan begins.

Other Developments

[Syria gives Kurds four days to accept integration as US signals end of support](#)

[Standoff with Iran over inspections cannot go on forever, IAEA chief says](#)

[Trump's 'board of peace' appears to seek wider mandate beyond Gaza](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [January 19](#), the first cross-Caspian Sea China-Central Asia freight train departed from north China's Tianjin Municipality to Baku, Azerbaijan, carrying goods such as stainless-steel pipes and household appliances. The train, operated by China Railway Beijing Group, will leave the country via Horgos Port in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region before traversing Kazakhstan and ultimately being shipped across the Caspian Sea to Baku. Spanning a journey of approximately 7,000 kilometres in about 20 days, the route cuts travel time by around 10 days compared to traditional sea transport.

China's launch of the first cross-Caspian freight train to Azerbaijan reflects its push to diversify trade routes and strengthen connectivity across Central Asia, reducing reliance on longer maritime paths. Geopolitically, the corridor enhances China's Belt and Road footprint, deepens its economic ties with Kazakhstan and the South Caucasus, and positions Baku as a critical transit hub linking Asia to Europe.

On [January 20](#), Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev outlined Kazakhstan's ongoing political reforms, foreign policy priorities, and digital transformation agenda during the National Kurultai (Congress) in Kyzylorda, stressing national unity amid global uncertainty. As part of the reforms, Tokayev proposed establishing the office of Vice President, to be appointed by the President with the consent of the Parliament. The Vice President would represent Kazakhstan internationally, work with Parliament, engage with domestic and foreign organizations, and perform other duties assigned by the President. On foreign policy, Tokayev noted that international relations are undergoing profound changes, marked by declining trust, erosion of international law, and rising global militarization. In this context, he said Kazakhstan's foreign policy must remain balanced and focused on safeguarding national interests. He underlined that diplomatic decisions carry long-term consequences and must be made with professionalism and caution. Diplomacy, he said, should serve as a tool for compromise rather than confrontation. On 'digitalization', Tokayev warned that technology alone cannot resolve poor governance. According to him, effective digital transformation requires streamlined management processes, improved organizational culture, and modern management practices in the public sector.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev statement during the National Kurultai (Congress) highlights Tokayev's bid to consolidate political authority while projecting stability amid global turbulence.



Other Developments

[Azerbaijan says it agreed to join Trump's 'Board of Peace'](#)

[Uzbekistan Agrees to Join U.S.-Proposed Peace Council on Gaza](#)

[India delivers first batch of Pinaka rocket systems to Armenia](#)

[Azerbaijani president says his country 'closed the page on war' with Armenia](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

The ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) [reported an increase](#) in global maritime incidents and piracy and armed robbery in 2025, classifying most cases as low-level. According to the IMB Annual Piracy and Armed Robbery Report, 137 incidents against ships were recorded in 2025 compared to 116 in 2024 and 120 in 2023. It reveals that 121 vessels were boarded, four vessels were hijacked and two were fired upon, as well as 10 attempted attacks. While most reported incidents in 2025 were categorised as low level, violence against crew continues, with 46 crew members taken hostage in 2025 compared to 126 in 2024 and 73 in 2023. Twenty-five crew were reported kidnapped, compared to 12 in 2024 and 14 in 2023. A further 10 crew were threatened, four injured and three assaulted in 2025. Additionally, the report highlights that the greatest number of incidents are with vessels that are underway (88 of the reported boardings in 2025). A vessel that was steaming was three times more likely (27) to be boarded than a ship at anchor. Also, bulkers remain the most vulnerable type (50), with containerships and product tankers each at approximately 20 incidents. Geographically, Southeast Asia is the area of greatest concern, accounting for 95 of the incidents reported last year. While there was also a highly publicised [re-emergence of incidents](#) off Somalia, IMB highlights that the lack of a broader resurgence was due to the continuing deterrents of the naval presence in the region and vessels being on alert and hardening their defences. Two of the incidents it notes were far from shore, showing that Somali pirate groups can still interfere with shipping.

The latest report highlights an increase in global maritime incidents, particularly piracy and armed robbery. Although most were low-level crimes, it stresses the critical need for prompt reporting, as perpetrators increasingly resort to firearms – resulting in hostage situations and assaults that threaten crew safety and disrupt supply chains.

The ships of the Indian Navy's First Training Squadron (1TS) – INS Tir, INS Shardul, and INS Sujata, along with ICGS Sarathi – as a part of a training deployment to Southeast Asia- [made a port call](#) at Belawan, Indonesia, on January 20, 2026. During the port call, personnel from the Indian Navy and the Indonesian Navy will engage in a wide range of professional and social interactions, including cross-deck visits and joint training activities, aimed at enhancing interoperability and strengthening maritime cooperation. As part of the cultural exchange programme, joint yoga sessions, and community outreach activities have also been scheduled.

The deployment to Southeast Asia reinforces India's Act East Policy and MAHASAGAR vision through regular naval interactions and training exchanges with member nations of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

Other Developments

[South African naval exercise goes from bad to worse](#)



[Chagos Islands transfer deal hits US opposition](#)

[13th Indian Navy – Sri Lanka Navy Staff Talks conclude in Colombo](#)

[India says Iran has not permitted contact with the crew of the seized tanker](#)

[Indian Navy handed over a Rigid Inflatable Boat \(RIB\) to the Sri Lanka Navy](#)



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