



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

July 23, 2025

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South Asia:

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Delhi Policy Group

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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:

South Asia: On July 17, 2025, a Trilateral Framework Agreement was signed in Kabul, Afghanistan, for a joint feasibility study on the Naibabad-Kharlachi rail link, a component of the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Railway Corridor.

Source: [X/@ForeignOfficePk](https://twitter.com/X/@ForeignOfficePk)

West Asia: Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa addressed the nation on July 17, 2025, after sectarian violence in the province of Sweida. Source: [Syrian Arab News Agency](https://www.syanianewsagency.com)

Indian Ocean Region: INS Nistar, the first indigenously designed and constructed Diving Support Vessel, was commissioned into the Indian Navy on July 18, 2025. Source: [X/@Indiannavy](https://twitter.com/X/@Indiannavy)

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Contents

South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh 1

Southeast Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 3

East Asia

Arshiya Chaturvedi 4

West Asia

Sanket Joshi..... 6

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 7

Indian Ocean Region

Divya Rai 9

Watch Points

◇	Iran and the E3 (Britain, France, and Germany) nuclear talks scheduled to be held in Istanbul on July 25
◇	Japan's changing internal political dynamics and possible leadership change may disrupt its traditional domestic priorities and foreign policy stance.

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

The [Resistance Front](#) (TRF), responsible for the April 22, 2025, Pahalgam attack was formally designated by the United States Department of State as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) on July 18. The United States Department of State identified TRF as a front and proxy of Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT). According to the press release, Pahalgam attack was the deadliest against civilians in India since the 2008 Mumbai attacks, carried out by LeT. The Indian government [endorsed](#) this decision.

This development signifies the success of India's diplomatic initiatives fostering global counterterrorism cooperation and underscores the deepening of India-US counterterrorism collaboration.

On July 17th, [Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar](#) travelled to Kabul to participate in a trilateral discussion with Afghanistan and Uzbekistan focused on regional collaboration. The Uzbek delegation, under the leadership of Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov, also travelled to Kabul. Following a trilateral meeting, a [Framework Agreement](#) was signed to initiate a joint feasibility study on the construction of a rail link between Naibabad and Kharlachi as part of the UAP Railway Corridor. Mr. Dar also held a meeting with the Taliban's acting foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi. In a statement, Pakistan's Foreign Office noted that both parties emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum in bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation in the areas of trade, transit, and security. Following Mr. Dar's visit, Pakistan's Interior Minister, Mohsin Naqvi, visited Kabul on July 20. [Bilateral discussions](#) with the Taliban's Interim Interior Minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani, were held during the visit. The talks centered on terrorism, border security, and the repatriation of Afghan refugees.

Following mediation by China, Pakistan and the Taliban-led Afghan government have initiated discussions to address bilateral concerns, prioritizing trade and connectivity. However, significant challenges including border conflicts, the forced repatriation of Afghan refugees, and terrorism continue to strain relations.

Incidents of violence between political party adherents continued to occur across Bangladesh. On July 19th, BNP and Chhatra Dal leadership disrupted a National Citizen Party (NCP) [street rally](#) in Cox's Bazar. Violent clashes related

to the NCP's July march in Gopalganj on July 16th resulted [in four deaths](#). Islami Andolan Bangladesh and Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis held [a protest](#) on July 18 to condemn the attack against NCP leaders and to voice their disapproval of the opening of a UN Human Rights Office in Dhaka. On July 22, seventy-five students [sustained injuries](#) from a baton charge by law enforcement during a protest at the secretariat's main gate, where they were demanding the resignation of the education adviser and secretary.

The failure of the interim government to enact promised reforms, curb political violence, and stabilize the economy has deepened political instability within Bangladesh.

Other Developments

[Thousands of Afghans secretly moved to Britain after data leak](#)

[Sri Lanka sacks high-ranking police officer over Easter Sunday bombings](#)

[Nepal, India home secretaries discuss border security, extradition, aid](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [July 22](#), US President Donald Trump hosted Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., with the aim of deepening strategic and economic cooperation between the two countries amid growing regional tensions, particularly with China. Following the meeting, US President Donald Trump announced that he has reached a trade agreement with the Philippine leader. President Trump revealed the broad terms of the agreement on his social media network, stating that Philippines will pay [19% tariff](#) and said the two countries would also work together militarily.

The announcement of the deal that positions the Philippines as an open market for the US, even as tariff rates rise from 17 percent (April 2) to 19 percent (July 22) reflects a tradeoff that Manila's broader strategic thrust lies in deepening security cooperation amid rising Indo-Pacific tensions. It reflects Manila's priorities toward Washington as a stabilising military partner.

On July 22, Singapore and Vietnam announced that they will strengthen their defence relationship and seek more regular dialogue between their leaders. During Singaporean Defence Minister, [Chan Chun Sing's visit to Vietnam](#), Mr Chan had called on Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh. The two leaders reaffirmed the warm and friendly bilateral relationship between Singapore and Vietnam, and discussed various initiatives under the CSP. Mr. Chan also met his counterpart Vietnam Minister of National Defence General (GEN) Phan Van Giang where they exchanged views on geopolitical developments and discussed ways to strengthen the bilateral defence relationship, under the ambit of the CSP.

Strategic dialogue between the nations underscores a calculated alignment to bolster joint security architecture—particularly in response to escalating tensions in the South China Sea.

Other Developments

[US publishes details of Indonesia 'reciprocal' tariff trade deal](#)

[Southeast Asia's shifting geopolitics: A challenge for India's Act East policy](#)

[China seeks to control Southeast Asia via ploy to back nuclear weapons treaty, analysts say](#)

East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

[China has begun constructing the world's largest hydropower dam, the Motuo Hydropower Station, on the Yarlung Tsangpo river](#) in Tibet. On this \$167 billion project, which is set to surpass the Three Gorges Dam in scale and energy generation, India and Bangladesh have raised concerns due to its environmental impact and geopolitical consequences. The construction could give China significant control over water flow to downstream regions of the Brahmaputra river, including India's northeastern states and Bangladesh, potentially threatening livelihoods and ecosystems. Both India and Bangladesh have demanded transparency and consultation, but Chinese officials have responded by reiterating China's "legitimate right" to develop the dam while promising to consider downstream impacts. Media Reports suggest that India plans to construct a hydropower dam on the Siang River as a strategic buffer to mitigate the risk of sudden water releases from China's dam and to prevent potential flooding in downstream areas of its territory.

This construction of a dam reflects on China's broader strategy of leveraging its critical transboundary resources, such as riverine waters, to exert influence and strategic pressure on India and other neighbours.

In [the recent upper house election held on July 20](#), Japan's long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its coalition partner Komeito, led by Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, suffered a significant setback. It is the first time since 1955 that the LDP and its allies don't have a majority in either chamber of the Diet. Having already lost its majority in the lower house in October last year, the coalition in this election, too, could only secure 47 seats out of the total 125 contested seats. A new far-right populist party, Sanseito, known for its anti-immigration and nationalist rhetoric, has recorded substantial gains in the election. The LDP has been known for its stable and pro-business policies, but now appears to be fractured, and Prime Minister Ishiba also faces growing internal dissent and steadily declining public support. With the ruling LDP having a minority government, it will have to undertake issue-based alliances with other smaller parties, which may result in increased risk of legislative deadlock and political instability.

The changing dynamics of Japan's domestic politics and resulting instability may hinder it's ability to decisively respond and manage current geopolitical concerns, including trade talks with the US amid tariff tensions and China's

regional assertiveness. The potential change in leadership could also alter Japan's geopolitical stance, exacerbating apprehension among its allies.

Taiwan continues to observe intensifying Chinese military activity near its territorial waters. [On July 21, the Ministry of National Defence \(MND\) reported detecting one Chinese aircraft and five naval vessels](#), with the aircraft crossing the median line into Taiwan's northern Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ). A similar incident was reported a day earlier, on July 20, involving two aircraft and four vessels. Responding to these latest incidents, Taiwan's Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim condemned China's escalating military provocations, grey-zone tactics, and economic coercion. She reaffirmed the Taiwanese government's commitment to national security and regional stability and highlighted the active focus on military modernisation along with strengthening societal resilience against China.

Further, [the US House of Representatives passed the Taiwan Conflict Deterrence Act on July 22](#) with bipartisan support against Chinese military aggression. The bill dictates that, if Beijing launches an attack, the US Treasury must publicly expose the illicit financial assets of top Chinese Communist Party elites, as well as restrict their and their families' access to American financial systems.

Amid growing Chinese aggression toward Taiwan, the US's adoption of non-military strategies, including financial and diplomatic deterrents, such as exposing CCP elites, to raise the cost of any attempt to alter the status quo. This reflects Washington's broader aim to preserve regional stability without immediate escalation.

Other Development

[Trump announces 'massive' trade agreement with Japan](#)

[N. Korea says to build additional 5,000-ton destroyer by Oct. 2026](#)

[India, South Korea hold 13th high-level Coast Guard meeting in Delhi](#)

[Will Crush Your Economy": US Senator's Big "Russia" Warning For India, China](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On July 19, Thomas Barrack, US Envoy for Syria, indicated that Sunni Bedouin fighters had withdrawn from [Syria's Druze-majority province of Sweida](#) after days of fighting. In response to Israeli accusations that Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa was complicit in sectarian attack on the Druze community, the US called upon the Syrian leader to [recalibrate his policies](#) and embrace a more inclusive approach or risk losing international support. Al-Sharaa reminded the Bedouins that they "cannot replace the state in handling domestic affairs and restoring security, and that they must adhere to the ceasefire and [comply with Damascus' orders](#)".

The US has distanced itself from Israeli airstrikes in Syria and urged dialogue between Tel Aviv and Damascus, demonstrating Washington's intent to act as a mediator in resolving disputes between Israel and Syria.

Despite US and Israeli airstrikes damaging Iran's nuclear sites, on July 21, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi informed that [Tehran will not give up Uranium](#) enrichment as it is a matter of "national pride". However, he expressed Iran's willingness to engage in indirect negotiations with the US to find a solution to the nuclear program. Meanwhile, Iran was warned by the E3 (Britain, France, and Germany) that if it fails to resume nuclear dialogue, ["snapback sanctions" would be activated](#) as part of JCPOA 2015. Iran rejected these threats, asserting that E3 cannot trigger JCPOA "snapback mechanism" as they have [failed to adhere to the terms of the agreement](#) and supported illegal US and Israeli military strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities. Iran and the E3 are scheduled to hold a meeting on this issue in Istanbul on July 25.

The 12-day war, Iran's refusal to abandon its Uranium enrichment, and the E3's pressure on Tehran to resume nuclear dialogue underscore a continuing lack of mutual strategic trust between the West and Iran.

Other Developments

[Eleven-minute race for food: how aid points in Gaza became 'death traps' – a visual story](#)

[Iran seeks China, Russia help to stall UN sanctions ahead of nuclear talks with Europeans](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [July 19](#), the president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, said he wanted Russia to publicly acknowledge that it had accidentally shot down an Azerbaijani passenger plane in December last year, and to punish those responsible. While Russian President Vladimir Putin apologised at the time for what the Kremlin called a "tragic incident", he stopped short of saying Russia had shot down the aircraft. President Aliyev further stated that Azerbaijan is preparing to [file lawsuits against Russia](#) in international courts over the downing of the Azerbaijan Airlines aircraft while accusing Moscow of stalling the investigation and failing to respond meaningfully to Baku's demands.

Azerbaijan's push to hold Russia accountable signals deepening tensions, revealing a shift from loyal ally of Russia to a strategic partner of the West by supporting them in the global confrontation with Russia.

On [July 16](#), it was revealed by Indian Defence Research Wing that Armenia is set to significantly enhance its artillery capabilities by planning to procure an additional 80 units of Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS) from India's Kalyani Strategic Systems Limited (KSSL) following the successful integration of 12 units in 2023.

This development not only underscores Armenia's satisfaction with India's ATAGS's performance but also highlights the growing defence partnership between India and Armenia.

On [July 17](#), Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan signed a tripartite framework agreement in Kabul to develop a feasibility study for the Trans-Afghan railway project, a strategic initiative that will benefit all of Eurasia. The Termez-Naibabad-Maidanshahr-Logar-Kharlachi route was agreed upon in July 2023 in Islamabad by representatives of the countries participating in the project.

The signing of this document primarily contributes the creation of a Eurasian single transport hub, and the deepening of multilateral development relations between the states and the growing ties of Pakistan with Central Asia.

Other Developments

[Kyrgyzstan ratifies tri-border point agreement with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan](#)

[The Turkic World in the Heart of Europe: OTS Leaders Discuss Economy, Transport, and Unity](#)

[Chairman of State Security Service of Uzbekistan meets with Taliban's acting Minister of Defense](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

INS Nistar, the first indigenously designed and constructed Diving Support Vessel, was [commissioned](#) into the Indian Navy on July 18, 2025, marking a significant milestone as India's first indigenously designed and constructed Diving Support Vessel (DSV). The commissioning took place in Visakhapatnam in the presence of Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Sanjay Seth. Built by Hindustan Shipyard Limited, INS Nistar is the first of two DSVs planned for the Indian Navy. The vessel is equipped to perform complex deep-sea saturation diving missions, matching capabilities held only by select navies worldwide. INS Nistar serves as the 'Mother Ship' for deep submergence rescue vessels (DSRVs), which are essential for rescuing and evacuating crew from submarines stranded at considerable depths.

INS Nistar is a crucial operational enabler for the Indian Navy, particularly in advancing India's autonomous deep-sea rescue capabilities. As the first indigenously designed and constructed Diving Support Vessel, it demonstrates the ability to secure fleet independently without reliance on foreign platforms for critical submarine rescue functions.

The Indian Naval Ships Delhi, Satpura, Shakti, and Kiltan, as a part of the Operational Deployment of the Indian Navy to Southeast Asia, [concluded](#) a port call at Singapore from July 16 to 19, 2025. During their visit, the Indian Navy engaged in professional exchanges with the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN), interacted with academic institutions, and participated in several community outreach activities.

The Indian Navy's operational deployment to Southeast Asia reflects India's 'Act East' policy in action, emphasising its commitment to regional security, freedom of navigation, and a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

Other Developments

[PM Modi embarks on a 4-day visit to the UK and the Maldives](#)

[Sri Lanka Navy \(SLN\) commenced the 'Trincomalee Naval Exercise – 2025' \(TRINEX – 25\) on July 22, 2025](#)

[INS Sandhayak visited Port Klang, Malaysia, from July 16 to 19, 2025](#)

[Australia is hosting the largest multinational military exercise Talisman Sabre](#)



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