



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

May 20, 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 an independently funded 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, 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. and Divya Rai, Research Associates. Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Sanket Joshi at sanket@dpg.org.in.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Delhi Policy Group as an Institution.

Cover Images:

1. India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar in a meeting with Maldives' Foreign Minister Iruthisham Adam in New Delhi on May 13, 2026. Source: [X/@DrSJaishankar](#)
2. UAE's President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi met in Abu Dhabi on May 15, 2026. Source: [Official X Handle/Randhir Jaiswal MEA India](#)
3. The Heads of State of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) met for an informal summit, in Turkistan, Kazakhstan, on May 15, 2026. Source: [Organization of Turkic States](#)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

An agreement has been signed [between](#) Afghanistan and an Indian enterprise for the modernisation of laboratory and quality-control capabilities at nine of its border ports. The five-year agreement is valued at USD 46 million. The project comprises laboratory equipment suitable for testing and assessing construction materials, electrical apparatus, textiles, leather, and paper-based products. The Taliban authorities stated that the agreement also includes the setup of sophisticated laboratory systems, the refurbishment of current equipment, and training initiatives for Afghan technical personnel, along with assistance in achieving international ISO certification standards.

India has maintained limited engagement with Taliban authorities since their resurgence in 2021, primarily concentrating on humanitarian aid. The first commercial deal struck between an Indian company and the Taliban might open doors for more collaborations.

On May 13th, India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, met with the visiting Foreign Minister of [the Maldives](#), Iruthisham Adam, in New Delhi. Following a cabinet reshuffle by Maldivian President Mohammad Muizzu in April 2026, Iruthisham Adam was appointed Foreign Minister, and this marked her first official foreign visit. Discussions during the bilateral meeting aimed to bolster the close relationship, people-to-people exchanges, and the long-standing partnership between India and the Maldives. During their meeting, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Foreign Minister Iruthisham Adam deliberated on expediting negotiations for the India-Maldives Free Trade Agreement, advancing the Bilateral Investment Treaty, encouraging trade settlements in local currencies, and strengthening cooperation in tourism, digital payments, and business-to-business ties.

Following her appointment as the Maldives' Foreign Minister, Iruthisham Adam's selection of India for her inaugural official foreign visit signals strengthening of India-Maldives relations. This occurs as both nations are nearing the conclusion of discussions on pivotal bilateral financial agreements, including a Free Trade Agreement.

Other Developments

[Afghanistan, China Advance Wakhan Corridor Road Project](#)

[UN launches \\$529 million plan for Afghan returnees from Iran and Pakistan](#)

[Russia going for a 'full partnership' with Afghan Taliban](#)

[Major boost to Pakistan-Bangladesh defence deal. JF-17 Thunder Block III simulator reaches Dhaka](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [May 20](#), Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto addressed a plenary session of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) to present the country's macroeconomic framework and key fiscal policy principles (KEM-PPKF) for the 2027 state budget. This marked the first time an Indonesian President has personally delivered the KEM-PPKF before Parliament—a responsibility traditionally handled by the finance minister. In his speech, Prabowo underscored the challenges posed by a highly uncertain and turbulent global economy, citing ongoing conflicts in the Middle East as a source of indirect but significant pressure on Indonesia's economic outlook. He announced that the government is [targeting a 2027 fiscal deficit of 1.8%](#) of GDP, a sharp reduction from the finance ministry's 2026 projection of 2.9%, reflecting adjustments for the economic impact of the Middle East conflict. The inflation target for 2027 was set at 1.5%–3.5%, while economic growth is expected to range between 5.8% and 6.5%. Prabowo also revealed plans for [tighter regulation](#) and management of commodity exports, signalling a shift toward greater government oversight in safeguarding Indonesia's economic resilience.

President Prabowo's speech underscores Indonesia's ambition to navigate global turbulence with fiscal discipline and resource sovereignty.

On [May 18](#), Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. articulated the geopolitical constraints facing his country in relation to Taiwan. In an interview with Japanese media in Manila, he observed that “the Philippines would likely be involved in any potential conflict over Taiwan due to its proximity.” He further emphasised the demographic dimension of this issue, noting that approximately 200,000 Filipino nationals reside and work in Taiwan. Marcos's remarks precede his forthcoming state visit to Japan, where he is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi to deliberate on bilateral security cooperation. While reaffirming Manila's adherence to the “One China” policy, Marcos underscored the inevitability of Philippine exposure to regional instability. He stated: “Except that if there is actual confrontation, if there is conflict, just looking at the map, you can tell that the northern Philippines, at the very least, is going to be part of that or will feel the effects.”

The President's comments underscore the Philippines' strategic vulnerability as a neighbour to Taiwan, while also reflecting the uncertainty intensified by U.S. President Trump's recent remarks in Beijing, which have cast doubt on Washington's commitments to Taiwan's defence and arms sales.

Other Developments

[Taiwan's future cannot be decided by 'external forces', President says](#)

[Indonesia clings to fuel subsidies despite oil price surge, worrying economists](#)

[South Korea, Japan agree to shore up energy cooperation, strengthen security ties](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On May 17, U.S. President Donald J. Trump warned Iran that the “clock was ticking” and that [Tehran must agree to a nuclear deal](#) with Washington at the earliest. A day later, Trump said that he had cancelled an imminent U.S. strike on Iran because Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar had requested a pause in military action while serious negotiations were taking place with Iran. However, tensions in the region continued, as drones launched from Iraq by suspected Iranian-backed militia groups [targeted a nuclear plant in UAE](#). The Emirati government described this as a “terrorist attack” that constitutes an unacceptable act of aggression and a [direct threat to the country's security](#).

There is a risk of renewed military conflict in West Asia if the U.S. and Iran remain deadlocked on key strategic issues.

On May 15, UAE's President, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, met India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, in Abu Dhabi. The two leaders reaffirmed the strong [momentum in their bilateral strategic partnership](#) and committed to further expanding cooperation across strategic, economic, technological, and social sectors. Major outcomes of PM Modi's visit include the MoU on strategic collaboration between Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL) and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), strategic collaboration on LPG supply, strengthening defence-industrial collaboration, setting up a ship repair cluster at Vadinar, and long-term investment commitments.

India and the UAE are expected to play a greater role in regional stability, economic growth, and technological advancement as their economic and geopolitical priorities align.

Other Developments

[Trump's China visit and Washington's failure to bring Beijing into alignment on Iran](#)

[US nuclear power pact with Saudi Arabia lacks strict guardrails, letter says](#)

[Somaliland to establish Embassy in Jerusalem](#)

[Israel, Hezbollah war persists despite truce extension; Lebanon's death toll passes 3,000](#)

[Every month of delay in normalising oil supply adds \\$10 to year-end oil prices, says Daan Struyven](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [May 15](#), the Informal Summit of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) was held in Turkistan, Kazakhstan under the theme “Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development”. The Summit focused on strengthening cooperation among the Member and Observer States in the fields of digital transformation, innovation, artificial intelligence, connectivity, and sustainable economic development. The Leaders reaffirmed their shared commitment to further deepening solidarity, mutual trust and strategic cooperation within the Turkic World in line with the objectives of the Turkic World Vision-2040. Despite the atmosphere of symbolism and fraternity, however, the summit also exposed clear differences between Ankara’s wide-ranging vision and Astana’s insistence that the organisation should remain a practical cooperation platform. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev [emphasised](#) that the OTS “is neither a geopolitical project nor a military organisation. It is a unique platform aimed at strengthening trade, economic, technological, digital, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation among brotherly nations”.

The contrasting perspectives of Ankara and Astana on the role of the Organization of Turkic States underscore a broader internal tension common to many regional groupings: institutions initially conceived as platforms for economic cooperation are increasingly being tested by pressures to evolve into security or even military blocs.

On May 19, the Secretary of the Security Council of Kyrgyzstan, Adilet Orozbekov, met with the Minister of Public Security of China, Wang Xiaohong. During the meeting, according to the press service of the president, issues of bilateral cooperation and an exchange of views on the international security situation were discussed. Orozbekov also shared with Wang Xiaohong the outcomes of the 21st meeting of the secretaries of the security councils of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which took place in Bishkek on May 14 under the chairmanship of the Kyrgyz side.

This meeting reflects the deepening Kyrgyzstan–China security cooperation within the broader framework of regional stability. By engaging directly after the SCO meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan is positioning itself as both a facilitator of multilateral dialogue and a bilateral partner attentive to China’s security concerns.

Other Developments

[Could Kazakhstan help restart nuclear diplomacy with Iran?](#)

[Kazakhstan Signals Nuclear Diplomacy Role as Iran Uranium Dispute Intensifies](#)

[John Lee to visit Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, taking largest-ever delegation overseas](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh [held a bilateral meeting with](#) Vietnam's Deputy PM and Defence Minister General Phan Van Giang in Hanoi on May 19, 2026, to review and deepen the growing defence partnership, focusing on maritime security, defence industry collaboration, military training, capacity building, UN peacekeeping, cyber security and regional stability. Both sides stressed the importance of peace, stability and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific and agreed to enhance cooperation through regular dialogues, joint exercises and exchanges. They discussed avenues to expand cooperation in areas including military training, defence industry collaboration, maritime security, capacity building, United Nations peacekeeping, cyber security and high-level exchanges. The two Defence Ministers virtually inaugurated Language Lab at the Air Force Officers' College, Vietnam. The Defence Minister also announced the establishment of an Artificial Intelligence Lab at the Telecommunications University in Nha Trang. Military College of Telecommunications Engineering, India and Telecommunications University, Vietnam, also exchanged an MoU in the field of artificial intelligence and quantum technology, marking another important chapter in the Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two nations.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit signals a clear, pragmatic deepening of India-Vietnam strategic partnership focused on maritime security, defence-industrial cooperation, capacity-building and technology (AI/quantum), aimed at enhancing Vietnam's defence capabilities while advancing India's Act East and Indo-Pacific engagement.

IOS Sagar [arrived](#) at Colombo Harbour on May 15, 2026, for a three-day port call as part of its operational deployment in the Indian Ocean Region. The visit underscores strong maritime partnership and interoperability between the Indian Navy and SLN and reinforces regional security cooperation. During the stay, the ship's Commanding Officer meet senior SLN leaders and the Indian High Commissioner in Colombo; the SLN Chief of Staff will visit the vessel and interact with the multinational crew. IOS Sagar departs on May 18, 2026, after conducting a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Sri Lanka Navy. The visit reflects India's Neighbourhood First policy and its commitment to peace, stability and collective maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.

IOS Sagar's visit to Colombo exemplifies India's Neighbourhood First policy and reaffirms New Delhi's commitment to peace, stability, and collective maritime security across the Indian Ocean Region.

Other Developments

[Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh will pay an official visit to South Korea](#)

[Indian Navy's oceanographic research vessel, INS Sagardhwani, departs from Port Klang, Malaysia](#)

[India, Netherlands unveil Strategic Partnership roadmap with focus on defence, security cooperation](#)



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