



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

## INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

January 28, 2026

### *Authors*

#### **South Asia:**

Shreyas Deshmukh

#### **Southeast Asia & Central Asia:**

Jayantika Rao T.V.

#### **East Asia:**

Arshiya Chaturvedi

#### **West Asia:**

Sanket Joshi

#### **Indian Ocean Region:**

Divya Rai

**Volume IV, Issue 4**



**Delhi Policy Group**

Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003

[www.delhipolicygroup.org](http://www.delhipolicygroup.org)



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

## India's Proximity Archives

Vol. IV, Issue 4

January 28, 2026

### 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](mailto:sanket@dpg.org.in).

### Cover Images:

**South Asia:** India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President of the European Council, Antonio Costa, and President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, at the MoU Exchange ceremony, in New Delhi on January 27, 2026. Source: [MEA/Flickr](#)

**West Asia:** President Trump signed the Board of Peace charter in Davos, Switzerland, on January 22, 2026.

Source: [The White House](#)

**Indian Ocean Region:** India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met the European Commission's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas, in New Delhi on January 27, 2026. Source: [X/Rajnath Singh](#)

© 2026 by the Delhi Policy Group

### Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor,

India Habitat Centre,

Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003.

[www.delhipolicygroup.org](http://www.delhipolicygroup.org)

# India's Proximity Archives

Vol. IV, Issue 4

January 28, 2026

## 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

◇ *A Deepening India-EU Partnership*

◇ *Ratification of the Charter of the US-led "Board of Peace"*

## South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

A high-level European Union delegation led by President of the European Council Antonio Costa and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen [visited India](#) from January 25-27. They were the Chief Guests for India's 77th Republic Day parade. A contingent comprising representative from both the European Union Military Staff and the European Union Naval Operations ATALANTA and ASPIDES participated in the parade. Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with President Antonio Costa and President Ursula von der Leyen co-chaired the 16th India-EU Summit in which they underlined their "commitment to raise the India-EU Strategic Partnership to a higher level based on shared values and principles including democracy, human rights, pluralism, rule of law, and the rules -based international order with the UN at its core." Both sides concluded [thirteen agreements and MoUs](#) pertaining to trade, defence, skilling, energy, science and technology, and connectivity. A key outcome was the successful completion of negotiations for a [free trade agreement](#) (FTA).

*The India-EU Free Trade Agreement will integrate two major economies, catalysing new opportunities in innovation and manufacturing, and enhancing cooperative ventures across the service sector.*

United Nations Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo [visited Kabul](#) from January 24-25 to advance UN-led talks on humanitarian aid, counter-narcotics, and the Doha process framework. During a meeting with Taliban Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, Secretary DiCarlo addressed topics including the Taliban's international engagement, cooperation on counter-narcotics, economic stability, private sector limitations, and the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance initiatives. Furthermore, DiCarlo engaged in discussions with Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban Foreign Minister, concerning the Doha dialogue framework and upcoming consultations, underscoring the United Nations' supportive role in facilitating dialogue. At the meeting, Amir Khan Muttaqi requested the United Nations' assistance in lifting Afghanistan's banking sanctions, concurrently, Rosemary DiCarlo highlighted the necessity of [sustained cooperation](#) through the Doha process working groups.

*In a complex political and security situation in Afghanistan, UN agencies are playing a vital role in meeting the humanitarian requirements of the Afghan people, with support from regional nations such as India.*

## Other Developments

[Licenses of several media organisations revoked in Afghanistan](#)

[Nepal and China agree to expedite projects, boost border trade](#)

[MoUs for \\$4.5bn agri investment between Pakistan and China](#)

[Pakistan, Myanmar agree to strengthen bilateral relations](#)

## Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

Vietnam's Communist Party re-appointed [To Lam as its General Secretary](#), extending his leadership position in the Southeast Asian nation for the next five years. On January 23, To Lam was [“unanimously” re-elected](#) to the post of general secretary, according to an announcement made at the conclusion of the party's five-yearly congress in Hanoi. [To Lam, is also seeking to become President](#), with a decision on that position expected to be announced later. Addressing the Congress after his re-election, Lam said he would maintain party unity.

*Vietnam's reappointment of To Lam as Communist Party general secretary signals political continuity, reinforcing centralised authority as Hanoi navigates U.S.–China rivalry and asserts its role in Southeast Asia.*

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the US Navy conducted [a bilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity \(MCA\)](#) within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone, demonstrating a collective commitment to strengthen regional and international cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific, from January 25 to 26, 2026. The Philippine and US navies sailed together within the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea, performing joint exercises to boost interoperability between the two treaty allies. The joint sail was within the [Philippines' exclusive economic zone](#), which China also claims as part of its territory. It was the 11th “maritime cooperative activity” involving the United States and the Philippines since November 2023. The US Indo-Pacific Command deployed the USS John Finn, an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer and an MH-60R Seahawk helicopter.

*The joint Philippine–US naval exercises at Scarborough Shoal underscore their deepening alliance and signal a strategic challenge to China's territorial claims, reinforcing the Indo-Pacific's contested geopolitical landscape.*

### Other Developments

[ICC judges find former Philippine President Duterte fit to stand trial](#)

[US drone demand puts Indonesia's strategic balance to the test](#)

[Indonesia says no to US demand to buy American drones, but agrees to other terms in trade talks](#)

## East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

On January 24, [China's Ministry of National Defence announced the launch of a formal investigation](#) against two of its highest-ranking military officers, Zhang Youxia and Liu Zhenli. Both officers were regarded as close and trusted allies of Chinese President Xi Jinping. They were accused of serious violations of discipline and law, with several reports pointing to corruption and the alleged leakage of sensitive data to adversaries. There is widespread speculation regarding Xi's move, as a potential effort to tighten his control over the military. [Taiwan is closely monitoring this development](#) and maintains heightened vigilance.

*The recent military leadership purge reflects fractured and changing internal power dynamics of China. Understanding these internal dynamics is critical for assessing China's strategic capacity in relation to its ambitions at a time when it is aggressively posturing itself, particularly in Indo-Pacific.*

US President Donald Trump recently, through his social media handle, [declared the potential imposition of a 25 per cent tariff on imports from South Korea](#). He noted that South Korean lawmakers have been unable to implement the US-South Korea trade agreement reached in October last year. It is for this reason that tariffs across all reciprocal tariff categories, including automobiles, lumber, pharmaceuticals, and others, would be raised from the earlier agreed 15 per cent to 25 per cent. While no official notification has yet been issued to South Korea by the US administration, South Korean authorities have made it clear that they remain committed to the trade agreement and are open to talks on the matter. South Korea's Industry Minister Kim Jung-kwan, who is currently on his official visit to Canada, may even travel to Washington to meet with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and discuss the issue. Following President Trump's announcement, South Korea's stock market and key indices also saw the effect in terms of an immediate downturn, which, though somewhat recovered by the end of the trading day.

*The recent tariff announcement, which is without any legislative authority at present, is more of a power signalling and pressure tactic of the US against South Korea. This strategy of public pressurising raises questions about the US's predictability and reliability, seriously undermining its historic position as a dominant power offering economic and security support for its partners.*

### Other Development

[China calls for closer defence ties with Russia in ministers' talks](#)



[North Korea fires ballistic missile towards Sea of Japan: Tokyo](#)

[German investment in China hits four-year high as Trump tariffs reshape global trade](#)

[For Britain, China remains a 'threat' – but one worth doing business with](#)

[Taiwan detects 2 Chinese aircraft, 5 naval vessels around its territory](#)

[China may be sitting on one of the largest gold finds ever recorded, worth \\$83 billion](#)



## West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On January 22, US President Donald Trump ratified the Charter of [the "Board of Peace"](#) in Davos, Switzerland, establishing it as an international organisation. Trump described the Board of Peace as the first step toward a better future for Gaza and the Middle East as a whole, which would end decades of suffering, hatred, and bloodshed. Among the [countries in West Asia](#), Türkiye, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel have accepted the US invitation to join the Board of Peace.

*The US-led Board of Peace will play a pivotal role in demilitarisation, governance reform, and large-scale rebuilding of war-torn Gaza.*

Amidst the continuing tensions between the US and Iran, President Trump indicated that the [Iranian leadership wanted to make a deal](#) regarding its nuclear programme. Iran, on its part, warned the US of serious consequences in case of military strikes.

*The prospects of a US-Iran nuclear deal remain uncertain as Iran has repeatedly rejected the US's demand for a ban on Uranium enrichment, the removal of highly enriched Uranium, and a cap on Tehran's ballistic missile arsenal.*

US Special Envoy for Syria, Tom Barrack, urged the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), led by Kurds, to fully [integrate into a Unified Syrian State](#) under the leadership of Ahmed al-Sharaa. He noted that the Syrian government had joined the Global Coalition to defeat ISIS, signalling a pivot towards the West and cooperation with the US on counter-terrorism.

*The rationale for US-SDF (Kurds) cooperation was to fight ISIS; however, with the fall of the Assad regime and the Syrian leadership's willingness to fight ISIS, the US wants SDF to integrate into the Syrian State.*

### Other Developments

['US Will No Longer Help Iraq If...': Trump Warns Against al-Maliki's Return As Prime Minister](#)

[India at heart of megatrends driving energy demand growth, says UAE industry minister amid deepening oil, gas trade](#)

## Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [January 23](#), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has [pledged](#) its full support for Turkmenistan's chairmanship of the CIS in 2026, signalling a rare moment of consensus around Ashgabat's role within the post-Soviet bloc. According to a statement from the CIS Executive Committee, member states agreed to assist Turkmenistan in implementing its chairmanship program, including organisational, analytical, and coordination support. The commitment was discussed during consultations involving CIS officials and representatives of member governments, with a focus on continuity and practical cooperation within the organisation. Turkmenistan, which maintains a policy of [permanent neutrality](#) and typically limits its participation in multilateral institutions, is expected to use the chairmanship to emphasise economic cooperation, transport connectivity, and humanitarian initiatives. While Ashgabat has historically kept a low profile within the [CIS](#), its upcoming leadership role offers an opportunity to shape the bloc's agenda at a time when its relevance is increasingly being questioned.

*The consensus to support Turkmenistan's chairmanship offers the CIS with a relatively non-controversial chair, unlike Russia that usually dominated the organisation.*

On January 27, Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev held talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, underscoring both countries' commitment to strengthening comprehensive cooperation. President Tokayev noted that the minister's visit reflects Israel's firm intention to deepen bilateral ties with Kazakhstan across a wide range of sectors. During the meeting, both sides discussed trade, economic, and scientific-technical cooperation, as well as the implementation of joint projects in artificial intelligence, agriculture, and water resource management. Tokayev also welcomed the Kazakhstan-Israel business forum held in Astana as part of Sa'ar's visit, expressing confidence that its outcomes would make a practical contribution to expanding investment partnerships between the two nations. Sa'ar emphasised Israel's interest in giving fresh momentum to interstate relations with Kazakhstan and elevating them to a new level. He also expressed appreciation for President Tokayev's decision to have Kazakhstan join the Abraham Accords, noting that the move will strengthen stability, peace, and international dialogue.

*Kazakhstan's talks with Israel highlight Astana's strategy of diversifying partnerships and projecting itself as a neutral but globally engaged actor. For Israel, the partnership strengthens its foothold in Central Asia and broadens the Abraham Accords' reach, reinforcing its narrative of normalisation and cooperation across the Muslim world.*

## **Other Developments**

[The Board of Peace and Central Asia](#)

[Trump's new 'Board of Peace' leans heavily on Eurasian middle powers](#)

[Analysis: Three Decades of Parliamentary Reform in Central Asia – and What Changed](#)

## Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh [held a meeting](#) with the High Representative/Vice President of the European Union (EU) Commission, Kaja Kallas, in New Delhi on January 27. The two leaders discussed a range of bilateral security and defence issues. Rajnath Singh emphasised that the partnership will become a force multiplier by integrating supply chains for building trusted defence ecosystems and future-ready capabilities. He said that India's defence industry can play a meaningful role in the EU's 'ReArm initiative', especially when the EU is seeking to rapidly diversify suppliers and de-risk dependencies. Kaja Kallas stated that India and the EU must work together in the Indian Ocean Region and learn from each other's best practices through joint exercises. India welcomed the EU's proposal of positioning a Liaison Officer (LO) at the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram.

*The meeting signifies a major step in transforming the India-EU Security and Defence Partnership into a more profound security partnership, enabling Indian firms' access to EU procurement and annual dialogues on maritime security, cyber issues, and counterterrorism.*

The USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group (CSG) reportedly [entered](#) the Middle East area amid escalating US-Iran tensions as of late January 2026. To counter Iranian surveillance, the CSG disabled its Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponders soon after passing through the Strait of Malacca. The [deployment is a response](#) to Iran's brutal suppression of protests since late 2025, with reports exceeding 5,000 deaths, triggering fresh US sanctions and President Trump's evaluation of pre-emptive strikes on nuclear and missile facilities. In addition to the carrier and warships, the Pentagon is also moving fighter jets and air-defence systems to the Middle East. Over the weekend, the U.S. military announced that it would carry out an exercise in the region "to demonstrate the ability to deploy, disperse, and sustain combat airpower". The carrier's presence gives Washington a range of military options if Trump decides to escalate pressure on Tehran.

*It was the first time that an aircraft carrier had been stationed in CENTCOM since the USS Gerald Ford was deployed to the Caribbean in October in the run-up to the US operation to remove Venezuela's leader Nicolás Maduro.*

### Other Developments

[Indian Navy's First Training Squadron \(1TS\) strengthens maritime bonds in Indonesia](#)

[CDS releases Military Quantum Mission Policy framework](#)

[Indian Navy's First Training Squadron \(1TS\) arrived at Phuket Deep Sea Port, Thailand](#)

[The Royal Navy of Oman Ship 'AL SEEB' concluded a logistics replenishment visit to Sri Lanka](#)

[Indonesian Naval Ship 'KRI SULTAN ISKANDAR MUDA - 367' departed Sri Lanka after logistics replenishment and a goodwill mission](#)



**Delhi Policy Group**  
Core 5A, 1st Floor,  
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road  
New Delhi - 110003  
India

[www.delhipolicygroup.org](http://www.delhipolicygroup.org)