



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

February 25, 2026

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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:

West Asia: The Arab countries in the Middle East condemned US Ambassador Mike Huckabee's statement on Israel's right to the Biblical land on February 20, 2026. [Source: Official X Handle/Tucker Carlson](#)

Central Asia: Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi meeting with the Prime Minister of Republic of Kazakhstan, Olzhas Bektenov, at Hyderabad House, in New Delhi on February 18, 2026. [Source: Prime Minister of India](#)

Indian Ocean Region: The 9th Conclave of Chiefs of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) convened at Visakhapatnam on February 20, 2026. [Source: X/@indiannavy](#)

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Contents

South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh..... 1

Southeast Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 3

East Asia

Arshiya Chaturvedi..... 5

West Asia

Sanket Joshi..... 6

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 8

Indian Ocean Region

Divya Rai..... 10

Watch Points

◇ *Normalising India-Bangladesh relations under the BNP Government*

◇ *China's strategic lever of critical mineral export curbs on Japan*

◇ *Arab Opposition to U.S. Ambassador's Remarks on Israel's Right to the Biblical Land*

◇ *Indian Navy assumes IONS chairmanship after 16 years*

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

The [first cabinet meeting](#) held by newly elected Prime Minister and BNP leader Tariq Rehman on February 18 focused on three governmental priorities: curbing the prices of basic commodities, bolstering the law and order situation, and ensuring a regular flow of electricity and energy. [Substantial reforms](#) in civil service and military leadership were also introduced during the government's first week. The implementation of the July National Charter, however, remains pending as BNP Members of Parliament have not been sworn in as members of the [constitution reform](#) council. The government is facing pressure from the JI-led opposition for the immediate fulfilment of the charter's provisions. Meanwhile, India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, has extended an invitation to the new Foreign Minister, Khalilur Rahman, to visit Delhi. The Indian High Commissioner, Pranay Verma, extended this invitation during a [courtesy meeting](#) with Khalilur Rahman on February 22. Previously, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended an invitation to Tarique Rahman and his family to visit India.

A phase of cautious optimism has emerged in Dhaka-Delhi relations following the formation of the new government in Bangladesh. Leaders from both nations have extended reciprocal goodwill, intending to re-establish engagement and strengthen the bilateral relationship.

In retaliation for recent TTP attacks, Pakistan stated on February 22 [that it had killed 70](#) terrorists through military strikes on at least seven militant hideouts in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence announced that a deliberate and [appropriate response](#) would be given at its discretion. On February 17, the Taliban government announced the release of three [Pakistani soldiers](#) previously captured during border skirmishes in October 2025, a release facilitated by Saudi Arabian mediation. India issued a [stern condemnation of](#) Pakistan's airstrikes within Afghan borders, asserting that these actions represented another instance of Pakistan attempting to externalise its domestic challenges, and restated its unwavering support for Afghanistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence.

Instead of acknowledging its own governance failures in socio-economic development and political inclusion for the people of Balochistan and Pashtun tribal regions, Pakistan is blaming outside actors for the prevailing security situation.



Other Developments

[Nepal and India signed a mutual legal assistance deal after years of talks](#)

[Clash at Chinese-funded meat factory site in Sindhuli, Nepal leaves seven injured](#)

[PM Modi meets Sri Lankan President at AI Summit](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [February 19](#), President Donald Trump's administration and the Indonesian government announced the finalisation of a trade agreement to lower U.S. tariffs to 19% from 32%. Under the deal, Indonesia will [eliminate trade barriers](#) on more than 99% of US imports and facilitate the purchases of American products worth over US\$ 30bn. At the same time, more than 1,800 Indonesian commodities, including palm oil, coffee and cocoa, will be exempt from the tariff. The agreement also lifts restrictions on industrial exports, expands cooperation with U.S. firms in mining and rare earths, and [sets rules for digital trade](#) – requiring Indonesia to avoid discriminatory taxes and consult Washington before new agreements with another country that could jeopardise U.S. interests. Additionally, Indonesia must align with U.S. trade restrictions on third countries and will adopt measures with “equivalent restrictive effect” to align with Washington's policies whose practices harm U.S. interests, including dumping goods at below-market prices.

Despite national debate over its one-sided nature, Indonesia signed the U.S.-centric trade framework, prioritizing economic gains and strategic alignment over sovereignty concerns. This decision underscores Washington's growing influence in Jakarta and highlights how regional trade dynamics in Southeast Asia may be reshaped by U.S.-driven rules and restrictions.

At the February 19 inauguration of the Board of Peace, Southeast Asia was represented by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, Vietnamese Communist Party Chief, To Lam, and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet as members of the Board. Indonesia and Vietnam joined with clear economic motives – Jakarta finalised a tariff deal with Washington, while Hanoi, still negotiating, secured concessions such as removal from restrictions on advanced U.S. technologies, aiming to stabilise ties and fuel growth. Cambodia's participation reflected its broader regional positioning. In contrast, several of Washington's closest partners in the region – including treaty allies Thailand and the Philippines, as well as Malaysia, Singapore, and others – were notably absent. Their absence underscored the selective nature of engagement within ASEAN and highlighted the varying degrees of alignment with U.S. initiatives across Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asian participation in the Board of Peace reflects how each country interprets Trump's platform and his claim that the postwar rules-based order is fading. The mixed response – some joining, others staying on the sidelines – underscores regional caution about

U.S. unilateralism and the risks of undermining global institutions that have long supported Southeast Asia's prosperity.

Other Developments

[Thailand, Cambodia dispute exchange of fire at border](#)

[Hearings start in ICC case against Philippines' Duterte: 5 points](#)

[Trump's controversial pick of US ambassador to Malaysia dropped](#)

[Former Philippines president Duterte drew up 'death lists', boasted about murders: ICC prosecutor](#)

East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

On February 24, [China's Commerce Ministry announced the imposition of export restrictions on "dual-use" materials](#), including rare earth magnets and other critical minerals. The export measure targets as many as 20 Japanese companies, which include major names such as Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Subaru, and Hino Motors, among others. The Chinese authorities have also enlisted 20 more companies to a new 'watchlist'. These latest moves are being rationalised by the Chinese side as critical to curb Japan's ambitions of 'remilitarisation'.

China leverages its dominance in critical minerals and rare earth supply chains as yet another strategic manoeuvre against Japan amid ongoing bilateral tensions, triggered after the Japanese PM's Taiwan Contingency remark last November.

[Taiwan's parliament to hold discussions late next week on its long-stalled special defence budget of US\\$ 40 billion](#). Taiwan's opposition, which holds a parliamentary majority, has refused to review the proposal and instead advanced a limited budget allowing funds for only some of the US weapons desired. The said budget was proposed last year by Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te, inconsistent with the US administration's demand for Taiwan to increase defence spending to counter China. The US is Taiwan's important partner as it provides international support and arms, both of which are critical for safeguarding its security and sovereignty.

Taiwan's domestic political gridlock, arising from US-China strategic competition, weakens coordination with allies and deterrence signalling altogether, making its security landscape more fragile and vulnerable.

Other Development

[Japan to deploy missiles on Yonaguni island near Taiwan by 2031](#)

[South Korea's ex-president jailed for life over martial law attempt](#)

[North Korea's Kim says country to develop economy over next 5 years](#)

[Japan pushes back decision on joining Trump's Board of Peace](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

India's Prime Minister [Narendra Modi will pay a State Visit to Israel](#) from February 25-26. He will meet Israel's President Isaac Herzog, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and address the Israeli Parliament (Knesset). PM Netanyahu stated that this visit will deepen the Israel-India strategic partnership and that Tel Aviv intends to create a "[hexagon of alliances in the region](#)" to counter both the radical Shiite axis and the emerging Sunni axis. India and Israel held the first round of negotiations for a [free trade agreement](#) on February 24.

PM Modi's State Visit to Israel will provide an opportunity to discuss common challenges and deepen the strategic partnership between the two democratic countries to achieve their shared vision.

The [U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee](#), in an interview aired on February 20, claimed that the Jewish people (Israel), as descendants of Abraham, could take all of the promised land in the Bible, which essentially includes the entire Middle East. Reacting sharply, the Arab and Islamic countries in the region issued a joint statement describing the U.S. Ambassador's remarks as a [flagrant violation of international law](#) and a grave threat to regional security and stability. They reiterated their opposition to Israeli settlements in the West Bank and attempts to annex the West Bank or separate it from Gaza.

Despite the Trump administration's opposition to Israeli settlements in the West Bank, Amb. Mike Huckabee's statement demonstrates the US's tacit support for Israel's civilisational right to Judea and Samaria (West Bank).

The U.S. and Iran are scheduled to hold the [third round of their indirect nuclear dialogue](#) in Geneva on February 26. In light of this, Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi reiterated that Tehran remains committed to achieving a fair and equitable deal, but it will not give up its right to peaceful nuclear technology. Araghchi maintained that Iran does not intend to develop a nuclear weapon.

The U.S.-Israeli demand that Iran dismantle its nuclear programme and Tehran's opposition to such a proposal could prove to be a major hurdle to reaching a comprehensive deal.

Other Developments

[EU terrorist list: Council designates the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation](#)

[Iran and UAE Foreign Ministers Discuss Nuclear Talks and Regional Developments](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [February 18](#), Kazakhstan's Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov held bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his working visit to New Delhi, discussing the further development of trade and investment cooperation on the sidelines of the international India AI Impact Summit 2026. The talks focussed on energy, agriculture, digitalisation, and artificial intelligence. During his address at the Summit, Bektenov highlighted the economic potential of advanced technologies and their impact on the structure of global growth. He stressed that intelligence must be inclusive, sovereign, and, most importantly, transformative for key sectors of the economy, noting that Kazakhstan is becoming a regional digital hub. Bektenov also said that the completion this year of the Trans-Caspian fibre-optic line, constructed jointly with Azerbaijani partners, will provide the shortest alternative route for global data traffic, enabling Kazakhstan to serve as a digital bridge between East and West.

The talks highlight Kazakhstan's push to diversify beyond Russia and China by deepening ties with India, while using digital infrastructure to boost its strategic role in Eurasia. For India, closer cooperation strengthens its foothold in Central Asia, advancing its strategy secure reliable energy and technology corridors.

The inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump's [Board of Peace](#) on February 19, 2026, marked a bold attempt to reshape multilateral conflict-resolution efforts, particularly in West Asia. Designed as a platform for allies—especially Muslim-majority nations—to coordinate on Gaza's reconstruction and broader peace initiatives, the Board drew participation from Central Asia, with Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev joining as founding members and pledging financial support. For Astana, participation reflects a renewed application of its multi-vector foreign policy, positioning Kazakhstan as a proactive "Middle Power" ready to contribute not only diplomatic mediation but also tangible reconstruction efforts. [Tokayev emphasized](#) Kazakhstan's readiness to channel resources through reputable international firms into infrastructure, housing, schools, hospitals, and other essential facilities in Gaza, reinforcing its image as a responsible global stakeholder. [Uzbekistan](#), by contrast, has opted for a more cautious strategy—minimizing military exposure while prioritizing economic and humanitarian engagement. This approach strengthens Tashkent's profile as a constructive regional actor without entangling itself in coercive scenarios, aligning with its broader policy of pragmatic neutrality.

At its core, joining the Board gives Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan an opportunity to assert greater agency in a fragmented international order, while elevating Central Asia's visibility in global governance. Their participation signals a strategic effort to diversify beyond traditional power centres and position themselves as constructive actors in emerging U.S.-led initiatives.

Other Developments

[Around 100 CIS observers to monitor Constitutional Referendum in Kazakhstan](#)

[Azerbaijan does not plan to join \\$7B Gaza initiative announced at Board of Peace meeting](#)

[Kyrgyzstan Between the Russian World and Global Chaos: An Interview With Deputy Prime Minister Edil Baisalov](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

The Indian Navy took over the [Chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium \(IONS\)](#) from the Royal Thai Navy during the 9th Conclave of Chiefs in Visakhapatnam on February 20, 2026. Having earlier held the inaugural chairmanship from 2008 to 2010, India's return to the helm after 16 years is to take forward the forum that has evolved into a central platform for professional maritime collaboration. Key developments included the Philippines joining as an observer and Oman entering the IONS Working Group on HADR, expanding cooperative horizons. Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff and new IONS Chair, outlined a proactive vision to bolster the organisation's operational relevance. India also announced priority initiatives for its tenure: the IONS Maritime Exercise (IMEX); sustained IOS SAGAR deployments to member countries with IONS personnel aboard; and targeted Maritime Information Sharing Workshops and dialogues to drive operational synergy, professional exchanges, and capability building.

India's IONS chairmanship is strategically vital, cementing its role as an Indo-Pacific maritime leader and net security provider amid China's naval expansion. It advances India's MAHASAGAR vision via IMEX, SAGAR deployments, and workshops, boosting interoperability and domain awareness with partner countries.

The Indian Navy will bolster its Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) capabilities with the [commissioning](#) of INS Anjadip, the third of eight ASW Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) vessels, at Chennai Port on February 27, 2026. Built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, Anjadip is a state-of-the-art vessel specifically designed to address the challenges of the littoral combat environment—the coastal and shallow waters vital for the nation's security. The vessel is engineered to act as a 'Dolphin Hunter', focused on the detection, tracking, and neutralisation of enemy submarines in coastal areas. The ship is packed with indigenous, cutting-edge anti-submarine warfare weapons and a sensor package, including the hull-mounted sonar Abhay, and armed with lightweight torpedoes and ASW rockets. In addition to its primary ASW role, the agile and highly manoeuvrable warship is also equipped to undertake Coastal Surveillance, Low-Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO) and Search & Rescue operations.

INS Anjadip's commissioning strengthens India's ASW edge in vital littoral zones, countering submarine threats from adversaries like China and Pakistan. As the third indigenous ASW-SWC, it advances Aatmanirbhar Bharat with homegrown sonar, torpedoes, and rockets—plus multi-role versatility for surveillance and LIMO.

Other Developments

[5th Edition of the Goa Maritime Conclave \(GMC-26\) was conducted in Goa](#)

[INS Sudarshini arrived at Safaga, Egypt, as part of her ongoing Lokayan-26 deployment](#)

[EU to extend the European Union's maritime security operation, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES](#)

[7th edition of the annual joint military exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' between India and Japan commenced](#)

[16th edition of the India-US Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR, to be conducted in Himachal Pradesh](#)



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