



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

March 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 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, 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:

Prime Minister of Japan, Sanae Takaichi meeting the US President Donal Trump in Washington on March 19, 2026.

Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#)

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi addressed the upper house of India's Parliament on the situation in West Asia on March 24, 2026. Source: [Official X Handle/Narendra Modi](#)

The Indian Navy will commission stealth frigate INS *Taragiri* (F41) on April 03, 2026 at Visakhapatnam, under the Eastern Naval Command. Source: [X/@indiannavy](#)

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◇ <i>U.S.'s 15-point plan to end the war with Iran</i>
◇ <i>Indian Navy set to commission latest stealth frigate, Taragiri</i>

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Through an X post on March 24th, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif offered his country as a potential site for [US-Iran peace negotiations](#). This offer was later reposted by US President Donald Trump on his Truth Social platform. This is widely perceived in Islamabad as Washington's implicit endorsement of Pakistan's evolving role as a mediator. The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Ishaq Dar, conducted [telephone conversations](#) with the foreign ministers of the United Arab Emirates, China, and the United Kingdom on the same day to deliberate on this issue. Subsequently, Prime Minister Sharif [communicated with](#) Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. Meanwhile, during a presentation of the 2026 [Annual Threat Assessment](#) to the United States Senate Intelligence Committee, US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard identified Pakistan as a state posing a considerable threat to the United States. She cautioned US lawmakers that Pakistan's advancing missile technology could potentially extend its reach to American territory.

Pakistan's closer ties with Gulf nations render it highly susceptible to the repercussions of the current US-Iran conflict. However, its strong ties with the Trump administration, coupled with its deep connections to Iran and Gulf countries, have enabled it to position itself as a mediator for US-Iran peace talks.

Pakistan and Afghanistan announced a [temporary truce](#) on March 18, coinciding with Eid Al Fitr. The mediating parties, including Qatar and China, expressed a hope that this initiative would foster de-escalation and promote a sense of calm between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Meanwhile, the conflict along the Durand Line [did not cease](#) during Eid. The UN human rights office is calling for an [independent investigation](#) into a March 16 attack, allegedly carried out by Pakistan on a drug rehabilitation centre in Afghanistan, which is reported to have resulted in numerous patient deaths.

Amidst pressure from China and mediation by Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan reached a temporary truce. However, the situation remained volatile due to ongoing border skirmishes, with the potential for further escalation given that the fundamental issues were not resolved during the mediation talks.

Other Developments

[Balendra Shah to be sworn in as Nepal PM on March 27](#)

[Bangladesh High Commissioner meets S Jaishankar in New Delhi](#)

[India, Sri Lanka discuss repercussions of West Asia conflict](#)

[Sri Lanka refused US request to land two fighter jets in Mattala: President](#)

[Sri Lanka Approves Indian-Sri Lankan Joint Venture for Key Northern Power Transmission Link](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [March 18](#), it was confirmed by the Malaysian Trade Ministry's office that the agreement on reciprocal trade (ART) with Washington was "null and void" and no longer applicable following the US Supreme Court's decision to strike down President Trump's reciprocal tariffs. Trade Minister Johari Abdul Ghani had initially stated on March 16 that the agreement was "not on hold. It is no longer there – it's null and void," adding that tariffs were being justified on the basis of Malaysia's trade surplus. He emphasized that the authorities should clearly specify which industries the tariffs applied to and that they could not be imposed on a "blanket basis." His statement was subsequently [retracted](#) by the government, which said that Johari had "misspoken," without offering further clarification. However, on March 18 Nikkei Asia quoted Johari's press secretary as saying that the minister's statement "remains," which the publication took as a confirmation of Kuala Lumpur's withdrawal from the agreement. As of now, Anwar's administration has yet to issue a more formal announcement regarding the deal's status.

The conflicting statements highlight an ongoing internal debate within Anwar's administration over how decisively Malaysia should distance itself from ART. The lack of a formal announcement suggests a deliberate strategy of caution, aimed at minimising potential diplomatic fallout with Washington while still signalling Malaysia's intent to assert policy independence.

Myanmar's junta chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing [appears to be orchestrating](#) an armed forces reshuffle to shore up his power base by promoting loyalists ahead of his expected imminent transition to a nominally civilian government. With the assumption that he will be taking over as the President of the country on March 30, General Ye Win Oo, the former chief of military intelligence, was promoted to army chief- replacing Vice-Senior General Soe Win, who retains his role as deputy commander-in-chief of defence services. Analysts who spoke to The Straits Times widely expects Gen Ye Win Oo, the close aide and long-time protege of the junta leader, to become the next commander-in-chief when Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, assumes the presidency. A retired senior military officer told Strait Times that Gen Ye Win Oo "is not a reformer" and is likely to become Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's "puppet". If Senior General Min Aung Hlaing does assume the presidency, Thailand's former foreign minister and ambassador, Kasit Piromya, believes "he will become more entrenched, more hardline and uncompromising". Speaking to Strait Times, he urged the global community not to normalise relations with the Myanmar military while the country is still locked in a civil war.

Piromya's warning reflects a broader concern for the region: legitimising Min Aung Hlaing's presidency would entrench authoritarianism in the country. The reshuffle is less about reform than about consolidating power, ensuring loyalists remain in control. Nationally, this prolongs Myanmar's civil conflict and undermines prospects for democratic change.



Other Developments

[PM Wong to visit Hainan, Hong Kong, and speak at Boao Forum](#)

[Myanmar parliament says to start process to select new president on March 30](#)

[Indonesia says no to \\$1.28b fee for Trump's 'Board of Peace' seat](#)

[Philippines declares national energy emergency as Iran war fuels oil shock fears](#)

East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

On March 19, [Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi met with US President Donald Trump for the Japan-US Summit Meeting](#). During the discussion, President Trump commended the Japanese PM's leadership and called her a "very popular, powerful woman and a great leader." Prime Minister Takaichi expressed her government's unwavering commitment to the Japan-US alliance and intent to deepen bilateral cooperation in key areas, including economic security, trade, energy security, and critical minerals. Articulating Japan's position on the ongoing Middle East Crisis, she noted that Iran must not be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons and its destabilising actions in the Strait of Hormuz are condemnable. Takaichi further underscored the need for Japan to coordinate with the international community, particularly the US, to facilitate early de-escalation while also enhancing bilateral cooperation in energy security with the US through increased procurement of US-sourced energy. Other key issues on which the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment include promoting 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)', enhancing coordination among like-minded partners in the region, and addressing strategic challenges posed by China and North Korea.

Amid the shifting geopolitical realities, Japan and the US are actively seeking points of strategic convergence to deepen their bilateral relationship beyond a primarily security-focused alliance into a multidimensional partnership to bolster their national capacities and deterrence, which is needed to secure their national interests.

On March 23, [the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, which studied China's artificial intelligence development, observed](#) that China's open-source AI is generating a self-reinforcing competitive advantage and increasingly overtaking the global market. This trend persists despite numerous US restrictions, including curbs on the supply of advanced AI chips. Large language models from Chinese firms, including Alibaba, Moonshot and MiniMax, are leading the worldwide usage rankings on multiple platforms such as HuggingFace and OpenRouter. As noted in the Commission's report, China's cost-effective AI applications, along with the government's proactive deployment across sectors such as manufacturing, logistics networks and robotics, are facilitating the generation of vast real-world data. This data then feeds back into models, enhancing China's AI model performance and effectiveness. The report further highlights that China employs an open AI innovation ecosystem, which allows developers, researchers, and enterprises to work immediately with cutting-edge AI capabilities, bridging the gap between foundational research and real-world applications. This Open model proliferation of China, the report underlines, is creating alternative pathways to AI leadership.

In the global AI race, China is leveraging its strength in developing cost-effective, large-scale AI models, alongside its vast data generation capabilities, against the US's dominance in compute power.

Other Developments

[Japan to begin biggest-ever oil release from national reserves as Middle East energy crisis bites](#)

[Kim Jong Un says North Korea's nuclear status is irreversible, threatens South Korea](#)

[Japan to drop 'most important' tag for China ties](#)

[Republic of Korea: the 22nd EU-Republic of Korea Joint Committee takes place in Seoul](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On March 24, reports indicated that the U.S. had sent a 15-point plan to Tehran via Pakistan to [end the war with Iran](#). Major demands made by the U.S. include the [dismantling of Iran's nuclear programme](#), reducing the ballistic missile arsenal, ceasing support for proxy groups, and reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's position is that for any negotiations to resume, the U.S. and Israel must [first end the war](#), provide guarantees against future military action, and compensate for wartime losses. Meanwhile, around 1,000 U.S. soldiers are expected to be [deployed to the Middle East](#) in the coming days.

It remains to be seen if Iran is willing to accept U.S.-Israeli demands of curbing its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes – conditions Iran views as an existential threat to its national security.

On March 24, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the country's Parliament (upper house) on the ongoing conflict in West Asia. PM Modi expressed concerns over the [security situation in the Gulf region](#), noting that more than three weeks have passed since the war broke out, resulting in a severe energy crisis. He reiterated that attacks on commercial ships and the disruption of international waterways, such as the Strait of Hormuz is unacceptable. Through its diplomacy with Iran, India has secured safe passage for some of its vessels carrying crude oil and LPG through the Strait of Hormuz. On March 24, the Iranian Mission to the UN informed that ["non-hostile vessels" belonging to States](#) that are not participating nor supporting acts of aggression against Tehran and complying with safety and security regulations can pass through the Strait of Hormuz safely.

India prioritises dialogue and diplomacy with Iran, the Gulf nations, and the US to de-escalate tensions in West Asia and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, key to its energy supplies.

Other Developments

[Prime Minister receives telephonic call from US President on West Asia situation](#)

[Reem Al Hashimy Visits India to Discuss Bilateral Cooperation and Regional Developments](#)

[China's foreign minister urges early peace talks in call with Iranian counterpart](#)

[Israel's military to occupy swathe of southern Lebanon, defence minister says](#)

[Iran launches waves of missiles towards Israel](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [March 24](#), Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held a phone call with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to discuss bilateral relations as well as regional and global developments. The two leaders reviewed cooperation between Türkiye and Kazakhstan and exchanged views on current international issues. President Erdogan reaffirmed Ankara's commitment to further strengthening ties with Astana, saying efforts are ongoing to elevate relations and that additional steps will be taken in the coming period. He also expressed hope that the results of Kazakhstan's recent constitutional referendum would prove beneficial. Both leaders emphasised cooperation within the Organization of Turkic States, reflecting a push for deeper political, economic, and cultural integration among Turkic nations.

This phone call reflects a broader strategy to consolidate the Turkic world as a geopolitical bloc. For Kazakhstan, it provides external support for Tokayev's domestic reforms and diversifies its foreign relations. For Turkey, it strengthens its leadership role in Central Asia, enhances energy and trade opportunities, and positions Ankara as a key player in Eurasian security.

On [March 24](#), Russia's Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation and Uzbekistan's Atomic Energy Agency (UzAtom) have signed a comprehensive roadmap to deepen cooperation in nuclear energy and related fields. The agreement outlines key areas including workforce training, public education on modern nuclear technologies, and planning for a future “atomic city” around the planned nuclear power plant (NPP). Officials emphasised that the partnership reflects a holistic approach, with nuclear energy expected to drive development across multiple sectors. The [newly signed agreement](#) introduces an integrated plant configuration featuring two large-capacity units based on Generation 3+ VVER-1000 reactors and two smaller units with RITM-200N reactors producing 55 MW each. Authorities have also approved the construction site for the RITM-200N units, allowing full-scale development to begin under international safety standards.

This cooperation marks the first global export of modern small modular nuclear technology, with regulatory approval confirming the safety and reliability of the project. The agreement sets the stage for Uzbekistan's transition into nuclear energy under robust oversight, combining large and small reactors in a single.

Other Developments

[Mirzoyan Details Progress in Relations with Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan](#)

[Azerbaijan demands clarification from Russia over statement about late president](#)

[Xi Jinping and Berdymuhamedov Sr. Discuss Expansion of China-Turkmenistan Partnership](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

Reaffirming India's commitment to collaborative maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the [second edition of Indian Ocean Ship \(IOS\) SAGAR](#) commenced on 16 March 2026. Building on longstanding maritime cooperation efforts, the initiative embodies the Government of India's MAHASAGAR vision through a unique operational programme integrating naval personnel from 16 friendly foreign countries into training and sailing aboard an Indian Naval Ship to enhance interoperability and shared maritime understanding. Participants will begin with professional interactions at Indian Naval establishments in Kochi covering naval operations, seamanship, and security concepts before deploying at sea for joint activities, maritime engagements and port visits that strengthen linkages, exchange best practices, and address regional challenges.

India's second IOS SAGAR edition, under its new IONS chair, serves as a strategic platform to foster tactical alignment, best-practice exchanges, and bilateral ties with the Indian Ocean littoral states.

INS Trikanth, a Talwar-class stealth frigate, [completed a port call](#) at Port Victoria, Seychelles, on 20 March 2026, after participating in the inaugural tri-services Exercise Lamitiye 2026. This marked the Indian Navy's first involvement in the exercise, alongside the Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and Seychelles Defence Forces (SDF). During the harbour phase, Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) training was conducted onboard, which also included joint boarding drills. This was followed by the sea phase of the exercise, during which the ship exercised with SCGS *Le Vigilant* and undertook joint boarding operations at sea by a team comprising Indian Navy Marine Commandos and Special Forces of SDF. This was followed by landing of Army troops of the Indian Army and the Seychelles Defence Forces on Praslin Island.

The visit reinforced India's maritime security ties in the IOR, emphasising interoperability and bilateral defence cooperation.

The Indian Navy will be [commissioning its latest stealth frigate, Taragiri \(F41\)](#), on April 03, 2026. The ceremony at Visakhapatnam, scheduled to be presided over by the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh. As the fourth platform in the potent Project 17A class, the 6,670-tonne *Taragiri* embodies the 'Make in India' ethos and advanced indigenous engineering. Constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai, it marks a generational advancement with a sleeker hull and reduced Radar Cross-Section (RCS) for superior stealth operations. Featuring over 75% indigenous content, the frigate draws from an ecosystem of more than 200 MSMEs, bolstering Aatmanirbhar Bharat and sustaining thousands of jobs. Powered by a Combined Diesel or Gas (CODOG) propulsion system, *Taragiri* delivers high-speed, high-endurance performance for multi-domain maritime missions. Its world-class arsenal includes supersonic surface-to-surface missiles, medium-range surface-to-air missiles, and an advanced anti-submarine warfare suite—all integrated via a cutting-edge combat management system for rapid threat response.

The commissioning serves as a powerful testament to the nation's domestic manufacturing excellence toward becoming a completely self-reliant naval power.

Other Developments

[Raksha Mantri reviews West Asia situation & its effect on India's defence preparedness](#)

[Five Indian-flagged LPG tankers with nearly 2.3 lakh tonnes of cooking gas are stuck in the Strait of Hormuz](#)

[India an 'essential' U.S. partner in Indo-Pacific, its rise is good for American interests, says top Pentagon official](#)

[A Russian oil-laden tanker, MT Aqua Titan, arrived in India](#)

[2 Indian LPG tankers, the Jag Vasant and the Pine Gas, are being escorted by Indian navy warships](#)



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