



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

September 24, 2025

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South Asia:

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Ocean Region:

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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:

Central Asia: President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev delivered an address at the General Debate of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 24, 2025. Source: [X/Press Office of the President of Kazakhstan](#)

South Asia: A "Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement" was signed by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in Riyadh on September 17, 2025. Source: [X/@CMShehbaz](#)

Indian Ocean Region: Chief of Naval Staff of the Indian Navy, Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, met with the Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, Vice Admiral Kanchana Banagoda, in Colombo during his four-day official visit to Sri Lanka from September 22 to 25, 2025. Source: [X/@srilanka_navy](#)

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Watch Points

◇ <i>Kim opens door for dialogue with the US if not centred on denuclearisation</i>
◇ <i>US revoked Chabahar Waiver: A strategic blow to India amid renewed pressure on Iran</i>
◇ <i>India seals 15-Year deal with ISA to explore deep-sea polymetallic sulphide nodules (PMS) in the IOR</i>

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On September 17th, during a state [visit to Saudi Arabia](#), Pakistan's Prime Minister Shabaz Sharif ratified a "Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement". While the agreement's specific terms remain confidential, the [press release](#) indicates that aggression against one nation will be regarded as aggression against both. In addition, the agreement's objective is to cultivate elements of defence collaboration between the two states and reinforce joint deterrence to potential aggression. On September 18, Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif stated that Pakistan's nuclear program would be accessible to Saudi Arabia, if required, as stipulated by the recently established defence agreement. The [Indian Ministry of External Affairs](#) stated that it will analyse the consequences of this event for India's national security, as well as regional and worldwide stability.

The timing of the agreement's announcement, immediately following the recent India-Pakistan conflict and the Israeli attack on Qatar, highlights the evolving security landscape of the region.

New edicts issued by the Taliban serve to reinforce its rigid autocratic control. As a component of a new prohibition, the Taliban regime has [excluded](#) literature authored by women from the Afghan university teaching system and has also banned the instruction of human rights and sexual harassment. In a bid to control the nation's digital sphere, the Taliban authorities in Afghanistan disconnected [fibre optic connections](#) starting on September 22 across multiple provinces as part of an initiative that officials identified as a campaign against "vice". The decree, which was issued directly by Hibatullah Akhundzada, Supreme Leader of the Taliban, has deprived the population of high-speed internet and disrupted [financial services](#).

Subsequent to its assumption of power in 2021, the Taliban incrementally initiated the implementation of its interpretation of Islamic Law, which restricted fundamental human rights while concurrently bolstering its centralised power structure.

The US State Department's [press release](#) of September 16 indicates the revocation of the sanctions waiver for Iran's Chabahar port, currently under development by India, effectively ending the exemption that was in place since 2018 during President Donald Trump's first term. This revocation, effective from September 29, 2025, was expected months after Trump's executive order in January. The State and Treasury Departments, while making the announcement, cited their strategy of "maximum pressure on Iran" due to its alleged "support to regional terrorist proxies and advanced weapons systems, which pose a direct threat to US forces and allies." This decision has a direct impact on India's state-operated India Ports Global Limited (IPGL), which manages the Shahid Beheshti terminal in Chabahar. The port constitutes a vital hub within the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), thereby linking the Indian Ocean and Eurasia.

The Chabahar port holds strategic significance for India, facilitating access to Afghanistan and Central Asia, circumventing Pakistan. The United States' decision to rescind the waiver is perceived as a significant impediment to India's trade and strategic objectives within the area.

Other Developments

[Trump says 'bad things' will happen if Afghanistan does not return Bagram air base](#)

[Post-Operation Sindoor, major Pakistan terror groups shifting bases to Afghanistan border](#)

[Prime Minister Modi speaks with Prime Minister of the Interim Government of Nepal Sushila Karki on September 18](#)

[Singapore firm rejects paying \\$1 billion for Sri Lankan pollution damages](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

In another round of protests sweeping Southeast Asia, thousands of Filipinos took to the streets to protest against government corruption after it was alleged that taxpayers have lost billions of dollars to bogus flood relief projects on [September 21](#). Estimates by the Philippine government suggest that the country's economy may have lost as much as US \$2.001 over the last two years from corruption in flood control projects. Protests that have been largely peaceful have resulted in more than 200 people being arrested in the Philippine capital, Manila.

In the latest series of the protests ranging in the region, it is evident that the political instability in the region is being exacerbated by the economic vulnerabilities that have been long ignored.

[Myanmar](#) and [Asean](#) leaders are locked in a "diplomatic impasse" with the military junta determined to prevent the bloc from interfering with its plans for a general election later this year, according to observers. Four foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations last week postponed their planned trip to Myanmar to discuss the election, which is set to begin in December, and other matters. However, Malaysia's Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan, the head of the delegation, on September 18 said the trip had been postponed to early October but did not share further details.

The postponement of the ASEAN delegation's visit has lent credence to reports on Min Aung Hlaing's reluctance to meet the foreign ministers and address their concerns about the coming election.

Other Developments

[New Philippines shipyard poised to benefit from US-China maritime rivalry](#)

[Prime Minister Anutin eyes attending UN event](#)

East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

On September 19, 2025, [President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart, President Donald J. Trump, had a telephonic conversation](#) during which they discussed China-US relations and other issues of mutual interest. President Xi noted the significance of China-U.S. relations for mutual prosperity and the greater good of the world, while also highlighting historical ties, recalling support from the US and other anti-fascist Allied nations in China's War of Resistance. China's president urged the US to refrain from imposing unilateral trade restrictions which disrupt the consultative rapport between the two countries, and expressed China's willingness to negotiate terms on the TikTok issue in a manner consistent with its laws and regulations while taking into account the interests of both sides. He also argued that the US should ensure an open, fair and non-discriminatory environment for Chinese businesses and investors. President Trump spoke of the importance of US-China relations and expressed his desire to build a long-term, strong partnership with China, working together on a wide range of issues to promote global peace and stability. He also affirmed his readiness to cooperate with China on the bilateral economic and trade aspects, including negotiating an appropriate TikTok deal.

China and the US are two major powers, with each significantly depending on the other in terms of trade, technology, investment, and overall economic development. This interdependence is what creates a natural push for their strategic cooperation to amplify mutual growth and stability. However, it is this same dependency and the concept of relative gains under realist theory that lead to strategic competition between them.

On September 21, while addressing the Supreme People's Assembly, the North Korean leader, [Kim Jong Un, indicated the prospect of talks with the US](#) provided it stops pressing on North Korea's denuclearisation agenda, as he will never trade away the nuclear arsenal to ease sanctions. He said that North Korea has built its nuclear stockpile as a bulwark against external threats, particularly the US and South Korea. He even added that the sanction has rather been a learning experience and in fact made his country stronger and more resilient. The inefficacy of sanctions in deterring North Korea's nuclear program was also emphasised by South Korean President Lee Jae Myung in a recent media interview.

North Korea's nuclear program is seen as a deterrent against the perceived threat to its national security and sovereignty by the US and South Korea. This deep-seated fear makes coercion or any other kind of pressurising tactics for denuclearisation ineffective. The focus of the US, South Korea and other stakeholders should be on bringing North Korea to negotiations, agreeing on limited, defensive nuclear capabilities, and building long-term trust instead of using pressure alone.

Other Developments

[Trump rejects Palestinian recognition, signals pressure on China](#)

[Japan, U.S. and South Korea reaffirm commitment to ridding North Korea of nukes](#)

[South Korea's President Lee says U.S. investment demands would spark financial crisis](#)

[Taiwan reports 15 Chinese aircraft, 1 warship near island; majority cross median line](#)

[Japan-Australia-New Zealand-ROK Vice Foreign Ministerial Meeting](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On September 22, France, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Malta, Andorra, Portugal, San Marino, and Monaco formally recognised the [State of Palestine at a High-Level UN](#) General Assembly Conference on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine. French President Emmanuel Macron stated that the recognition of Palestine represents “recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people”, whom France has always supported. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the “one-sided” recognition of Palestine by Western leaders, warning that Israel would expand settlements in Judea and Samaria (West Bank) and [would not permit the establishment of a Palestinian State](#).

The formal recognition of Palestine by European countries underscores their frustration with the US-backed Israeli military offensive in Gaza. However, as long as the US and Israel remain opposed to a two-state solution, European recognition of Palestine will not have any significant effect on the ground reality in the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump, in his remarks at the 80th UN General Assembly on September 23, [condemned France and other Western countries](#) for their recognition of Palestine. President Trump cautioned European leaders to avoid rewarding Hamas terrorism and atrocities and urged them to focus on securing the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza.

The US's opposition to the recognition of Palestine, its recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and its unwavering support for Israel's security underscore its position as the leader of Judeo-Christian Civilisation.

Other Developments

[Syria, Israel near 'de-escalation' pact, US envoy says](#)

[Iran, European powers struggle to reach deal over return of UN sanctions](#)

Central Asia

by

Divya Rai

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, speaking at the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2025, underscored [a “crisis of trust”](#) in multilateral institutions and called for urgent, comprehensive UN reform to adapt to the new global realities. Serious violations of international law have become new normality, which undermines global stability and erodes confidence between peoples, between political leaders, and between states,” [he cautioned](#). Tokayev emphasised the moral responsibility of global leaders to choose cooperation over conflict, warning that failure to act on peace will impose heavier burdens on future generations. He proposed establishing a dedicated expert group to make concrete proposals for UN reform, including a review of the UN Charter and expansion of the Security Council to better represent Asia, Africa, Latin America, and “responsible Middle East powers”. Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev arrived in New York on September 21 for a working visit scheduled to last until September 23.

Tokayev’s remarks at the UN portray Kazakhstan’s diplomacy as forward-looking and reformist and articulate Kazakhstan’s identity as a responsible, peace-orientated middle power that bridges East and West, advocating cooperation over conflict, legal normativity over unilateralism, and sustainable development over short-term gain.

US President Donald Trump on Monday [announced](#) that Kazakhstan signed a \$4 billion deal to purchase American locomotives and rail equipment, calling it “the largest railroad equipment purchase in history”. The deal, secured after a call between President Donald Trump and Kazakhstan’s President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, involves Pennsylvania-based Wabtec supplying 300 Evolution Series locomotives in kit form to Kazakhstan’s national railway, Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, over the next decade. The deal also includes long-term maintenance support, reinforcing Kazakhstan’s role as a critical Eurasian transit hub, particularly along the Trans-Caspian Middle Corridor connecting Asia and Europe.

Kazakhstan has emerged as the pivotal hub of U.S. engagement in Eurasia. The locomotives will boost capacity along the Trans-Caspian “Middle Corridor” linking Central Asia with Europe while bypassing Russia and Iran, which not only strengthens geopolitical leverage but also positions Kazakhstan as the linchpin of Eurasian trade integration.

Other Developments

[U.S. Special Envoy for South and Central Asia Sergio Gor met with Kazakhstan President Tokayev](#)

[Kyrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov will visit Japan on November 17-20, 2025](#)

[Azerbaijan’s Deputy Minister of Economy, Sahib Alekperov, announced that Baku will gift an 8,000-ton oil tanker to Turkmenistan](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) of India, [undertook an official four-day visit to](#) Sri Lanka from September 22 to 25, 2025. He held extensive discussions with Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, senior defence officials, and tri-service chiefs, focusing on enhancing bilateral defence cooperation, particularly in maritime security, joint training, and operational synergy. The talks reaffirmed the commitment of both nations to deepen naval collaboration and interoperability across the services in the strategically important Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The Navy Chief will also participate in the 12th edition of the Galle Dialogue 2025 – International Maritime Conference in Colombo, themed ‘Maritime Outlook of the Indian Ocean under Changing Dynamics’. Admiral Tripathi highlighted successful joint anti-piracy missions and narcotics interdiction operations as exemplars of effective Indo-Sri Lankan naval cooperation. The Indian Navy’s stealth frigate INS Satpura was present in Colombo during the visit.

The visit builds upon a long history of high-level defence and naval engagements between India and Sri Lanka, which have steadily deepened bilateral military cooperation and interoperability. These engagements have strengthened maritime security cooperation and addressed common challenges such as piracy, narcotics trafficking, and illegal fishing in the IOR.

India’s Ministry of Earth Sciences [signed a landmark 15-year agreement](#) with the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to explore polymetallic sulphide nodules (PMS) in a 10,000 square kilometre area of the Carlsberg Ridge in the north-western Indian Ocean, marking the world’s first such licence for this region. The newly signed agreement is India’s third exploration contract with ISA and its second specifically for PMS exploration. This agreement, signed by Dr. M. Ravichandran (MoES) and Leticia Carvalho (ISA), makes India the first country to hold two ISA contracts specifically for PMS exploration, solidifying its position as a leader in deep ocean mineral research. This deal complements India’s earlier contracts for polymetallic nodule and sulphide exploration, further strengthening its scientific presence and maritime influence in international waters under the guidelines of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. With this contract, India now holds the largest area ever allocated for PMS exploration in the international seabed and strengthens a 30-year association with the ISA, reaffirming its commitment to sustainable resource utilisation and marine environmental protection for the benefit of all humankind.

The PMS nodules in this region are rich in manganese, cobalt, nickel, and copper – critically important materials for energy transition technologies and strategic industries. This agreement cements India’s leadership in marine mineral exploration, particularly in PMS nodules, and strengthens its strategic and resource position in the IOR.

China’s surveillance ship Yuan Wang 5 has [returned](#) to the Indian Ocean after three years after its last high-profile visit to Sri Lanka’s Hambantota Port in 2022. Yuan Wang 5 is a sophisticated Chinese People’s Liberation Army Navy tracking and intelligence-gathering

vessel equipped with advanced radar and satellite communication systems. Its reappearance coincides with speculation about a possible Indian hypersonic missile test over the Bay of Bengal, for which India has [issued](#) a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) restricting airspace on September 24 and 25. The ship was recently tracked near Indonesia and is now believed to be heading toward the Bay of Bengal, raising heightened security concerns in New Delhi. Yuan Wang 5 is reportedly recognised as a dual-use platform capable of tracking satellite and missile activity and collecting electronic signatures.

China's research and surveillance vessel Yuan Wang 5 returned after its last high-profile visit to Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port in 2022, raising security concerns in New Delhi. Despite the Chinese government's claim that the vessel was engaged in scientific research, India views its presence as a challenge to regional security and a demonstration of China's expanding strategic footprint in the Indian Ocean.

Other Developments

[Ministerial Meeting of the Small Island Developing States of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea was held on the sidelines of the 80th UNGA](#)

[Indian Navy's First Training Squadron \(1TS\), comprising INS Tir, INS Shardul, INS Sujata, and ICGS Sarathi, concluded a four-day port call at Maputo, Mozambique](#)

[The Indian Navy is set to commission Androth, the second Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft \(ASW-SWC\), on October 6, 2025](#)

[Exercise Jal Prahar 2025, a large-scale joint amphibious exercise, was conducted from September 16 to 22, 2025](#)



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