



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

September 17, 2025

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South Asia:

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East Asia:

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Indian Ocean Region:

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Volume III, Issue 38



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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:

South Asia: Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel administered the oath of office to newly appointed Prime Minister Sushila Karki on September 12. Source: [X/ @kathmandupost](#)

West Asia: An Emergency Arab-Islamic Summit was held in Doha, Qatar, on September 15, 2025. Source: [Official X Handle OIC](#)

Indian Ocean Region: INS Nistar, along with the Submarine Rescue Unit (East), made their maiden port call at Changi Naval Base, Singapore, on September 14, 2025, to take part in the biennial Exercise Pacific Reach (XPR-25). Source: [X/ @HCI_Singapore](#)

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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.....7

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V.8

Indian Ocean Region

Divya Rai.....9

Watch Point

| |
|---|
| ◇ <i>Political changes in Nepal and potential reforms by interim government</i> |
| ◇ <i>Ongoing protests in Indonesia and its potential economic impact in the future</i> |
| ◇ <i>Singapore and New Zealand set to seal a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, may unlock bold new collaboration</i> |

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On September 12, Sushila Karki, a former Chief Justice of Nepal, was [sworn in](#) as Nepal's interim Prime Minister, following protests that advocated for the dissolution of the KP Sharma Oli-led government. She is the first woman to assume the office of Prime Minister of Nepal. Rameshore Khanal, the finance minister; Kulman Ghising, the minister for energy, water resources, and irrigation; and Om Prakash Aryal, the minister for home affairs, [were sworn in](#) along with her. The Cabinet is required to organise parliamentary elections within a six-month timeframe. Vital Nepalese institutions, which were vandalised during the anti-corruption protests, have [resumed their services](#) since September 14. India has [expressed its welcome](#) of the newly formed Interim Government in Nepal, to foster peace and stability within the nation.

The smooth transition of power to the new administration, which was preceded by the youth-led anti-corruption protest and has a clear mandate to conduct elections in six months, suggests that Nepal's democracy is becoming stronger.

According to a report published on September 15, the [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM) cautioned that Afghanistan is experiencing a triple crisis of substantial migrant returns, diminishing aid, and catastrophic natural disasters, thus rendering millions susceptible to poverty. The report indicates that almost two million Afghans repatriated from Iran and Pakistan in 2025, with a significant number experiencing forced deportations. The IOM highlighted that women are among the most vulnerable, given that numerous individuals who studied or worked in Iran now experience Taliban-imposed limitations on education and employment within Afghanistan. The agency indicates that approximately 40,000 people enter Afghanistan each day, with a significant number experiencing homelessness, unemployment, or document loss at border crossings. Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis is regarded as one of the world's worst by the United Nations.

The Taliban's ideological constraints are posing challenges to aid operations by international organisations in Afghanistan. Further deficiencies in governance are intensifying the humanitarian situation within the country.

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari [visiting China](#) from September 12-21, where he travelled to Chengdu, Shanghai, and Xinjiang, and met with provincial leadership, with an emphasis on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He is also scheduled for a meeting with the senior leadership of China. In the meantime, Shanghai Electric Power Company has chosen to [discontinue](#) its bid to acquire up to

66.4% of Karachi-Electric Ltd, due to shifts in the Pakistani business climate. Shanghai Electric Power reached an agreement in 2016 to acquire a controlling stake in KE from Pakistan's Abraaj Group for \$1.77 billion.

Frequent visits to China by civilian and military leaders from Pakistan in recent months aimed to enhance strategic trust and revive Chinese investments in Pakistan. In reality, significant Chinese companies that have invested in Pakistan are losing confidence because of default returns and rising risk factors.

Other Developments

[US officials hold talks in Kabul over Americans detained in Afghanistan](#)

[Arakan army assisting in drug smuggling: BGB](#)

[Islamic parties close to uniting under a single alliance in Bangladesh](#)

[Bangladesh reform charter hits political roadblocks](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [September 17](#), thousands of online riders are set to take to the streets of Jakarta, to demand the resignation of Transport Minister Dudy Purwagandhi. This will be the first major protest since Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto [reshuffled his Cabinet](#) last week. Between 2,000 and 5,000 ride-hailing riders are anticipated to participate in the protests. Their goals also include advocating the creation of laws that would protect their interests in Indonesia. They are expected to hold protests in front of Indonesia's parliament, the Presidential Palace and the offices of the Ministry of Transport. Raden Igun Wicaksono, who is the chairman of Garda - a riders' association that is the main organiser of Wednesday's protest - has [warned Indonesia's leaders](#): "the fight is just getting started".

The ongoing protest that is more than a labour dispute – is a flashpoint in Indonesia's evolving political economy. It exposes tensions between rapid digitalisation and outdated labour laws. However, if the protests are sustained or escalated, it could dent Indonesia's image as a stable, investment-friendly economy.

On [September 13](#), US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the US stood with Philippines and rejected what he described as China's "destabilizing plans" involving Scarborough Reef. In his statement, Rubio stated that "Beijing claiming Scarborough Reef as a nature preserve is yet another coercive attempt to advance sweeping territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea at the expense of its neighbors." Despite US's vocal support to the Philippines, [China's military again conducted patrols](#) in the South China Sea and warned the Philippines against any provocations on September 14.

The US condemnation of China's claim over Scarborough Reef - especially its framing as a 'nature preserve' - reflects a strategic pushback against Beijing's use of environmental narratives to legitimise territorial expansion. For the Philippines, the US backing over Scarborough Reef is both a shield and a spotlight - fortifying its maritime claims while elevating its role in the broader contest for Indo-Pacific influence.

On [September 15](#), Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) announced that they will launch a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) with New Zealand, elevating bilateral relations between the two countries. Foreign Affairs Minister Vivian Balakrishnan concurred with President Tharman Shanmugaratnam's [opening address to the 15th Parliament](#), noting that Singapore's foreign policy must adapt swiftly to changing realities. He further stated the world was transitioning to an era

marked by disruptions to global trade, the weaponisation of economic tools, rising risks of conflicts, weakening multilateralism, sharper major power rivalry and rapid technological change. He added, “These shifts pose serious challenges for Singapore, whose survival and prosperity depend on free trade, access to global supply chains and our role as a business and logistics hub”.

Other Developments

[EU and Indonesia agree trade deal, FT reports](#)

[Sjafrie's new post shows Prabowo's reliance on military figures](#)

[Ho Chi Minh City's expansion highlights challenge of state reform](#)

[Japan to donate ships, drones to Malaysia under security assistance program](#)

East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

On September 15, [the US, Japan and South Korea launched a joint air and naval exercise, named Freedom Edge](#). The exercise, scheduled to last until September 19, is being conducted off the southern coast of South Korea's Jeju Island. South Korea's Defence Ministry noted that the exercise aims to strengthen the combined operational capabilities of the concerned countries in the sea, air and cyberspace, which is critical in countering North Korea's belligerence. The US Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii has described the exercise as "the most advanced demonstration of trilateral defence cooperation to date." North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister – Kim Yo Jong has expressed serious condemnation of the trilateral drill. She called it a confrontational display against North Korea by the three countries and warned of inevitable adverse consequences to them. The US and Japan are also simultaneously engaging in a two-week bilateral exercise in Japan under which a missile system capable of striking the Chinese mainland will be deployed.

The deepening military cooperation between the US, Japan and South Korea has become increasingly important as Russia, China, and North Korea are warming up their relations as rapidly as ever.

[China's Coast Guard has accused a Philippine ship of deliberately ramming one of its vessels](#), which occurred on September 16, 2025, near Scarborough Shoal. Scarborough Shoal, also called Huangyan Island in China, is a disputed area claimed by both China and the Philippines, with clashes occurring repeatedly. The US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has called this yet another coercive manoeuvring by China to assert expansive territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea.

The recent clash near Scarborough Shoal underscores the persistent tensions in the South China Sea over territorial claims and how international powers like the US, which has signalled countering of China's unilateral actions in the South China Sea as its strategic interest, are playing the role of a power balancer.

On September 15, [the US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, while speaking with the press, said](#) that the Trump administration would not impose additional tariffs on Chinese goods to curb China's purchases of Russian oil till the time European countries impose steep duties on China and India.

This is yet another instance underscoring the growing rift between the US and its European Allies.

Other Developments

[South Korea Presidential office says tariff talks with U.S. stalled](#)

[South Korea to review possible human rights violations in US raid on workers](#)

[Japan dispatches five language education 'partners' to India](#)

[Why China is investigating Nvidia for 'violating' its anti-monopoly laws](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On September 15, an emergency Arab-Islamic Summit was held in Doha following Israel's military strikes in Qatar against Hamas leadership. The joint statement issued at this summit [denounced Israeli aggression against Qatar](#) and its settlement activities in the West Bank, as well as Israel's policies leading to genocide, ethnic cleansing, and starvation in Gaza. Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani cautioned that Israel was [not interested in ending the war](#) in Gaza and that Tel Aviv was "thwarting ceasefire negotiations" and the liberation of hostages. Meanwhile, on September 15, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met in Jerusalem, wherein the [US reaffirmed its support for Israel's security](#), including the destruction of Hamas and the liberation of hostages.

While the joint statement issued at the Arab-Islamic Summit condemned Israeli aggression, it failed to provide any concrete action plan to stop it. The Arab-Islamic countries, some of which are major non-NATO allies of the US, are either unwilling or unable to press Israel and the US to end the Gaza war.

On September 12, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the [New York Declaration](#) on the "peaceful settlement of the Palestine question and implementation of the two-state solution with Israel". 142 UN member-states voted in favour of the resolution, 10 voted against, and 12 abstained. The countries that voted against the resolution included Israel, the US, Argentina, Hungary, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, and Tonga.

Even as the UNGA adopted a resolution on the implementation of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, Israel's continuing settlement activities in the West Bank and the US's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital underscore that a Palestinian state is highly unlikely.

Other Developments

[Israel says Gaza City ground offensive has begun as UN commission concludes Israel is committing genocide](#)

[Under US pressure, Syria and Israel inch toward security deal](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [September 16](#), the Second Ministerial Dialogue on Economy and Energy in the “Central Asia + Japan” format was held in Tokyo, chaired by Japan’s Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry, Yoji Muto. The participants in the dialogue reaffirmed their commitment to cooperation across various fields, considering the countries’ obligations under the Paris Agreement to combat climate change. The discussions centred on energy transition, decarbonization, and the implementation of joint projects aimed at achieving carbon neutrality. Minister Yoji Muto presented the “Roadmap for Achieving Carbon Neutrality in Central Asia,” which was developed in collaboration with the ministries of the participating countries.

Japan's leadership in the “Central Asia + Japan” dialogue is a calculated geopolitical move that blends climate action with strategic influence. It redefines regional alliances, promotes sustainable development, and positions Japan as an architect for Central Asia’s energy future.

On [September 17](#), the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum of Afghanistan has announced the signing of a significant contract for the development of the Toti-Maidan gas fields with the KAM Group and Uzbekistan’s Railcom company. Afghanistan’s Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Abdul Ghani Baradar highlighted the project’s potential impact, stating: “With this project, the country’s dependence on imported gas and electricity will be reduced, the outflow of foreign currency will be curbed, and gradually, the groundwork for gas exports abroad will also be created.” Deputy Minister of Energy of Uzbekistan, Bakhtiyar Mamatkarimov, added that “This project marks the beginning of major cooperation between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. Advanced technologies will be applied in this project, and environmental considerations have also been taken into account.”

The agreement, spanning 25 years, marks a major step toward enhancing the two countries’ energy sector and fostering regional economic ties.

Other Developments

[Turkmenistan’s Foreign Minister Meets with Bahrain’s Deputy Foreign Minister](#)

[Turkmenistan and Russia Hold Consultations on Information Security](#)

[Kazakhstan Reaffirms Support for Qatar at Arab-Islamic Summit in Doha](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

The Indian Navy's indigenously designed and constructed Diving Support Vessel INS Nistar, along with the Submarine Rescue Unit (East), [made their maiden port call](#) at Changi Naval Base, Singapore, on September 14, 2025, to take part in the biennial Exercise Pacific Reach (XPR-25) scheduled from September 15 to 29. As the designated mothership for Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicles (DSRV), Nistar will participate in multinational submarine rescue drills and Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEE), engaging closely with partner navies. The deployment marks a significant milestone in India's submarine rescue capability and reflects growing operational linkages with regional partners on underwater safety and interoperability.

India's participation in multinational engagement – Exercise Pacific Reach 2025 – with INS Nistar showcases India's indigenous capability in advanced naval technology and submarine rescue. The participation is particularly vital given the increasing number of regional submarine operators and the pressing need for rapid, coordinated responses to underwater emergencies.

The Indian Navy [commissioned its latest naval base](#), INS Aravali, at Gurugram on September 12, 2025. The base is named after the resilient Aravali Mountain range and will serve as a hub for information and communication centres critical to India's maritime command, control, and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) framework. INS Aravali embodies the Navy's commitment to collaboration and technological advancement, supporting the vision of MAHASAGAR—Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions—by linking platforms and partners across oceans. The motto of the base is “Maritime Security through Collaboration” (सामुद्रिकसुरक्षायाः सहयोगं).

INS Aravali's establishment signals a shift toward information dominance as a force multiplier, aligning with India's broader strategy to become a preferred security partner in the Indian Ocean while protecting national interests against evolving maritime threats.

Indian Naval Ship (INS) Trikanth [arrived](#) at Salamis Bay, Greece, on September 13, 2025, as part of its ongoing deployment to the Mediterranean Sea. During the visit, INS Trikanth participated in the inaugural bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and the Hellenic Navy. This engagement spans a harbour phase, featuring planning discussions, interactions with senior military officials, cross-deck visits, and cultural exchanges aimed at fostering people-to-people connect, followed by a two-day sea phase dedicated to joint operations at sea. The exercise was designed

to bolster interoperability, refine tactical skills, and deepen operational synergy between the two navies, while also enhancing diplomatic, operational, and cultural ties.

The recent visit represents an important step in advancing India's maritime cooperation with European partners, highlighting New Delhi's growing strategic engagement in the wider Mediterranean region and supporting shared security objectives through collaborative ventures and best-practice exchanges.

Other Developments

[Australia and Papua New Guinea signed a communique after a mutual defence treaty stalls](#)

[Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden region have established a new framework for joint maritime operations](#)

[Great Nicobar mega-project faces rising scrutiny over impacts and approvals](#)



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