



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

December 17, 2025

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

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

www.delhipolicygroup.org



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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: A meeting of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries was held in Tehran, Iran, on December 14, 2025.

Source: [ISNA](#)

East Asia: UK's Trade Minister Chris Bryant and his Korean counterpart Yeo Han-koo at the announcing event of the UK-ROK Free Trade Agreement in London on December 15, 2025. Source: [GOV.UK](#)

West Asia: Jordan's King Abdullah II and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a meeting in Amman on December 15, 2025. Source: [Official X Handle/Narendra Modi](#)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Bangladesh's Chief Election Commissioner, AMM Nasir Uddin, [announced](#) that national elections are scheduled for February 12, 2026. Elections will be conducted in all 300 parliamentary constituencies, concurrent with a national referendum on the 'July National Charter'. The Election Commission has established 42,761 polling centres and 244,739 booths to facilitate voting by an estimated 127.6 million voters. Concurrently, Bangladesh is still experiencing political violence. On December 12, an unidentified assailant in Dhaka shot a youth leader affiliated with a right-wing cultural organisation and a prospective candidate in the forthcoming general elections. Bangladesh's Foreign Office summoned [India's envoy](#) in Dhaka to convey its concern over allowing former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her supporters to undermine the forthcoming general elections. India [denied unequivocally](#), declaring that "New Delhi has consistently supported free, fair, and inclusive elections in the neighbouring country and has never allowed its territory to be used for activities hostile to the interests of the Bangladeshi people."

The announcement of the national election date in Bangladesh led to an increase in political violence, which was exacerbated by growing socio-political divisions. The interim government's failure to address these incidents may raise questions about its ability to conduct free and fair elections, aggravating the country's political instability.

During the meeting held in Tehran on December 14, representatives from Afghanistan's [neighbouring countries](#), including Pakistan, Uzbekistan, China, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Russia, addressed the present and future situation of Afghanistan. The Taliban was invited to attend the session but chose not to participate. The declaration issued during the discussions in Iran [emphasised](#) the significance of preserving economic relationships with Afghanistan to enhance living standards, while also advocating for the nation's inclusion in regional political and economic initiatives. The attendees supported initiatives aimed at de-escalating the existing tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The meeting took place amidst ongoing disputes between Afghanistan and Pakistan. No viable conclusions or decisions were reached by the participating nations regarding Afghanistan, with the sole exception of expressing concern over the situation.

Other Developments

[US okays sale of tech worth \\$686m for Pakistan's F-16s](#)

[Nepal set to allow Indian high-value notes after a decade-long ban](#)

[6 Bangladeshi peacekeepers killed in terrorist attack in Sudan](#)

[Bangladesh President Shahabuddin feeling 'humiliated', wants to resign after February election](#)

[World Bank confirms US\\$120 million in emergency support to Sri Lanka](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

As the border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia extended into its second week, heavy fighting continues. Efforts at mediation have failed to bring about a renewed ceasefire. On [December 14](#), the Thai government reported that 16 soldiers had been killed since clashes began on December 7, alongside the displacement of 258,626 civilians. Thailand also confirmed its first civilian death directly linked to the fighting. Cambodia's Ministry of Interior reported [11 civilian deaths](#), 74 injured, and the evacuation of nearly 400,000 people from border areas. Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul dismissed claims that a ceasefire was in place, declaring that Thailand is determined to "preserve, protect, and defend the integrity of our land and our people at all costs." Rejecting mediation attempts, Thailand announced a [military operation](#) to "reclaim Thai sovereign territory" in the coastal province of Trat and imposed a curfew across five districts on December 14, excluding the tourist islands of Koh Chang and Koh Kood.

On [December 16](#), Malaysia's government postponed a meeting of foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that it has called to address the escalating border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia. The meeting, initially scheduled for December 16, will now be held on December 22 after Thailand requested a delay.

The renewed Thailand–Cambodia border fighting risks turning a local territorial dispute into a broader regional security problem. Rising casualties and mass displacement in both countries hardens nationalist sentiment and shrinks the space for political compromise, increasing the chance of further escalation. Thailand's rejection of mediation and its emphasis on defending "sovereign territory" reflects a more unilateral, militarised stance that challenges ASEAN's norms of consensus and non-violence. The conflict also highlights ASEAN's persistent inability to manage disputes within its own membership.

On [December 15](#), the Philippines said it will protest the Chinese coast guard's "harassment and endangerment" of Filipino fishermen in a South China Sea shoal last week. Three Filipino fishermen were injured and two fishing vessels damaged when Chinese coast guard ships blasted water cannon and cut their anchor lines near Sabina Shoal on December 12. The Philippines said it was alarmed by the actions of China's coast guard, saying the use of water cannons and dangerous manoeuvres that cause injury and damage "cannot be justified". "The Philippines will undertake the appropriate diplomatic response and register its strong objection to these actions and demand that China cease such aggressive acts," the Philippines' maritime council said in a statement.

The commitment to an “appropriate diplomatic response” signals that the Philippines intends to escalate the issue through formal channels rather than military means as the latter approach has not been successful. This new approach aligns with its broader strategy of leveraging international law and alliance networks to counter China’s assertiveness.

Other Developments

[Malaysian PM Anwar names new trade, economy ministers in cabinet reshuffle](#)

[Cambodia applies to join trans-Pacific trade pact](#)

[PH, US hold drills in WPS after Chinese harassment of Filipino fishers](#)

[Thailand sets Feb 8 for general election despite border clashes](#)

East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

On [December 15, South Korea and the UK signed a new trade deal](#) replacing the 2019 post-Brexit continuity arrangement, parts of which were set to expire in January 2026. The two countries have agreed to maintain 98 percent of trade tariff-free. Currently, the total trade between the two countries is around £15 billion a year. The new agreement covers a wide array of export categories, including services, automotive, pharmaceutical and food and drinks, amongst others. In the automobile sector, the threshold on the quantity of parts in a car that must be British or from the EU to qualify for zero tariffs has been lowered from 55 percent to 25 percent.

Countries are increasingly seeking to secure more and more Free trade agreements as the global economic order witnesses a visible strain due to rising tariffs, the proliferation of non-tariff barriers, and the fragmentation of long-standing trade partnerships.

On December 15, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, [Wang Yi, met with the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia](#), Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, in Saudi Arabia. The two leaders co-chaired the fifth meeting of the Political Sub-committee of the China-Saudi Arabia High-level Joint Committee, where they deliberated on ways to enhance bilateral cooperation across various fields. China commended Saudi Arabia's economic development achievements and its role in promoting regional and international security and stability. On the other hand, the Saudi Arabian leader reaffirmed his country's position of adherence to the One-China policy, recognising the PRC as China's sole legitimate government and Taiwan as an inalienable part of China. The two sides also discussed the issue of Palestine, and related concerns such as the two-State solution, relevant UN resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. Countries during this meeting also signed the Agreement on the Mutual Visa Exemption for Holders of Diplomatic, Service and Special Passports Between the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Chinese Foreign Minister also held meetings with his counterparts from [the UAE](#) and [Jordan](#).

In an increasingly fragmented and competitive international system, China is seeking to expand its outreach in West Asia guided by the strategic need to diversify.

Other Developments

[China reiterates demand that Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi retract remarks about Taiwan](#)

[The 205th ROK-U.S. Joint Committee of the Status of Forces Agreement Joint Press Release](#)

[S. Korea, US launch consultative body on NK policy amid inter-ministry feud](#)

[Taiwan detects heightened Chinese military activity around its territory](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Jordan on December 15-16, marking the 75th anniversary of the establishment of [India-Jordan diplomatic relations](#). PM Modi, during his meetings with Jordan's King Abdullah II and Crown Prince Al-Hussein bin Abdullah II, pledged to deepen bilateral relations in domains such as trade and economic cooperation, agriculture, IT, healthcare, infrastructure, critical and strategic minerals, civil nuclear cooperation, and people-to-people ties.

The visit of Prime Minister Modi to Jordan would enable Amman and New Delhi to align their positions on a wide range of issues, including trade, security, and regional stability. India plans to more closely integrate Jordan into its global initiatives and digital ecosystem.

Meanwhile, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar visited the UAE and Israel from December 13-17. In Abu Dhabi, EAM Jaishankar co-chaired the 16th meeting of the [India-UAE Joint Commission](#) and the 5th round of the India-UAE Strategic Dialogue with UAE's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening a comprehensive strategic partnership and pledged to advance the implementation of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor while supporting the modernisation of the Global South. In Jerusalem, EAM Jaishankar conveyed [India's condolences on the terror attack on the Hanukkah](#) celebration in Australia and pledged to work with Israel to combat the shared challenge of terrorism.

EAM Jaishankar's visit to the UAE and Israel continued the deepening trend of India's ties with two key strategic partners in West Asia. It enhanced economic, security and counter-terrorism cooperation, and reaffirmed shared interests in promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

During the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah on December 14, fifteen people were killed and several others were injured in a [terror attack at Bondi Beach in Sydney](#), Australia. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described the Bondi Beach attack as ["cold-blooded murder" of the Jewish people](#) and accused the Australian government of fueling "antisemitism" by supporting Palestinian statehood. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese rejected these accusations, stressing that he does not see any link between Canberra's recognition of Palestine and the terror attack in Bondi.

Following Israel's military campaign in Gaza, the attack on Australian Jews reveals a widening climate of antisemitism across parts of the West. In response, several countries have

strengthened security measures to protect Jewish communities, while Hanukkah celebrations have become visible expressions of unity and resilience in the face of hate.

Other Developments

[China to strengthen strategic communication with GCC, safeguard common interests: FM](#)

[Pakistan's military chief Asim Munir in spotlight over Trump's Gaza plan](#)

[Trump adds seven countries, including Syria, to full travel ban list](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [December 12](#), Turkmenistan hosted a high-level international forum on “Peace and Trust” to mark the 30th anniversary of its neutrality. The event brought together global leaders including Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, and the heads of Central Asian states. Discussions centred on peace, trust, dialogue, mutual respect, and multilateral cooperation, with participants noting that neutrality is becoming increasingly relevant in today’s international environment. The forum concluded with the adoption of the [Ashgabat Declaration](#), which reaffirmed peace, trust, and dialogue as core principles and proposed initiatives such as a “Global Code of Trust” and a mediation chamber to strengthen international cooperation. President Putin welcomed the declaration [emphasising](#) the importance of peacefulness, non-interference, and respect for nations’ rights to choose their own development paths, traditions, and religions, principles he said are vital for stable international relations.

Turkmenistan’s “Peace and Trust” forum signals a subtle but meaningful geopolitical shift in Central Asia, where neutrality is being reframed as a diplomatic asset rather than a passive stance. Regionally, the meeting underscores growing coordination among Eurasian states outside Western frameworks and hints at a more cohesive Central Asian diplomatic identity. It also highlights how neutral states can carve out strategic relevance by hosting platforms that bring rival powers into dialogue, subtly reshaping the balance of influence across the broader Eurasian landscape.

On [December 12](#), Kyrgyzstan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Economy and Commerce held a joint briefing for ambassadors from Central Asian states and the United States to outline preparations for the second B5+1 Forum, set to take place in Bishkek on February 4–5, 2026. The upcoming forum builds on the outcomes of the C5+1 Summit held in Washington on November 6, 2025. Designed to strengthen cooperation, the B5+1 platform aims to foster sustained dialogue between regional governments and the private sector, promoting long-term partnerships and deeper policy coordination.

This briefing signals Kyrgyzstan’s intent to position itself as a central convening hub for U.S.–Central Asia engagement at a moment when great-power competition is reshaping the region’s diplomatic landscape. By preparing for the second B5+1 Forum and linking it directly to the outcomes of the recent C5+1 Summit in Washington, Bishkek is helping institutionalise a framework that brings together regional governments and the private sector – something the U.S. sees as essential for countering economic dependence on larger neighbours like China and Russia.

Other Developments

[Japan to host 1st summit with 5 Central Asian nations](#)

[Kazakhstan Accelerates Development of Trans-Kazakhstan Railway Corridor](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

The Indian Navy [commissioned](#) DSC A20, the first of five indigenously built Diving Support Craft, on December 16 at Naval Base Kochi. DSC A20 has been designed and constructed as per the classification rules of the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS). It is a catamaran-hull ship, with a displacement of approx. 390 Tons. Fitted with state-of-the-art diving equipment, the vessel will play a vital role in underwater repairs and inspections, harbour clearances and critical diving missions in coastal waters.

Commissioning of DSC A20 is yet another milestone in the Indian Navy's quest for indigenous shipbuilding, growing domestic capabilities, self-reliance and reducing dependency on imports.

The first-ever Quad (Japan, Australia, India and the United States) [Indo-Pacific Logistics Network \(IPLN\) Field Training Exercise \(FTX\)](#) was conducted in Guam, the US, with the participation of the Ministry of Defence and Self-Defence Forces from Japan. The IPLN is an initiative that enables Quad partners to leverage shared logistics capabilities to support civilian response to large-scale natural disasters more rapidly and efficiently across the Indo-Pacific to save lives, boost recovery efforts, and provide support for regional partners. The FTX focused on interoperability and coordination between the Quad partners' capabilities. Additionally, the FTX strengthened the Quad partners' disaster response capacity through training activities, including boarding a Japan Air Self-Defence Force (JASDF) C-130H transport aircraft. This capacity is key to the Quad's goal to better support regional partners in moments of need.

The Quad's first Field Training Exercise (FTX) under the Indo-Pacific Logistics Network (IPLN), aims to strengthen Quad cohesion for a free and open Indo-Pacific, focusing on practical cooperation amid China's regional influence. For India, it bolsters naval logistics ties, supports maritime domain awareness efforts and plans future exercises, expert exchanges, and confidence-building.

The US [launched](#) Pax Silica, a coalition to secure silicon, semiconductor, and AI supply chains against overreliance on China. It brings together eight US partners, including the United States, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Australia. These nations were signatories to the Pax Silica Declaration at the inaugural summit in Washington, D.C. on December 12. Guests like Taiwan, the EU, Canada, and the OECD provided input, but are not core partners. The initiative, which spans critical minerals, energy, manufacturing, semiconductors, AI infrastructure, and logistics, India was notably absent from the nine-nation group, despite prior Quad and bilateral tech ties with the US, South Korea, UAE, Singapore, and Japan.

With supply chains emerging as a new battleground, the United States' recently announced Pax Silica initiative marks a strategic push to wrest control of technology supply chains from China – currently dominating 60-70% of rare earth processing – and to shape the rules of the artificial intelligence era. Surprisingly, while the other two Quad partners are included, India is conspicuously absent, despite having signed an MoU with the US to expand and diversify critical minerals supply chains, which underscores a downgrading of India-US ties.

Other Developments

[8th edition of Exercise Ekatha between India and Maldives was held at MNDF Central Area Command, Kadhdhoo](#)

[Fifth Chinese research vessel entered Indian Ocean Region – 'Da YANG YI HAO', is headed to the Maldives](#)



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