Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

October 22, 2025

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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: The Taliban Defence Minister Mullah Yaqoob and Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif signed a ceasefire agreement on October 19, 2025, in Doha. Source: X/@MofaQatar_EN

East Asia: Ms. TAKAICHI Sanae was designated as Japan's 104th Prime Minister on October 21, 2025. Source: Official X Handle/PM's office of Japan

Indian Ocean Region: Sri Lankan Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 17, 2025, in New Delhi during her three-day official visit to India. Source: X/ @narendramodi

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Watch Points

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◊ *Japan's new female leader's first test - US President Donald Trump's upcoming visit to Japan*
◊ *President Trump to face the leaders of ASEAN, BRICS and QUAD together for the first time since the tariff war*

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Following intense border clashes and airstrikes by Pakistan on Kabul, a ceasefire agreement was signed between Pakistan and Afghanistan on October 19. Negotiations between the two countries were brokered by Qatar and Turkey, with talks being held in Doha. The Qatari Foreign Ministry announced that Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to future meetings to ensure the ceasefire's endurance, confirm its execution reliably, and promote security and stability in both nations. Pakistan has sealed its border with Afghanistan, escalating pressure on Afghan merchants who depend on Pakistani maritime ports and connectivity infrastructure for transit, notably the Atari–Wagah route, which has led to the cessation of Afghanistan–India trade. Pakistan has also begun the demolition of homes belonging to Afghan refugees in various cities, claiming the reason as land encroachment.

Despite the ceasefire agreement signed by Pakistan and the Taliban-led Afghan government, its endurance is highly improbable. Pakistan's reliance on military solutions to address diplomatic, ideological, and social concerns could intensify the insurgency within its border provinces.

On October 17, Muhammad Yunus, Bangladesh's Chief Advisor and Chairman of the National Consensus Commission, along with the Commission's members and leaders of various political parties, ratified the "July National Charter." This charter encompasses more than 80 reform suggestions spanning several sectors. Leaders of 25 political parties participated in the signing ceremony. The student-led National Citizen Party (NCP), which was allied with Muhammad Yunus, declined to attend the ceremony. Nahid Islam, the party's convener, stated that some political parties are signing the document using national consensus as a means of deceiving the public. NCP is seeking official legal status for the July National Charter.

Despite the fact that most parties have reached a consensus on the July Charter, it continues to be seen as a political ploy because the present government is unable to implement it, and the ideological positions of the political parties are at odds with the proposed reforms.

Other Developments

Pakistan launches its first hyperspectral satellite

Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have reached a staff-level agreement unlocking around $1.2 billion in financial assistance

The Indian Government restored the status of its Technical Mission in Kabul to that of Embassy of India on October 21

Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On October 21, the Philippines' Foreign Secretary Maria Theresa Lazaro said the Philippines hopes to advance a long-delayed code of conduct for the South China Sea when it assumes the chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) next year. She added that the Philippines remains committed to promoting a rules-based order and pursuing diplomatic dialogue amid ongoing tensions in the disputed region. Ms Lazaro acknowledged that forging a unified ASEAN stance has long been challenging, given the bloc's diverse political, economic and strategic interests. However, she said member states share a common desire for peace and stability in the region.

While it is more than evident that as the ASEAN chair, the Philippines will push for a code of conduct in the South China Sea, given that it is the most affected by the ongoing disputes with China over these contested waters. However, a key question remains: to what extent will ASEAN's consensus-based decision-making process allow for a binding COC? This process is vulnerable to objections from individual member states, which could dilute the legal language and effectiveness of the agreement.

The upcoming Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Kuala Lumpur from October 26-28, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to attend the East Asia Summit (EAS) along with U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese Premier Li Qiang. Leaders or representatives of China, Russia, Japan, India, Australia, and New Zealand are expected at the EAS, while Brazil President Lula da Silva and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa will attend as observers at the ASEAN-related summits.

This means that all key members from the Quad and key founder members of BRICS will be in attendance, along with the significant economic bloc of ASEAN.

Other Developments

Trump's ASEAN Summit attendance raises stakes for trade, security talks

Ex-Thai PM Paetongtarn steps down as Pheu Thai leader, pledges total 'overhaul'

Hundreds in Indonesia fall ill after eating govt-provided meals, as Prabowo downplays concerns

East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

On October 21, the Japanese parliament voted in both houses to elect Sanae Takaichi as its first female Prime Minister. This signifies a transformative moment in the country's political history where leadership positions have traditionally been dominated by men. Takaichi's leadership, particularly her hardline approach to addressing Japan's critical challenges, including economic troubles, the LDP's declining popularity, and immigration concerns, will be put to the test in the months to come.

Takaichi is seen as a fresh face within the LDP, distinguished by her aggressive and nationalist stance in sharp contrast with the traditionally moderate leaders from the party. All eyes will be on the upcoming US President Donald Trump scheduled to visit Japan, to see how she engages particularly with respect to the Japan–US trade deal which was reached in July, and Washington's push to reduce reliance on Russian energy, both of which carry significant economic implications, attention will focus on how she fulfils her pledge to revitalise Japan's economy.

On October 18, Taiwan's major opposition party, the KMT, elected Cheng Li-wun as its new chairperson with a wide margin. There have been allegations of heavy Chinese involvement in this election in support of Cheng. The KMT, a nationalist and pro-China party, has maintained significant political influence in Taiwan; however, it has lost three consecutive presidential elections to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Cheng has positioned herself as a reformist pledging to transform the KMT party from a flock of "sheep" to "lions". Moreover, asserting her opposition to the DPP leadership, which has strengthened Taiwan's military posture against China, Cheng called for Taiwan to be less of a troublemaker, a geopolitical sacrifice to a peacemaker in its relations with China.

Cheng Li-wun's reformist domestic messaging could help rejuvenate the KMT's image and broaden its appeal, particularly among voters concerned with economic stability and international diplomacy. However, she will need to balance the KMT's pro-China stance with domestic public opinion, which remains wary of Beijing's influence, a possible reason that the party has not been successful in presidential elections.

Other Development

The 3rd Workshop on AI Capacity Building Held in Shanghai

Xi Jinping calls for 'reunification' with Taiwan in message to newly elected opposition leader

North Korean soldier defects to South Korea across the heavily fortified border

US Navy shipbuilding is 'a mess.' South Korean companies think they can help fix it

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

Following a Hamas attack resulting in the deaths of two Israeli soldiers, the IDF launched a series of airstrikes targeting Hamas, which led to the deaths of 26 Palestinians on October 19. Meanwhile, US Vice President J.D. Vance arrived in Jerusalem on October 21, where he is scheduled to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Vice President Vance expressed "great optimism" over the Gaza peace plan, describing it as "durable" and "going better than expected". He reiterated President Trump's threat that Hamas would be obliterated if it refused to disarm. Hamas leaders refused to commit to any proposal calling for the disarmament of the terror group.

Israel's airstrikes in Gaza on October 19 and Hamas' refusal to disarm underscore the fragile nature of the ceasefire between the two sides, which points to a big gap between their respective positions on Gaza and that of the US.

On October 20, the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, denied that the US-Israeli airstrikes had destroyed Iranian nuclear facilities. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei reiterated that Iran should not re-engage in nuclear talks with the US, as the outcome of such a dialogue is pre-determined by Washington's coercive and bullying tactics.

Iran's refusal to engage in a nuclear dialogue with the US, as well as the reimposition of UN sanctions against Tehran, reflect widening differences between Iran and the West regarding its nuclear program.

India's state refiners are likely to cut imports of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) from the countries in West Asia, as they plan to increase LPG purchases from the US. According to reports, India plans to import approximately 10 per cent of its cooking gas from the US, starting in 2026.

India's intent to increase LPG imports from the US is likely to strengthen its efforts to secure a broader trade agreement with Washington during a period when the US has implemented reciprocal tariffs in an effort to achieve fairer trade with international partners.

Other Developments

Russia prepared to expand ties with Iran in all areas, the Kremlin says

Syria hopes to have US sanctions formally lifted in coming months, says economy minister

Central Asia

by

Divya Rai

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev arrived in Kazakhstan for a two-day state visit from October 20 to 21. Ilham Aliyev held a one-on-one meeting with Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in Astana on October 21. The two leaders held high-level bilateral talks and the second meeting of the Kazakhstan–Azerbaijan Supreme Interstate Council. The visit produced several concrete outcomes that reinforced their strategic alliance, agreements to deepen cooperation in trade, energy, transport, digital infrastructure, and industrial development, and discussions aimed at expanding freight flows along the Middle Corridor linking China, Central Asia, and Europe. A major highlight of the meeting was the announcement of the lifting of all restrictions on the transit of goods from Azerbaijan to Armenia and from third countries to Armenia through Azerbaijan. Leaders also addressed regional security and the significance of projects like the Zangezur Corridor and the U.S.-brokered TRIPP initiative. President Tokayev highlighted the importance of multifaceted cooperation and emphasised Kazakhstan's commitment to expanding strategic partnership and trade-economic cooperation with Azerbaijan.

In summary, Azerbaijan lifting transit restrictions to Armenia reflects a significant diplomatic breakthrough with tangible impacts on trade and regional cooperation in Central Asia and the South Caucasus, including expanding freight flows along the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (Middle Corridor).

Russia has overtaken Central Asian countries as the largest supplier of pipeline natural gas to China in 2025, exporting $7.29 billion worth of gas between January and September, an 18.9% increase year-on-year. In comparison, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan combined supplied over $7.9 billion, with Turkmenistan's exports declining by 12.7%. Kazakhstan followed with gas exports totalling $854.7 million, while Uzbekistan supplied approximately $629.8 million. This surge in Russian gas exports followed a major agreement signed during President Vladimir Putin's visit to Beijing, committing Russia to supply 106 billion cubic metres of gas annually to China. Russian gas exports are key in this expansion, especially through major pipeline projects like Power of Siberia and future projects such as Power of Siberia 2. Similarly, Russia is expanding gas export infrastructure, such as a new trunk pipeline to northern and northeastern Kazakhstan, which will transport 10 billion cubic metres per year.

Russia's rapidly growing gas exports to China have overtaken those of Central Asian suppliers in 2025. Despite US sanctions targeting Russian energy exports and affiliated shipping fleets, Russia has managed to sustain and even grow its gas exports. The growing Russian share in China's gas market aligns with its broader strategy to deepen energy cooperation across Eurasia.

Other Developments

Kazakhstan launches electronic queue system at border crossing with Kyrgyzstan

Saudi Company to launch 200 MW power plant in Samarkand

Kazakhstan to remain Central Asia's growth leader in 2025, says IMF

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya undertook a three-day official visit to India from October 16 to 18, 2025—her first visit since taking office in November 2024. In New Delhi, she met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, with discussions focusing on education, innovation, women's empowerment, technology collaboration, fishermen's welfare, and regional development cooperation. Prime Minister Modi reaffirmed India's commitment to deepening bilateral partnerships and advancing shared prosperity across the region. She described India as a partner of long-standing trust and credited its "global rise and inclusive approach" as an anchor of regional stability.

PM Amarasuriya also underscored Sri Lanka's ambition to reposition itself as a maritime and logistics hub in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). She emphasised the need to modernise the India–Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA), originally signed in 1998, calling it outdated considering current economic realities.

This visit marks a transition towards more structured, policy-driven bilateral cooperation encompassing multiple sectors. It highlights the two nations' mutual commitment to building a resilient partnership that fosters economic growth, enhances regional stability, and strengthens people-to-people connections. The Sri Lankan Prime Minister's visit to Hindu College, Delhi University, carried symbolic value, emphasising the deep-rooted educational and cultural ties that bind India and Sri Lanka.

India and Ethiopia held their inaugural Joint Defence Cooperation (JDC) meeting in New Delhi on October 15, 2025, marking a significant advancement in their bilateral defence partnership. The meeting follows the Defence Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed earlier in 2025, establishing a structured institutional framework for regular dialogue and strategic cooperation. The meeting, co-chaired by Joint Secretary (International Cooperation) of India's Ministry of Defence Amitabh Prasad and Ethiopia's Director General for Defence Foreign Relations Maj Gen Teshome Gemechu, reviewed ongoing defence cooperation and explored new areas for collaboration, including training, joint military exercises, medical cooperation, and defence industry engagement. Ethiopia has been a longstanding defence partner of India since 1958, and their ties have strengthened with active participation in United Nations peacekeeping efforts and expanding bilateral programmes.

The meeting marks a new chapter in India-Ethiopia relations. For India, this partnership aligns with its broader strategy in the Indian Ocean and Horn of Africa regions, extending its strategic footprint and reinforcing maritime security and counter-terrorism efforts.

Other Developments

The sixth vessel in the series of eight Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Crafts was launched at Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), Kochi

The induction ceremony of the 11th ACTCM Barge was held at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai

India has reportedly secured an agreement from the government of Mauritius allowing it to establish a satellite station in the Chagos archipelago

The European Council approved conclusions on a new strategic EU-India agenda

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