



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

January 14, 2026

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South Asia:

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Volume IV, Issue 2



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 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: India's Chief of the Army Staff, General Upendra Dwivedi, during his visit to Sri Lanka met Commander of the Sri Lanka Army *Lieutenant General Lasantha Rodrigo*, On January 7, 2026. Source: [Sri Lanka Army](#)

West Asia: Is Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei met people from Qom province on January 9, 2026. Source: [Official X Handle/Ayatollah Khamenei](#)

Southeast Asia: Myanmar's Chairman of the Central Committee for Supervision of Field Census and Union Minister for Immigration and Population U Myint Kyaing inspected the status of polling station procedures for the holding of the second phase of the multi-party democratic general election on January 11, 2026. Source: [Myanmar National Portal](#)

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Watch Points

◊ *Sri Lanka's balancing act between India and China*

◊ *South Korea's strategic dilemma amid China-Japan rift*

◊ *Unrest in Iran driven by severe economic challenges*

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

India's Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Upendra Dwivedi, [visited Sri Lanka](#) on January 7-8. He conferred with key military and governmental figures, including the Commander of the Sri Lanka Army, the Deputy Minister of Defence, and the Defence Secretary, addressing topics such as cooperative training, capacity enhancement, defence education, and regional security matters. He also provided the Sri Lanka Army with defence equipment. Meanwhile, during an interview with journalists, India's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Santosh Jha, stated that India is awaiting Sri Lanka's response to the proposition for a comprehensive project report on [land connectivity](#) between the two nations, which was originally suggested by Sri Lanka.

The Indian Army Chief's visit to Sri Lanka and the discussions held reflect India's dedication to collaborative security within the Indian Ocean Region.

China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, briefly [visited Sri Lanka](#) on January 12 en route back to China after concluding an official visit to South Africa. During the visit, he met with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath and [expressed](#) China's intention to increase exchanges of governance experience with Sri Lanka, broaden practical cooperation in various areas, and further strengthen the strategic cooperative partnership between the two nations. As per a Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry statement, Minister Herath indicated that the agreement pertaining to the SINOPEC Oil Refinery Project in Hambantota is scheduled for finalisation within the initial quarter of 2026.

China appears to be seeking to reassert its presence in Sri Lanka by accelerating previously delayed, Chinese-funded projects, even as India-Sri Lanka relations improve.

Other Developments

[Bangladesh to resume direct flights with Pakistan from January 29 after a decade gap](#)

[India begins implementation of \\$ 450 million assistance package for Sri Lanka after Cyclone Ditwah](#)

[Pakistan-Afghanistan Trade Falls 53% as Border Closures Persist](#)

[Newly appointed Kabul envoy in India holds talks on visas, trade ties](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) is poised for a landslide victory in Myanmar after the [completion of the second stage](#) of elections on January 11, 2026 - an exercise the United Nations has condemned as a "sham," lacking credibility in the absence of genuine opposition. The outcome is [hardly a surprise](#) given the heavily skewed political landscape, marked by the elimination of serious rivals and restrictive laws designed to suppress dissent. The extent to which the playing field was tilted in its favour included the removal of any serious rivals and a set of laws designed to stifle opposition to the polls. While the junta insists that the polls will usher in political stability and a brighter future, the process remains tightly controlled under its staggered electoral framework, with the final phase of voting scheduled for January 25, when it claims power will be returned to the people.

Myanmar's 2026 sham elections cement military dominance, deepen civil conflict, and tilt the country further into China's orbit, while exposing ASEAN's limits in managing regional crises.

On [January 8](#), Philippine Deputy Assistant Secretary of Foreign Affairs Dominic Xavier Imperial outlined the country's priorities as Chair of ASEAN for 2026. He affirmed that the Philippines, in its role as ASEAN Chair, is committed to advancing peace, security, and prosperity, while deepening regional integration and promoting social inclusion. Speaking at a press briefing, Imperial emphasized that the Philippines seeks to provide steady leadership and principled engagement, thereby strengthening ASEAN in the years ahead. Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary [Mari Grace Preciosa Castelo](#) added that the 2026 ASEAN hosting underscores Manila's dedication to multilateralism and its leadership in fostering unity amid diversity. She noted that the Chairmanship offers the Philippines a valuable opportunity to contribute meaningfully to peace, prosperity, and the empowerment of people across the region. The Philippines will host several major ASEAN events in 2026 with the 48th ASEAN Summit and related meetings scheduled for May 8-9 in Cebu City, followed by the 49th ASEAN Summit from November 10-12 in Pasay. Along with these, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat (AMM Retreat) has been scheduled from January 25-29. In total, the Philippines will convene 208 cluster meetings – amounting to more than 650 gatherings throughout the year – including 104 at the working group level and 24 at the ministerial level.



Despite the Philippines' broad vision and ambition for its 2026 ASEAN Chairmanship, achieving its central objective of advancing maritime security – particularly progress on the South China Sea Code of Conduct – remains unlikely, as domestic security challenges and complex internal fissures demand greater immediate attention.

Other Developments

[Cambodian deaths exceed 110 in December border conflict with Thailand](#)

[Genocide case before international court 'flawed and unfounded', says Myanmar govt](#)

[Spectre of uncertainty haunts US-Southeast Asia trade](#)

[UAE, Philippines sign CEPA in Abu Dhabi](#)

East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

South Korean President Lee Jae-myung [travelled to Japan](#) for the Japan-South Korea Summit from January 12–13. The visit was one of several bilateral visits that form part of the shuttle diplomacy framework between Japan and South Korea. The two leaders met in Nara, the hometown of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, to discuss deepening security and economic ties. The talks focused on issues of mutual interest, including industrial supply chains, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, and deeper coordination with their mutual ally, the US. Takaichi emphasised the importance of Japan-South Korea relations and called for the need to strengthen trilateral cooperation between Japan, the ROK and the US. Lee, who had been on a state visit to China a week earlier, commented on [the China-Japan spat, calling it undesirable for regional peace](#), and clarified that Seoul would not involve itself in the ongoing row.

On the backdrop of China-Japan dispute, South Korea has to carefully calibrate its policy of avoiding becoming entangled in the conflict, which could not only destabilise the East Asia region but also hamper its national interests.

Japanese news media report Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is planning to dissolve [Japan's House of Representatives](#) (the lower house of the Diet) as early as next week, at the start of the upcoming regular Diet session. This paves the way for a snap general election, with a possible schedule in early next month. It is being suggested that the move is aimed at capitalising on Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's 62 per cent approval rating to secure a stronger parliamentary majority. Such a larger majority would enable the incumbent government to effectively advance its more assertive political agenda, including more "proactive" fiscal spending and the expansion of intelligence capabilities. The leader of the Democratic Party for the People, Tamaki Yuichiro, however, has warned against it as it could negatively impact the economy.

Sanae Takaichi's strong approval ratings, despite heightened tensions with China, suggest that a large section of the Japanese electorate aligns with her assertive political posture in the current regional security dynamics.

Other Development

[South Korea to probe drones North Korea says violated its airspace](#)

[Taiwan says reached 'general consensus' with U.S. on trade deal](#)

[China reaffirms its territorial claims over Shaksgam Valley after India's objections](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

Anti-government [demonstrations continued in Iran](#) with reports indicating hundreds killed and thousands arrested across the country. On January 13, US President Donald Trump urged “Iranian patriots to take over their country's institutions” and [promised US assistance for the same](#). The US has announced an [additional 25 percent tariff](#) on countries that trade with Iran. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei warned the US and European countries that their [treacherous plot to destabilise Iran will fail](#). Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned the diplomats of France, Germany, Italy, and the UK to protest their governments' support for the [US and Israel-backed riots in the country](#).

The unrest in Iran is driven by severe economic challenges stemming from Western sanctions aimed at curbing the country's nuclear program.

On January 7, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a phone conversation. Major issues discussed included deepening bilateral relations, [zero-tolerance towards terrorism](#) in all its forms and manifestations, implementation of the Gaza Peace Plan, and an exchange of views on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

India and Israel remain committed to strengthening their strategic partnership, built on shared democratic values, mutual trust, and a forward-looking vision.

On January 13, the US Department of State designated Muslim Brotherhood chapters in Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt as [Foreign Terrorist Organizations](#) and Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT). The US Department of the Treasury will also designate the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood as SDGTs for providing material support to Hamas in Gaza.

The US's designation of the Muslim Brotherhood as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation demonstrates Washington's effort to counter the Muslim Brotherhood chapters' support for terrorism in the region.

Other Developments

['Last straw': Somalia cuts UAE ties after Yemen separatist's illegal entry](#)

[India's rice exports to top buyer Iran stall on protests, tariff worries](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [January 13](#), two oil tankers bound for the Yuzhnaya Ozereyevka terminal—responsible for handling nearly 80 percent of Kazakhstan's oil exports—were struck by drones in the Black Sea near the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC). The CPC pipeline is a critical artery, transporting Kazakh crude oil through Russia to the Novorossiysk marine terminal for global export. While responsibility for the attack has [not been officially confirmed](#), analysts suggest Kyiv may be targeting Russian energy infrastructure as part of its broader strategy to pressure Moscow to end the war in Ukraine. This incident follows a [January 12 strike](#) on three Russian oil drilling platforms in the Caspian Sea and a November 29 strike, when a Ukrainian drone damaged one of the CPC terminal's three main moorings at Yuzhnaya Ozereyevka.

Drone strikes by Ukraine on energy infrastructure in the Caspian Sea jeopardises Kazakhstan's position as a transit-dependent oil producer and amplifies the risks to energy markets.

Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev [received the credentials](#) of the newly appointed ambassadors of the United States during a January 9 ceremony at Akorda. The new US ambassador [Julie Stuft said her goal](#) is to ensure that US companies in the Central Asian country have not just an "even playing field" but are also "the partners of choice" in a region where Russia and China are the dominant trading partners. She also expressed US support for Kazakhstan's agenda of political and economic reforms. During the ceremony, speaking about Kazakh-American relations, Tokayev underscored the importance of [his visit](#) to Washington, D.C., in November. He also stated "Recently, we had a productive telephone call on many issues related to bilateral cooperation. I am grateful for [the invitation](#) to attend the G20 Summit, which will be held in the United States at the end of this year. We will do our best to build on the momentum and enhance our strategic partnership in many areas".

The United States' growing involvement with Astana reflects Washington's strategy to balance Russian and Chinese influence in Central Asia, attempting to establish itself as a strategic alternative.

Other Developments

[Turkmenistan heightens border security amid Iranian protests](#)

[Uzbek President to Chair Expanded Security Council Meeting](#)

[From Tehran to Tashkent: How Iran's Crisis and U.S. Tariffs Reverberate Across Central Asia](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

On January 10, [the joint maritime exercise codenamed](#) "Will for Peace 2026" began at the Port of Simon's Town in Cape Town, South Africa, with participation from China, Russia, Iran and South Africa. Under the theme of "Joint Actions to Ensure the Safety of Key Shipping Lanes and Maritime Economic Activities", participants will conduct counter-terrorism and rescue operations, anti-sea strikes, and other activities such as professional exchanges and on-board tours. The exercise, scheduled from January 9 to 16 in the waters and airspace off Simon's Town, consists of two main phases. The port and shore operations phase (from January 9 to 12) is followed by the sea phase (from January 13 to 15), during which the participating vessels will conduct drills on communication, formation manoeuvre, maritime strike, hijacked vessel rescue, helicopter-borne patient transfer and treatment, and other subjects.

BRICS, hitherto seen primarily as an economic bloc, has stepped up efforts to promote maritime cooperation, underscoring its growing role in safeguarding international maritime security. However, there is no indication that India, Egypt and Saudi Arabia will either participate or observe.

Iran has [reportedly released](#) the Greek-owned oil tanker St. Nikolas, which it seized in January 2024. The St Nikolas was seized by Iran in January 2024 while transiting the Gulf of Oman with a cargo of Iraqi crude oil bound for Turkey in retaliation for the US confiscating and selling more than 980,000 barrels of Iranian crude on board the ship in 2023. The detention followed events in April 2023, when U.S. authorities seized the same vessel while it was operating under the name Suez Rajan. That seizure took place in the South China Sea and involved more than 980,000 barrels of Iranian crude oil linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

The release of the Greek-owned St. Nikolas tanker by Iran marks a de-escalatory step amid escalating U.S.-Iran tensions under President Trump. This event closes a two-year cycle of retaliatory ship seizures linked to U.S. sanctions enforcement.

Other Developments

[Meeting of 16th ADMM-Plus EWG on Counter Terrorism & Final Planning Conference for Table Top Exercise to be held in New Delhi](#)

[UAE joins in an exercise with the Iranian navy for the first time](#)

[Somalia, South Korea ministers held talks on maritime cooperation](#)



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