



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## INDIA'S PROXIMITY ARCHIVES

February 18, 2026

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**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](mailto:sanket@dpg.org.in).

### Cover Images:

**South Asia:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron held bilateral talks and jointly inaugurated the 2026 India-France Year of Innovation in Mumbai on 17 February. Source: [X/@narendramodi](https://twitter.com/narendramodi)

**East Asia:** Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the 62nd Munich Security Conference on February 14, 2026. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peoples Republic of China](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/en/foreign-affairs/peoples-republic-of-china)

**West Asia:** President Trump met Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House on February 11, 2026. Source: [Official X Handle/PM of Israel](https://www.whitehouse.gov/official-x-handle/pm-of-israel)

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## Contents

### South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh.....1

### Southeast Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. ....2

### East Asia

Arshiya Chaturvedi.....3

### West Asia

Sanket Joshi.....4

### Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. ....5

### Indian Ocean Region

Divya Rai.....6

## Watch Points

◇ <i>India-France elevate ties to "Special Global Strategic Partnership"</i>
◇ <i>Tarique Rahman's BNP storms polls, grabs two-thirds majority to form government</i>
◇ <i>Chinese FM labels Japan's assertive posturing as a "dangerous trend"</i>
◇ <i>U.S. signals plans to deploy more advanced missile systems in Philippines</i>
◇ <i>Germany strengthens its partnership with Central Asia at Z5+1 summit</i>
◇ <i>U.S. Military Build-Up in the Middle East amid Nuclear Dialogue with Iran</i>
◇ <i>Indian Navy's Maritime Diplomacy Trifecta</i>

## South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On February 12th, Bangladesh conducted its national election. The alliance led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) secured 212 seats in the 300-member Parliament. A coalition comprising eleven parties, led by Jamaat-e-Islami, secured seventy-seven seats. The voters also approved the July National Charter through a referendum intended to amend the Constitution. A turnout of [60 per cent](#) was recorded. On February 17, Tarique Rahman, the chairman of the BNP, [assumed](#) the office of Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Twenty-five cabinet ministers and twenty-four ministers of state were also [sworn in](#) by the President of Bangladesh. Dr. Khalilur Rahman, who currently serves as National Security Adviser, has been designated as the Foreign Minister within the cabinet. Muhammad Yunus, the head of the Interim Government, resigned on February 16. Meanwhile, [BNP General Secretary](#) Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir stated that Bangladesh-India relations won't be defined by a single issue, and Hasina's presence in India won't prevent Bangladesh from maintaining broader ties.

*Bangladesh's new BNP government has signalled its objective to address the governance vacuum left by the previous interim government, cultivate political stability, and strengthen its relationship with India.*

French President Emmanuel Macron is visiting India from February 17th to 19th to attend the Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit 2026. During his visit, he engaged in bilateral discussions with Prime Minister Modi and jointly officiated the commencement of the 2026 India-France Year of Innovation in Mumbai on February 17. Both leaders [agreed to elevate](#) bilateral relations to a "Special Global Strategic Partnership". To review the partnership's progress, both countries have agreed to the establishment of an annual Foreign Ministers' Comprehensive Dialogue. Discussions encompassed defence and security collaboration, civil nuclear energy, space exploration, and the establishment of resilient supply chains to link the two nations. A mutual agreement has been reached by the leaders to escalate joint initiatives concerning [advanced defence platform](#) research, co-design, co-development, and co-production, specifically within air, naval, and land systems domains, and in emerging dual-use technological sectors. India recently approved a proposal to procure 114 Rafale multirole fighter aircraft from France.

*Amidst widespread global uncertainty, India and France are advancing their bilateral interests and reinforcing a rule-based world order through the establishment of a 'Special Global Strategic Partnership'.*

### Other Developments

[Post-election violence mars several districts in Bangladesh](#)

[Monarchists' grand welcome plan for ex-king fuels pre-election tensions in Nepal](#)

[Pakistan launches second satellite from China's space centre](#)

## Southeast Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [February 13](#), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and India reaffirmed their shared commitment to further advancing the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) at the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN-India Joint Cooperation Committee (AIJCC), in Jakarta, Indonesia. They reviewed progress across all three ASEAN Community pillars and noted the successful completion of the 2021-2025 Plan of Action. The meeting highlighted the adoption of the 2026-2030 Plan of Action and emphasised sustained, forward-looking cooperation. Both sides pledged to build on existing initiatives while exploring new areas to keep the CSP dynamic and responsive to regional and global developments. As ASEAN chair, the Philippines co-led the meeting wherein the two sides highlighted [maritime cooperation as a priority issue](#), citing the imperatives of sea safety, environmental protection, connectivity, and adherence to international law across the Indo-Pacific.

*ASEAN and India's reaffirmation of their CSP, coupled with a new 2026-2030 action plan and emphasis on maritime cooperation, signals a deepening alignment to safeguard regional stability, connectivity, and law based order in the Indo-Pacific.*

On [February 16](#), the U.S. announced that it plans to deploy more high-tech missile systems to the Philippines to help deter aggression in the South China Sea, where the treaty allies condemned what they called China's "illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive activities." Senior officials from the U.S. and the Philippines met in Manila on February 16 for [annual talks on their alliance](#), which rests on a mutual-defense treaty signed in 1951. Their strongly worded statement condemned what it said were Beijing's illegal and deceptive activities in the South China Sea. U.S. and Philippine officials discussed expanding security, political and economic cooperation, including closer cooperation with regional partners. In a [joint statement](#) commemorating the 75th anniversary of a mutual defense treaty, the two sides outlined plans for increased joint military exercises, US support for modernising the Philippine armed forces and efforts "to increase deployments of US cutting-edge missile and unmanned systems to the Philippines".

*Washington's planned deployment of advanced missile and unmanned systems reflects a strategic bid to reinforce its military edge in Southeast Asia by deterring China's assertiveness in the South China Sea.*

### Other Developments

[Thaksin-backed party to join Thai election winner's coalition](#)

[East Timor triggers Asean first, accuses Myanmar of war crimes](#)

[ICC naming of Duterte's allies sharpens Philippines' political fault lines](#)

[Myanmar expels East Timor envoy after rights group complaint against regime](#)

## East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

On February 14, [Chinese Foreign Minister H.E. Wang Yi attended the 62nd Munich Security Conference](#). Addressing the session "Conversation with China", Wang Yi noted that Asia has shown relative resilience in maintaining peace amid current global uncertainties, except for the Cambodia-Thailand skirmish. Japan, however, he asserts, is witnessing dangerous trends. Calling the current Japanese Prime Minister's remark on Taiwan contingency invoking a "situation of existential crisis" reckless and erroneous, Wang Yi contends that this reflects Japan's ambition to invade and colonise Taiwan and revive militarism. He even recalled the Pearl Harbour attack during World War 2, which too was conducted on the pretext of "situation of existential crisis". A day earlier, on February 13, [Japan seized a Chinese fishing vessel and arrested its captain](#) for allegedly evading inspection in its exclusive economic zone. This incident, although a routine maritime exercise, risks escalating tensions given the current status of Sino-Japanese relations and that it is also the first time a Chinese vessel has been intercepted by Japan since 2022.

*China–Japan relations are fast deteriorating, as the two sides escalate assertive measures across political and strategic fronts.*

Former South Korean [President Yoon Suk Yeol is set to face a court ruling on February 19](#) over insurrection charges. Yoon was charged with insurrection on January 26, 2025, for imposing martial law in December 2024, the first such case since South Korea's democratisation in the 1980s. Under South Korea's criminal code, the charge of insurrection is punishable with one of three penalties: death, life imprisonment with hard labour, or life imprisonment without hard labour. The death penalty, however, is a rarity in South Korea, with no executions carried out since 1997. Last month, in January, Yoon was found guilty in another case for abuse of power, falsifying documents, and obstruction of justice, and received a five-year prison sentence. There are also other charges filed against him, including for treason, espionage, violation of campaign laws, and perjury.

*Thursday's verdict will serve as a key reflection of South Korea's democratic resilience. However, its reverberation will also be regional, given Yoon's hardline policy stance, characterised by defence prioritisation in close alignment with the US security framework and an assertive posture toward China.*

### Other Development

[China's tech shock threatens the U.S. AI monopoly and is 'just getting started'](#)

[New record! China laps up discounted Russian crude as India reduces purchases; threat of US strikes on Iran adds to jitters](#)

[Taiwan says budget delay risks 'rupture' in line of defence against China](#)

[Asia markets cautious ahead of US-Iran nuclear talks](#)

## West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

The U.S. and Iran held the [second round of their indirect nuclear dialogue](#) mediated by Oman in Geneva on February 17. Iran's Foreign Minister Syed Abbas Araghchi informed that the two sides had agreed on the "[guiding principles](#)" for a potential nuclear deal. J.D. Vance, Vice President of the U.S., stated that the Geneva talks went well. However, it was apparent that Iran would not accept and work through President Trump's red lines regarding [dismantling its nuclear program](#). Meanwhile, President Trump spoke about a potential "regime change" in Iran as the U.S. deployed its [second aircraft carrier](#) in the region.

*The U.S. is intensifying its military presence near Iran to heighten pressure on Tehran during nuclear talks, while signalling readiness to resort to force if diplomacy fails.*

President Trump met Israeli [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) at the White House on February 11. Major issues discussed in the meeting included the nuclear dialogue with Iran, the Gaza peace plan, and regional developments. PM Netanyahu stressed Israel's security needs, asserting that Iran's uranium [enrichment capabilities must be dismantled](#).

*Since Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and has the right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, it is unlikely to accept the U.S.-Israeli proposal to dismantle its uranium enrichment capabilities.*

A Lebanese government decision to grant the country's army four months to [disarm the militant group Hezbollah nationwide](#) was rejected by Hezbollah's leadership. Hezbollah's leader Sheikh Naim Qassem rejected Beirut's measures as "serving the goals of Israeli aggression".

*Israel's top security priority is the disarmament of Iran-backed Hezbollah, as the group's weapons outside Lebanese state control pose a direct military threat.*

### Other Developments

[Israeli cabinet approves West Bank land registration, Palestinians condemn 'de-facto annexation'](#)

[Iran temporarily closes Strait of Hormuz to hold military drill: media](#)

[Syrian army takes over al-Shaddadi base after US withdrawal](#)

## Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [February 11](#), Germany hosted the Z5+1 meeting in Berlin, bringing together the Foreign Ministers of the five Central Asian states and Germany as part of its ongoing “Strategic Regional Partnership” initiative launched in 2023. Building on earlier summits in Berlin and Astana, the meeting emphasised regional cooperation as a complement to bilateral ties, establishing a stable ministerial format to advance project lists, regulatory frameworks, and financial conditions. [Kazakh Foreign Minister Yermek Kosherbayev highlighted](#) Central Asia as a “new point of growth for the global economy” and described the “Central Asia–Germany” format as a strategic platform for addressing common challenges and implementing projects that benefit the entire region. Germany committed €2.7 million to support coordination for the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, focusing on data-sharing, planning discipline, and cross-border management standards where such initiatives often face obstacles.

*With multiple “C5+1” formats now involving the U.S., EU, China, and now Germany, Central Asian states have gained new bargaining power and strategic options that were largely absent just a few years ago, compelling external partners to compete while driving greater regional coordination.*

On [February 16](#), Kazakhstan convened an extraordinary meeting of the Regional Contact Group of Special Representatives of Central Asian countries on Afghanistan, with delegations from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in attendance. The agenda focused on trade and economic cooperation with Afghanistan, including joint projects, investment protection, transit tariff policy, and the development of transport corridors through Afghan territory. The Special Representative of the President of Kazakhstan for Afghanistan, Erkin Tukumov said the meeting was organised to have a constructive exchange of views and in identifying practical solutions to pressing issues of cooperation with Afghanistan.

*Central Asian nations have demonstrated that their main concern is for Afghanistan to act as a reliable economic partner as a key southern neighbour.*

### Other Developments

[Central Asia and Azerbaijan on Board as the Gaza Peace Effort Gets Underway](#)

[Kazakhstan and Tajikistan Advance Strategic Partnership After Foreign Minister's Visit](#)

[Kazakh FM Reaffirms Support for UN, Outlines Constitutional Reform at Almaty Meeting](#)

## Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

The Indian Navy is [hosting](#) three major international engagements in quick succession: Exercise MILAN 2026, the International Fleet Review (IFR) 2026, and the Ninth IONS Conclave of Navy Chiefs. The 2026 edition of the MILAN naval exercises is projected to be the largest in its history. Invitations have been extended to [over 135 countries](#), with 72 [having already confirmed their attendance](#). China, Pakistan and Turkey were not invited. At least 23 foreign warships are slated to participate, including significant contributions from major navies such as those of the United States, Russia and Japan. The 2026 edition marks the [most sophisticated iteration](#) of MILAN to date. The Harbour Phase, commencing on February 19, will showcase camaraderie, cooperation & collaboration at the opening ceremony and International City Parade, followed by intellectual exchanges through the International Maritime Seminar and Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEEs), laying the groundwork for the operational phase. The exercise culminates in a rigorous Sea Phase (February 21–25) in the Bay of Bengal.

*Exercise MILAN 2026 reflects the global reach and influence of the Indian Navy. It operationalises the MAHASAGAR doctrine by transforming multilateral drills into a live testing ground for its core tenets of mutual security, holistic growth, and collective maritime responsibility across regions.*

Rajnath Singh, India's Raksha Mantri, and his French counterpart, Catherine Vautrin, co-chaired the [6th India-France Annual Defence Dialogue](#) in Bengaluru on February 17, 2026, emphasising deeper collaboration in co-development, co-production, and industrial partnerships for niche technologies like advanced weaponry and aerospace systems. Key outcomes included announcements for reciprocal officer deployments between the Indian and French armies, renewal of the 10-year defence cooperation roadmap, and signing of an MoU between Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Safran for manufacturing of Hammer missiles in India. The dialogue also upgraded Exercise Shakti to an annual event and reaffirmed India's pivotal role as a 'First Responder' and 'Net Security Provider' for countries in the Indian Ocean Region.

*The 6th India-France Defence Dialogue advances co-production and co-development through local manufacturing and technology transfer, bolstering India's indigenous capabilities. Renewal of the 10-year roadmap and the new Joint Advanced Technology Development Group prioritise collaborative R&D in niche defence areas.*

Following the 19th UK-India Air Staff Talks in New Delhi, the UK and India [agreed to enhance military training](#) ties by deploying three Indian Air Force Qualified Flying Instructors (QFIs) to RAF Valley – the Royal Air Force's fast jet pilot training base – for an initial two-year term, marking the first such instance of Indian instructors training British pilots there. This milestone builds on the January 2026 placement of an IAF officer at RAF College Cranwell, completing Indian instructor presence across all three UK military academies (with the Navy at Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth since May 2024 and the Army at Royal Military

Academy Sandhurst since May 2025). The pact, co-chaired by AVM SK Taliyan (IAF) and AVM Ian Townsend (RAF), advances UK-India Vision 2035 through enhanced interoperability, joint exercises like the 2025 carrier strike group drill, and shared aircrew expertise on platforms such as the BAE Hawk T2.

*This development signals a maturing UK-India strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific, enhancing interoperability amid shared concerns over regional security challenges. By embedding IAF instructors across all three RAF academies, it fosters mutual skills exchange and trust, potentially paving the way for joint operations and technology sharing.*

### **Other Developments**

[Indian Navy along with Japan and Indonesia, conducted a trilateral exercise in the Andaman Sea](#)

[Narendra Modi Emmanuel Macron inaugurated final assembly line of the Airbus H-125 Light Utility Helicopter](#)

[Indian Navy inaugurated the MILAN Village as part of MILAN 2026](#)

[Indian Navy has assumed command of Combined Task Force \(CTF\) 154](#)

[The Indian Air Force \(IAF\) conducted an in-situ exercise with the Royal Thai Air Force \(RTAF\) in the Indian Ocean Region](#)

[US forces boarded another tanker with Venezuelan oil in the Indian Ocean Region](#)



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