

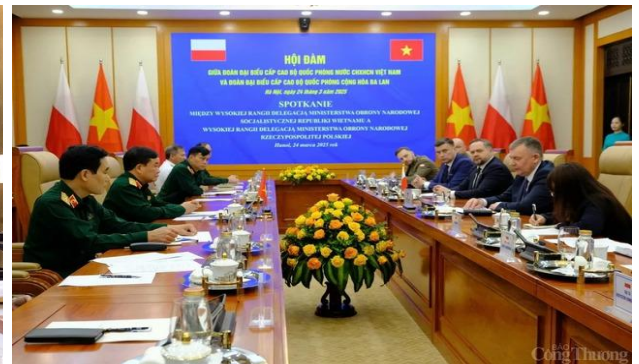


Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives March 26, 2025



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Delhi Policy Group

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

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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: *Pakistan Prime Minister Shebaz Sharif held a meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh on March 20, 2025. Source: [X/@CMShehbaz](#)*

Southeast Asia: *Deputy Minister of National Defense of Vietnam Hoang Xuan Chien holds talks with his Polish counterpart Pawel Bejda, Ha Noi, March 24, 2025. Source: [Government News](#)*

East Asia: *Foreign Ministers of the People's Republic of China (China), Japan and Republic of Korea (South Korea) at the 11th China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Peoples Republic of China](#)*

Indian Ocean Region: *The Indian Navy and the French Navy conducted the 23rd edition of the Varuna Exercise from March 19 to 22, 2025. Source: [PIB](#)*

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Contents

South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh 1

Southeast Asia

Divya Rai..... 2

East Asia

Arshiya Chaturvedi 4

West Asia

Sanket Joshi..... 6

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 7

Indian Ocean Region

Divya Rai..... 9

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Protests erupted across Balochistan on March 21, following the arrest of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leader Bebarg Baloch, and his relatives. Three people died and thirteen were injured during a [police operation](#) targeting a protest in Quetta organised by BYC head Dr Mahrang Baloch. A subsequent protest, involving family members of the missing persons, sought to identify bodies at the Civil Hospital in Quetta, and managed to take away a number of corpses from the [morgue](#). While much of Balochistan remained shut down due to protests, demonstrations continued in other Pakistani cities.

From March 19-22, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif [visited Saudi Arabia](#). He was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir, and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. A meeting between Prime Minister Sharif and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during the visit addressed the expansion of collaboration across economic, trade, investment, energy, and defense sectors. A deeper economic partnership between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia has been agreed upon, encompassing structured interactions and the prompt implementation of collaborative projects. Earlier this week, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia declared that a \$1.2 billion [oil facility](#) would be made available to Pakistan for a twelve-month period concluding in February 2026.

The United States has [rescinded the rewards offered for the capture](#) of three high-ranking Taliban members, including Sirajuddin Haqqani, the acting interior minister and head of the Haqqani Network, along with Abdul Aziz Haqqani and Yahya Haqqani. On March 20, a U.S. delegation, which included Special Envoy for Prisoner Affairs and former Afghan reconciliation envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, went to Kabul to discuss prisoner releases with Amir Khan Muttaqi, an acting Foreign Minister of the Taliban. Subsequently, George Glezmann, an American tourist abducted in Afghanistan in December 2022, [was released](#).

Other Developments

[UNODC: Opium prices in Afghanistan near historic peaks, mostly benefiting large-scale traffickers](#)

[Bangladesh High Commission hosts meeting with Indian investors in Delhi](#)

[Sri Lankan Election Commission sets local elections on May 6](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Divya Rai

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) [welcomes](#) the second U.S. Typhon Mid-Range Capability (MRC) missile system being deployed to the country. AFP spokesperson Colonel Francel Margareth Padilla stated, "This is a welcome development for the AFP. We can say that the more, the merrier", emphasising that additional assets would enhance personnel training opportunities. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command is preparing to send this new battery following the deployment of the first Typhon system in April 2024, which has remained in the Philippines and participated in joint exercises such as Salaknib and Balikatan. The Typhon system, capable of firing Tomahawk and SM-6 missiles, can target land and aerial threats, significantly increasing the Philippines' defence capabilities amid rising tensions with China over territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Vietnam's Deputy Minister of National Defense Hoang Xuan Chien [held talks](#) with Polish counterpart Pawel Bejda in Hanoi on March 24, 2025. During their discussions, they focused on enhancing defence cooperation between Vietnam and Poland, emphasising areas such as training, UN peacekeeping operations, and the defence industry. Chien reiterated Vietnam's commitment to its foreign policy principles of independence, self-reliance, and multilateral cooperation. He highlighted the importance of resolving disputes peacefully in accordance with international law, particularly regarding the East Sea (South China Sea) issue. Both sides agreed on the necessity for all parties involved to adhere to international norms, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Bejda expressed Poland's intent to strengthen bilateral ties, viewing Vietnam as a key partner in Southeast Asia.

U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth [is set to visit](#) the Philippines, marking the first stop on his inaugural trip to the Indo-Pacific this week. He will be in Manila from March 28 to 29, where he plans to meet with his Philippine counterpart, Gilberto Teodoro, and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. The discussions are anticipated to focus on China's increasingly assertive actions in the South China Sea and the Trump administration's commitment to providing "more significant support" to Philippine security forces. Following his two-day stay in the Philippines, Hegseth will travel to Japan to participate in the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima and engage with Japanese officials.

Other Developments

[14th meeting of ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus \(ADMM-Plus\) Experts Working Group on Counter-Terrorism was held in New Delhi](#)

[Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong paid a visit to Vietnam, from 25 to 26 March 2025](#)

East Asia

by

Arshiya Chaturvedi

On March 22, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya, and South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul attended the [11th China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting](#) in Tokyo. Wang Yi highlighted the long-standing cooperation among the three nations, emphasising its role in regional stability, economic integration, and mutual understanding. He proposed enhancing trilateral cooperation under the principle of "1+1+1>3" for mutual benefit, regional progress, and global impact.

Wang Yi stressed the importance of greater collaboration between the three in areas such as economic trade, scientific innovation, people-to-people exchanges, and sustainable development, urging for efforts to resume the China-Japan-ROK free trade agreement negotiations, establish new digital and innovation dialogue mechanisms, and enhance cultural and environmental cooperation. The foreign ministers agreeing on the need for deeper exchange, mutual trust and wider collaboration across diverse sectors between the three states, reaffirmed efforts for continuity and future-oriented cooperation under the "Trilateral Cooperation Vision for the Next Decade". They also committed to the preparation for the 10th China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Summit Meeting.

South Korea's constitutional court has [overturned the impeachment of Prime Minister](#) Han Ducksoo, reinstating him as acting president. He was suspended after clashing with the opposition-led parliament over judicial appointments and special counsel bills against the impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, for imposing martial law. The court ruled seven to one against his impeachment, citing insufficient grounds and procedural invalidity.

On March 22, 2025, the [Sixth Japan-China High-Level Economic Dialogue](#) took place in Tokyo, marking the first such meeting in six years. Chaired by Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Iwaya Takeshi, and China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, the dialogue highlighted the importance of strengthening economic cooperation under the "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests." Discussions covered macroeconomic policies, green economy collaboration, and initiatives such as the Japan-China Energy Conservation and Environment Forum and the GREEN×EXPO 2027. Both sides reaffirmed commitments to medical, healthcare, and third-country market cooperation and emphasised resuming and expanding imports of Japanese agricultural and aquatic products, including through IAEA frameworks. Japan

raised concerns about business environment issues, including China's "anti-espionage law," export restrictions, and intellectual property protection, urging transparency and fairness. Discussions also included topics of regional cooperation such as climate change, plastic pollution, and support for APEC and WTO reforms.

Other Developments

[North Korea tests new missiles, warns action against US-South Korea drills](#)

[Top Russian official meets North Korean leader in latest Pyongyang visit](#)

[Taiwan Coast Guard seizes suspected Chinese vessel in restricted waters off northwest Taiwan](#)

[Chinese Premier Li Qiang Meets with U.S. Senator Steve Daines and His Delegation](#)

[Wang Yi Meets with Secretary General of Japan's National Security Secretariat Masataka Okano](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff informed on March 23 that President Trump's outreach to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei regarding a possible nuclear deal is intended to [avoid a direct military confrontation](#) between the two countries. Abbas Araghchi, the Iranian Foreign Minister, dismissed the prospect of [direct talks with the US](#) as long as President Trump continues his "maximum pressure" sanctions policy. However, he indicated Tehran's willingness to engage in indirect nuclear negotiations with the US.

The Israeli military continued its [airstrikes in Gaza, targeting Hamas](#) leadership. Ismail Barhoum and Issam Da'alis, two key members of Hamas's Political Bureau, were eliminated over the past two weeks. Meanwhile, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz warned Hamas that if they fail to release the hostages, the IDF will permanently [occupy parts of Gaza for its security](#). Israel also conducted airstrikes in South Lebanon in response to rocket attacks from Lebanese territory, threatening the [fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah](#).

Amidst Syria's growing engagement with the European Union and the US, the Trump administration has reportedly handed Damascus a list of conditions to be fulfilled for ["partial sanctions relief"](#). Major issues discussed by the US included the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons stores, cooperation on counter-terrorism, appointing a Syrian liaison to locate missing US journalist Austin Tice, and not allowing foreign fighters to hold key positions in Syria's new government.

Other Developments

[Iran says Syria's interim authorities must ensure safety of civilians in Latakia and Tartus](#)

[India hosts Turkish NSA for Intel chiefs' meet amid its growing presence in West Asia and Africa](#)

[Turkey, US want to lift defence industry restrictions after talks, Turkish source says](#)

[US slaps Iran-related sanctions on oil tankers, China 'teapot' refinery](#)

[US allies in the Middle East are racing to get new laser defence weapons](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On [March 24](#), Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyyed Abbas Araghchi travelled to Yerevan within the framework of the Islamic Republic of Iran's continuous consultations with its neighbors regarding bilateral relations and regional developments, at the invitation of his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan. [In an Instagram post detailing his visit](#), The Iranian foreign minister specifically highlighted that "the South Caucasus holds particular importance in our country's foreign policy," reaffirming Iran's commitment to active engagement in the region.

On [March 20](#), Turkish Energy Minister Alparслан Bayraktar held talks with the chairman of the People's Council of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov, and Turkmenistan President Serdar Berdimuhammedov, in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. The minister delivered a speech at the "Year of Peace and Security: International Conference on Regional Economic [Cooperation](#) in Ensuring Sustainable Development." He stated "Türkiye wants to establish partnerships with Turkmenistan on the development of oil and natural gas fields both on the land of Turkmenistan and in the Caspian Sea" and further stressed that following the arrival of Turkmen gas to Türkiye in early March, relations between the two countries in the field of energy are deepening. "Thus, for the first time, we are supplying natural gas through a pipeline from a country that does not border us," he said.

On [March 25](#), under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary of the Security Council of the Republic of Tajikistan Sh.J.Faizullozoda, the meeting of representatives of the customer-coordinator and state national customers of the Policy, as well as interested ministries and departments of the CSTO member states and the Secretariat of the Organization on the implementation of the first phase of the Special Interstate Policy for strengthening sections of the Tajik-Afghan Border was held. The meeting participants have discussed the algorithm of further work and agreed on the Plan of joint activities for the implementation of the first stage of the Special Interstate Policy. The CSTO Deputy Secretary General Valery Semerikov took part in the meeting.

Other Development

[Kyrgyzstan Ratifies border deal with Tajikistan, ending years of dispute](#)

[Progress of talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan spurs hope](#)

[Opinion: Are Kazakhstan and the U.S. reaching common ground on sovereignty and mutual engagement?](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

The bilateral naval exercise Varuna 2025 between the Indian Navy and the French Navy [was conducted](#) from March 19 to 22, 2025. This edition featured a range of complex drills across multiple domains, aimed at enhancing tactical and operational proficiency. This year's exercise featured a range of advanced drills, including advanced air defence exercises with the Rafale-M and MiG-29K aircraft, anti-submarine warfare operations involving Indian submarines and frigates, and coordinated surface combat manoeuvres. The exercise also emphasised logistical interoperability through replenishment-at-sea drills. This was the 23rd edition of the exercise, which began in 1983 and was christened 'Varuna' in 2001.

During his visit to Mauritius in March 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi [announced](#) the Indian Navy's maiden initiatives of Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) Sagar and Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement (AIKEYME), aimed at strengthening India's role as the 'Preferred Security Partner' and 'First Responder' in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). IOS Sagar focuses on continued cooperation with IOR nations and involves deploying the Indian Naval ship INS Sunayna to the Southwest IOR. The ship will be manned by a mixed crew from India and nine friendly nations, including Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and South Africa. The ship will conduct port calls and joint surveillance of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in April 2025, while personnel from these countries will receive training at Indian naval institutions. On the other hand, AIKEYME is a multilateral maritime engagement exercise to enhance interoperability with the navies/maritime agencies of African countries. The exercise will be co-hosted by the Indian Navy and Tanzania Peoples' Defence Force (TPDF), will be held off Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, and is planned to be inaugurated by Hon'ble RM Shri Rajnath Singh in mid-April 2025. Spanning six days, the exercise includes participation from Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and South Africa in addition to the co-hosts. It will focus on enhancing interoperability through activities like piracy countermeasures, seamanship drills, search-and-rescue operations, and VBSS exercises.

Other Developments

[Indian Navy executes a successful medical evacuation \(MEDEVAC\) from MV Heilan Star, located approximately 230 nautical miles west of Goa](#)

[Goa Shipyard Limited \(GSL\) launched 'Tavasya', the second frigate, on March 22, 2025](#)



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