



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

- **Qatar's Amir visits India**
- **Dr S. Jaishankar visits Oman to attend the 8th Indian Ocean Conference**
- **Donald Trump's Gaza Plan**
- **IDF's partial withdrawal from Lebanon**
- **Marco Rubio's visit to Israel**
- **Riyadh hosts US and Russia peace talks on Ukraine**
- **Türkiye's President Erdoğan visits Pakistan**
- **Russia and Syria to hold high-level meetings**
- **Jordan's King Abdullah II visits USA**
- **Türkiye and Qatar sign new defence cooperation agreements**

Qatar's Amir visits India

At the invitation of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of Qatar, paid a State visit to India on 17-18 February 2025. Both countries elevated their relationship to a strategic level by signing the 'Agreement on the Establishment of Bilateral Strategic Partnership.' Other key signed MoUs included financial and economic collaboration, a revised agreement to avoid double taxation, youth and sports, documents and archives, investment, and business. Qatar also committed to investing US\$ 10 billion in India. Both nations agreed to enhance people-to-people ties, labour mobility and education cooperation. They condemned terrorism and discussed cybersecurity collaboration. The visit reaffirmed India-Qatar ties, with both sides expressing optimism about expanding economic and strategic partnerships for mutual benefit.

Dr S. Jaishankar visits Oman to attend the 8th Indian Ocean Conference

Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar visited Oman on 16 February 2025 to participate in the 8th Indian Ocean Conference. During the inaugural session, he delivered the keynote address, emphasising India's commitment to regional stability and cooperation in the Indian Ocean. Jaishankar held a bilateral meeting with Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, where both leaders reviewed India-Oman relations and discussed avenues for enhanced collaboration. To mark 70 years of diplomatic ties, Dr. Jaishankar, alongside his Omani counterpart, unveiled a commemorative logo. He also launched the book *Mandvi to Muscat*, highlighting the

historical Indian diaspora in Oman. On the sidelines, EAM engaged with Foreign Ministers from Brunei, Bangladesh, Iran, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and Nepal, reinforcing India's regional partnerships. The visit reaffirmed India-Oman relations and paved the way for stronger regional cooperation.

Donald Trump's Gaza Plan

US President Donald Trump, during his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on 4 February 2025, announced that the US would "take over" and "own" Gaza, envisioning long-term American control after relocating Palestinians elsewhere, particularly Egypt and Jordan. He said that the plan would allow the US to clear unexploded bombs and re-develop the area into a thriving economic hub or "Riviera of the Middle East". The White House later dialled back aspects of the proposal, assuring the relocation as temporary. On 21 February 2025, at the invitation of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Jordan's King Abdullah II, Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi and the UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Kuwait's Emir Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al-Sabah and Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa gathered in Riyadh to discuss efforts to support the Palestinian cause and developments in the Gaza Strip.

IDF's partial withdrawal from Lebanon

Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has preserved its troop presence in five locations in southern Lebanon, raising fears of a long-term occupation. Under the 27 November 2024 ceasefire deal between Israel and

Hezbollah, both sides were to withdraw by 26 January, later extended to 18 February. However, Israeli forces remain in several villages. Residents returning to residencies found widespread destruction of homes, farmland and businesses. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said Beirut is pressing the US and France to ensure Israel's withdrawal, emphasising diplomacy to avoid war. The United Nations and UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) called the delay a "violation" of a 2006 Security Council resolution.

Marco Rubio's visit to Israel

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio began his first tour to the region with a visit to Israel, meeting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on 17 February 2025 to discuss President Donald Trump's proposal to relocate Palestinians from Gaza. Rubio defended Trump's bold approach, insisting that change is needed for regional stability. Rubio stressed that Hamas must be eradicated for lasting peace. He stated that, "Hamas cannot continue as a military or government force. And frankly, as long as it stands as a force that can govern or as a force that can administer, or as a force that can threaten by use of violence, peace becomes impossible." Netanyahu, calling Trump Israel's "greatest friend" in the White House, signalled support for the plan and warned of severe consequences if Hamas resists the ceasefire terms. The leaders also discussed Lebanon's ceasefire and Syria's security situation.

Riyadh hosts US and Russia peace talks on Ukraine

In a significant diplomatic shift, the US and Russia agreed to work toward ending the war in Ukraine and improving bilateral ties

following high-level talks in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 18 February 2025. Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov discussed restoring embassy staffing, supporting Ukraine peace negotiations, and enhancing economic cooperation. The talks, attended by senior officials from both nations, marked a departure from Washington's previous stance under the Biden administration. Ukraine was notably absent, prompting criticism from President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European allies. US President Donald Trump defended the exclusion, suggesting Ukraine should have resolved the war earlier. The discussions set the stage for a potential summit between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, though no date was confirmed. Meanwhile, Russian drone attacks on Ukraine continued, highlighting ongoing hostilities despite diplomatic efforts. European leaders urged inclusive negotiations to ensure Ukraine's security.

Türkiye's President Erdoğan visits Pakistan

During his visit to Islamabad on 12-13 February 2025, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reaffirmed Türkiye's strong ties with Pakistan. Meeting with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, the leaders attended the seventh High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, resulting in 24 agreements spanning defence, trade, energy, and education. The deals included military collaboration, economic cooperation, and digital trade facilitation. Erdoğan highlighted historical ties and praised Pakistan's support during Türkiye's struggles. Both leaders pledged to enhance bilateral trade to US\$ 5 billion and expand joint defence projects. The visit marked a

renewed commitment to strengthening strategic and diplomatic cooperation between the two nations. Erdogan also visited Malaysia and Indonesia prior to this visit.

Russia and Syria to hold high-level meetings

Russia and Syria are set to hold high-level meetings in the last week of February 2025, as announced by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov while addressing the State Duma on 19 February 2025. The discussions follow a recent visit to Damascus by a Russian inter-agency delegation led by Mikhail Bogdanov, Russia's special presidential envoy for the Middle East and Africa. Lavrov underscored Russia's commitment to Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, warning against external interventions that could destabilise the country further. He also criticised the illegal US presence in Syria and the policies of the Biden administration. Additionally, on 11 February, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Syrian interim President Ahmed Al Sharaa discussed revising past agreements between Moscow and Damascus. According to TASS, Al Sharaa reaffirmed Syria's strategic relations with Russia, emphasising the need for cooperation in the interests of national security and stability.

Jordan's King Abdullah II visits USA

On 11 February 2025, King Abdullah II of Jordan held a meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House. King Abdullah congratulated Trump on his early achievements and appreciated his role in securing the release of hostages from Gaza and a temporary pause in hostilities. The

leaders discussed the Gaza situation, with Trump insisting Hamas release all hostages by Saturday and seeking Jordan's help in conveying the urgency to regional leaders. Trump also emphasised rebuilding Gaza post-conflict to ensure security and dignity for its people, free from Hamas's rule. After the White House meeting, King Abdullah met with bipartisan lawmakers on Capitol Hill. On social media, he reaffirmed Jordan's firm stance against the displacement of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, stressing that rebuilding Gaza and addressing its humanitarian crisis should be the top priority for all parties involved.

Türkiye and Qatar sign new defence cooperation agreements

On 4 February 2025, Türkiye and Qatar signed new agreements to strengthen their defence partnership. Turkish National Defence Minister Yaşar Güler met with Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Ali Al Thani in Doha to discuss bilateral and regional security issues. According to Türkiye's Defence Ministry, the two sides emphasised deepening defence cooperation. Following the talks, Turkish defence firms ASFAT (Military Factory and Shipyard Management Inc.) and MKE (Mechanical and Chemical Industry Corporation) signed comprehensive cooperation protocols with Qatar's Barzan Holding, affiliated with the Qatari Defence Ministry. These agreements aim to boost joint investments, defence collaboration and facilitate cooperation with third countries. The deal underscores the growing strategic partnership between Türkiye and Qatar in defence and security affairs.