



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

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Joint US-Israel strike on Iran

Following three rounds of negotiations over the nuclear issue, the US launched “Operation Epic Fury” as part of a joint military operation with Israel codenamed “Operation Rising Lion” to target the highest levels of Iranian leadership in Tehran on 28 February 2026. During the strikes in Tehran, Iran’s Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed along with Senior advisor to the Supreme Leader and Secretary of Iranian Security Council Forces, Ali Shamkhani; head of Supreme Leader’s Military Bureau Mohammad Shirazi; Chief of Staff of Iran’s armed forces, Abdorahim Mousavi; Defence Minister Aziz Nazirzadeh; Commander-in-Chief of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Mohammad Pakpour. On the same day, the US and Israel reportedly struck a school in Minab in southern Iran, killing at least 153 people, including children. Iran, in response to the US and Israel’s strikes, launched Operation True Promise IV, launching ballistic missiles towards Tel Aviv, Haifa, Dubai, airports in Abu Dhabi and Kuwait City and US military bases in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The attack followed the third round of US-Iran indirect talks held in Geneva on 26 February 2026, which failed to yield a breakthrough, but both sides agreed to continue talks.

Inaugural meeting of Board of Peace

On 19 February 2026, US President Donald Trump convened the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace in Washington DC, presenting it as a new mechanism to

oversee Gaza’s ceasefire, reconstruction and long-term governance. Chaired by Trump, the board secured pledges exceeding US\$7 billion from member states, with the US committing an additional US\$10 billion. Representatives from over 40 countries attended, though some traditional US allies expressed concern that its sweeping mandate could sideline the UN. Namgya Khampa, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Indian Embassy in the US, represented India as an observer.

Government reshuffle in Kuwait

On 1 February 2026, Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah announced a limited cabinet reshuffle affecting seven portfolios as Kuwait marked National Day and Liberation Day. An Amiri decree appointed Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah as Foreign Minister, Yaacoub Al Refaie as Finance Minister, Osama Boodai as Commerce and Industry Minister, Abdullah Bouftain as Information and Culture Minister, Abdulaziz Al Marzouq as Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Reem Al Fulajj as Minister of State for Development and Sustainability, and Tariq Al Jalahma as Minister of State for Youth and Sports. The government, led by Ahmad Abdullah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, was formed in May 2024 after the Emir dissolved the National Assembly amid a political deadlock. Moreover, on 23 February 2026, Kuwait introduced new amendments to a 2015 law on national military service, mandating compulsory service for 18 year old males in security forces and extending the registration deadline to 180 days.

Erdoğan visits Saudi Arabia and Egypt

Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Saudi Arabia and Egypt on 3–4 February 2026. The visits resulted in agreements on energy, trade and defence cooperation. In Riyadh, Saudi authorities committed to a US\$ 2 billion investment in renewable energy projects in Türkiye, coupled with an agreement to supply electricity at favourable rates. The deal is expected to bolster Türkiye's green energy transition while supporting Saudi Arabia's economic diversification objectives under Vision 2030. In Cairo, both governments agreed to raise bilateral trade to US\$ 15 billion and signed a military framework agreement to formalise defence collaboration. Prospects for expanded defence ties were further reinforced by the recent opening of a representative office in Egypt by Aselsan, Türkiye's leading defence electronic company, signalling intent to deepen industrial and security cooperation between the two countries.

CENTCOM strikes ISIS targets in Syria

United States Central Command stated that the US forces conducted 10 air strikes against more than 30 ISIS targets in Syria between 3 and 12 February 2026, targeting infrastructure and weapons storage sites. The strikes formed part of Operation Hawkeye Strike, launched after a 13 December ambush in Palmyra that killed two US service members and an American interpreter. CENTCOM stated that more than 50 ISIS militants had been killed or captured and over 100 infrastructure targets had been hit in two months of operations.

Meanwhile, four Syrian internal security personnel were killed in an ISIS attack on a checkpoint west of Raqqa, according to Syria's Interior Ministry on 23 February 2026. Security forces neutralised one attacker and continued combing operations, amid warnings that ISIS sleeper cells remained active in northeastern Syria.

Gulf states back Kuwait over Iraq maritime submission at the UN

The UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Jordan expressed solidarity with Kuwait after Iraq submitted maritime coordinates and a map to the UN that Kuwait said infringed on its sovereignty. Kuwait stated that the submission included Fisht Al Eid and Fisht Al Eij islets, which it maintained had never been disputed, and summoned Iraq's Chargé d'affaires to lodge a formal protest. Gulf states issued separate statements rejecting Baghdad's move and calling for dialogue in line with the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Iraq defended the coordinates as precise and consistent with international law, describing the determination of its maritime zones as a sovereign matter. The dispute centred on the Khor Abdullah waterway and reflected long-standing tensions over maritime boundaries since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits Israel

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his second visit to Israel on 25–26 February 2026, addressed the Knesset, highlighting deep civilisational ties and reaffirming India's zero tolerance policy

for terrorism. He expressed condolences for the victims of the 7 October 2023 attacks, announced support for Israel, and endorsed Donald Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan. India also called for enhanced cooperation through multilateral initiatives such as I2U2 and IMEC. India and Israel signed 16 agreements and MoUs covering defence, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, semiconductors, quantum computing, space and agriculture. Additionally, 11 major announcements were also made. Both countries agreed to increase joint AI research funding from US\$1 million to US\$1.5 million each and agreed to establish an India-Israel Centre of Excellence in Cybersecurity in India, alongside a multi-year strategic cyber cooperation programme. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to concluding an FTA and exploring linking India's UPI with Israel's fast payment system. Israel will also receive up to 50,000 additional Indian workers over five years.

India's MoS for Defence visits Riyadh

India's Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth led a high-level Indian delegation to the World Defence Show (WDS) 2026 held in Riyadh on 8–9 February 2026. The WDS is a biennial international defence exhibition hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. India inaugurated its first-ever national pavilion and advanced bilateral defence cooperation with Saudi Arabia. The India Pavilion showcased indigenous capabilities of Defence Public Sector Undertakings and private firms, featuring tanks, artillery systems, missiles, ammunition and radars.

During the visit, Seth held talks with senior Saudi officials, including representatives of General Authority of Military Industries and Saudi Arabian Military Industries, focusing on strategic collaboration, co-development of technologies and supply chain integration. He invited Saudi delegations to visit India's research and manufacturing facilities to explore joint development opportunities. The visit reinforced India's 'Make in India, Make for the World' vision and sought to deepen defence industrial partnerships within the global defence ecosystem.

India's NSA visits Saudi Arabia

India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval met his Saudi counterpart Musaed bin Mohammed Al Aiban in Riyadh on 3 February 2026 to discuss bilateral security cooperation and review regional developments. The discussions focused on the situation in Iran and Gaza, as well as the evolving role of regional actors amid shifting geopolitical alignments. Both sides examined ways to deepen collaboration on counter-terrorism, including tackling extremism, terror financing, misuse of technology and the nexus between organised crime and terrorism. The visit followed the third meeting of the India-Saudi Security Working Group on 28 January 2026 under the Strategic Partnership Council, where both countries condemned terrorism in all its forms, including recent attacks in Pahalgam and near Delhi's Red Fort. The engagement is seen as reinforcing the expanding strategic partnership between India and Saudi Arabia amid evolving regional security dynamics.