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WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

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Prime Minister Modi visits Jordan and Oman

As part of a three-nation visit to Jordan, Ethiopia and Oman, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Amman on 15-16 December. It was his first full bilateral visit to Jordan, coinciding with 75 years of diplomatic ties. He held talks with King Abdullah II to deepen cooperation in trade, defence, energy, technology, fertilisers, education and counterterrorism. Both sides aim at increasing bilateral trade to US\$5 billion in next five years. Five key agreements were signed, covering renewable energy, water resource management, digital solutions, cultural exchange and a twinning arrangement between Petra and Ellora.

Modi visited Oman on 17-18 December 2025, marking 70 years of diplomatic ties. He held talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on strengthening a multifaceted strategic partnership. Key outcomes included the signing of the India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), MoUs on agriculture, higher education, maritime heritage, trade bodies' cooperation, adoption of a Joint Vision Document on Maritime Cooperation, and agreements on millet cultivation and agri-food innovation. Modi was conferred the Order of Oman, the Sultanate's highest civilian award.

Jaishankar visits UAE and Israel

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar visited the UAE on 13-15 December to co-chair the 16th Joint Commission Meeting and the 5th Strategic Dialogue, reviewing the full spectrum of bilateral ties, including trade, investment, energy, connectivity, defence, security, technology, health, education, culture and people-to-people relations. In meetings with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al

Nahyan, discussions covered regional and global developments, cooperation under the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and Global South partnerships. Jaishankar also met UAE Vice President and Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, National Security Adviser Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and Mubadala CEO Khaldoon Mubarak.

Jaishankar visited Israel on 16-17 December, meeting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Isaac Herzog, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar and Economy Minister Nir Barkat. Talks focused on strategic cooperation, regional issues, defence, technology, academic exchanges and advancing the India-Israel Free Trade Agreement to deepen economic and innovation ties.

Israel recognises Somaliland

Israel became the first country to formally recognise the self-declared Republic of Somaliland as an independent and sovereign state on 26 December 2025. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would pursue immediate cooperation with Somaliland in agriculture, health, technology and the economy, describing the decision as being "in the spirit of the Abraham Accords". A joint declaration of mutual recognition was signed by Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Gideon Saar and Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi. Somalia has accused Israel of committing an "act of aggression" aimed at encouraging fragmentation and possibly facilitating the forced relocation of Palestinians from Gaza. Arab, African and several European states rejected the move as a violation of the UN Charter and African Union principles, reaffirming Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The US declined to condemn Israel, accusing UNSC of double standards.

Israel, Greece, Cyprus trilateral summit

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides met in Jerusalem on 22 December 2025 for the 10th Trilateral Summit, reaffirming their strategic cooperation amid rising tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The three leaders delivered a pointed message aimed at Turkiye by pledging to deepen collaboration on security, counterterrorism, and maritime protection, including safeguarding critical infrastructure and sea lanes. They agreed to hold annual summits, strengthen the 3+1 framework with the US, and advance joint energy projects such as natural gas development, electricity interconnectors, and the Great Sea Interconnector. The summit also emphasised cooperation on emergency response, climate change, technology, and regional connectivity, including projects linked to the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), while reaffirming support for regional stability and expanded peace frameworks. The three states also signed a trilateral work plan for military cooperation for 2026 in Nicosia.

Benjamin Netanyahu visits USA

US President Donald Trump hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at his Mar-a-Lago resort on 29 December for talks focused on Gaza and broader regional challenges amid US pressure to advance the second phase of the ceasefire deal. While Trump publicly praised Netanyahu and downplayed differences, divisions remain over Israel's reluctance to move toward a political future for Palestinians and its insistence on Hamas's full disarmament before any troop withdrawal. Trump has reiterated strong warnings to Iran over missile rearmament, while Netanyahu is

reportedly seeking US backing for further strikes on Tehran.

CENTCOM launches Operation Hawkeye Strike against ISIS in Syria

Acting under the direction of the US Commander in Chief, US Central Command (CENTCOM) launched Operation Hawkeye Strike against ISIS targets in Syria following a 13 December attack on US and partner forces in Syria. The operation began on 19 December 2025 and involved extensive air and ground firepower, with CENTCOM forces striking more than 70 ISIS targets across multiple locations in central Syria. Fighter jets, attack helicopters and artillery were used, supported by the Jordanian Armed Forces, which participated with fighter aircraft. Over 100 precision-guided munitions targeted known ISIS infrastructure and weapons storage sites. CENTCOM stated that the operation aimed to prevent ISIS from inspiring or directing terrorist plots against the US and its partners. In the days following a 13 December attack on US and Syrian personnel, US and partner forces conducted ten separate operations in Syria and Iraq, resulting in the killing or detention of 23 ISIS operatives. CENTCOM reported that more than 80 counterterrorism operations had been carried out over the previous six months to neutralize threats to regional and US security.

Saudi Arabia–UAE tussle in Yemen

On 30 December 2025, Saudi Arabia said it was disappointed by actions taken by the UAE that allegedly pressured the Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces to operate near Saudi borders in Yemen's Hadhramout and Al Mahra governorates. In a statement issued by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riyadh warned that such steps threatened its national security,

undermined Yemen's stability, and violated the principles of the Arab Coalition. Saudi Arabia declared that any threat to its security constituted a red line and said it would take all necessary measures to counter such risks. It expressed hope that the UAE would act wisely to preserve bilateral relations and uphold Gulf unity. Riyadh reaffirmed that a comprehensive political solution in Yemen required the participation of all parties, including the STC. It also urged the UAE to comply with Yemen's request to withdraw its forces within 24 hours. The statement followed reports that unauthorised UAE-linked ships delivered weapons to Mukalla port, prompting a limited coalition airstrike by Saudi Arabia targeting foreign military support. The strikes followed the STC's takeover earlier in December 2025 of the oil-rich governorates of Hadhramaut and Al Mahra, moves Riyadh viewed as undermining Yemen's unity and threatening Saudi security interests. On 27 December 2025, Saudi Arabia publicly reaffirmed its support for Yemen's internationally recognised government and urged the STC to withdraw peacefully from contested areas. The STC condemned the bombardment as counterproductive and defended its advance as necessary to counter security threats.

Counterterror operation in Türkiye

On 29 December 2025, three Turkish police officers and six ISIS terrorists were killed in a prolonged gunfight during a counterterrorism operation in Yalova province in northwest Türkiye, the Interior Ministry of Türkiye said. The clash occurred when police raided a house overnight on suspicion that ISIS terrorists were hiding there, as part of nationwide operations launched after the detention of 115 suspected ISIS terrorists on 22

December 2025, for allegedly planning attacks during Christmas and New Year celebrations. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya stated that more than 100 addresses across 15 provinces were raided on 29 December, and that eight police officers and one additional security force member were wounded in the Yalova operation, which lasted nearly eight hours. The terrorists killed were Turkish citizens, while five women and six children were evacuated safely from the property.

46th GCC Summit takes place in Bahrain

The 46th Gulf Cooperation Council Summit was held in Bahrain on 3 December 2025. The final communiqué called for strengthening cooperation, cohesion and integration among member states while addressing regional and global challenges. GCC leaders reviewed progress on economic unity, security and defence coordination, and directed intensified implementation of joint visions, including customs union reforms, the common market, rail connectivity, and the establishment of a GCC Civil Aviation Authority. They endorsed initiatives on governance, anti-corruption, climate action, energy transition and artificial intelligence, while reaffirming support for stable global energy markets. On regional issues, the Council strongly backed the Palestinian cause, demanded a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, supported reconstruction and a two-state solution, and condemned Israeli actions. It reiterated support for the sovereignty of Gulf States, rejected Iran's claims over the islands in the Gulf claimed by the UAE, and reaffirmed Kuwait–Saudi rights over the Al Durra gas field. The GCC also renewed commitments on counterterrorism, regional stability, and diplomatic solutions across West Asia, Africa and Eurasia.