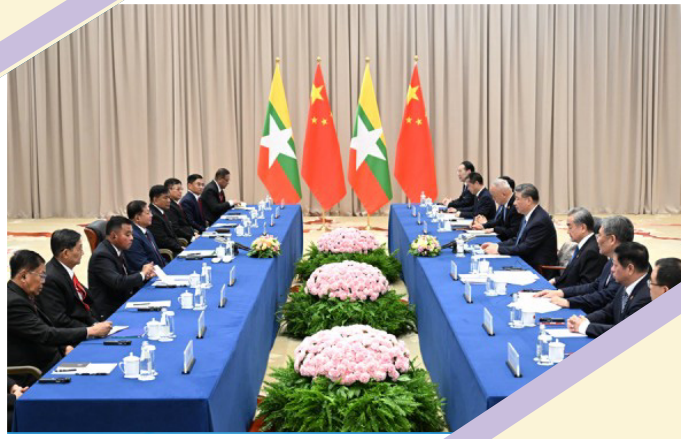


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Indo-Pacific Insights

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

supersonic and strategic cruise missiles, anti-aircraft missiles, and the firing of a 127mm naval gun. Analysts note the ship's advanced vertical launch systems and radar capabilities, with some suggesting possible Russian technological assistance.

April 30

Australia, Philippines, U.S. Conduct Maritime Cooperative Activity in Philippine EEZ

The armed forces of Australia, the Philippines, and the United States held a multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone on April 29, 2025. This joint exercise aimed to enhance interoperability and uphold a rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific, amid tensions over China's actions in the South China Sea. The activity underscores strengthened defense ties among the three nations, reflecting a collective commitment to regional stability and freedom of navigation.

May 01

U.S. Notifies Potential \$131M Maritime Surveillance Tech Sale to India

The U.S. announced a potential \$131 million sale of maritime surveillance technology to India,

April 28

North Korea Conducts First Test Firing of New Warship's Weapons System



On April 28, 2025, North Korea conducted the inaugural weapons test of its newly unveiled 5,000-ton Choe Hyon-class destroyer. Overseen by leader Kim Jong Un, the trials included launches of

enhancing its naval capabilities in the Indo-Pacific. This move strengthens the U.S.-India strategic partnership, focusing on maritime security and countering regional threats, particularly in the Indian Ocean. The sale aligns with India's growing role in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific, amid concerns over China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and beyond. The deal awaits Congressional approval.

May 03

U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander Warns of China's Advantage in Taiwan Conflict

Admiral Samuel Paparo, head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, warned that China is outpacing the U.S. in weapons production, threatening America's ability to counter a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Speaking to the Wall Street Journal, Paparo highlighted the high risk of conflict, with Beijing considering a blockade or amphibious invasion. This underscores escalating tensions in the Taiwan Strait, a key flashpoint in Indo-Pacific geopolitics, prompting calls for enhanced U.S. military readiness.

May 04

Australia's Labor Government Eyes Unity and Trade Strategy After Re-election Victory

Following a decisive re-election win, Australia's Labor government, led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, pledged to prioritise managing the fallout of the U.S.-China trade war. Treasurer Jim Chalmers called it a "dark shadow" over global economic stability. Albanese promised disciplined governance and national unity after securing a likely expanded majority in parliament. Voter concerns over U.S. tariffs, cost-of-living pressures, and conservative policies helped Labor gain ground. Opposition leader Peter Dutton lost his seat amid comparisons to Trump-era austerity. Australia now aims to shield its economy from international trade volatility while pursuing inclusive domestic policy.

Canada Explores Indo-Pacific Trade Opportunities with Bangladesh

Canada's Indo-Pacific trade representative visited Bangladesh to discuss investment opportunities,

emphasizing economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The visit highlights Canada's strategy to deepen trade ties with South Asian nations, diversifying economic partnerships amid U.S.-China tensions. Bangladesh's strategic location and growing economy make it a key player in regional trade dynamics, aligning with Canada's broader Indo-Pacific engagement goals.

May 05

Malaysia Seeks Tariff Relief Amid U.S. Trade Pressure



Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim told parliament that the U.S. has agreed to further negotiations over planned 24% tariffs on Malaysian exports, offering hope for a reduction. While most tariffs are suspended until July, Anwar warned that the global trade war could lower Malaysia's growth below the 4.5–5.5% target. Malaysia is also seeking new trade opportunities with China and the EU.

May 06

U.S. Sanctions Myanmar Warlord for Cyber Scams and Human Trafficking

The U.S. imposed sanctions on Myanmar warlord Saw Chit Thu, his two sons, and their militia for facilitating cyber scams, human trafficking, and smuggling. The Treasury described Saw as a key figure in a criminal network exploiting trafficked victims in Southeast Asia to target Americans. The UN estimates hundreds of thousands have been forced into such scam operations across the region.

May 07

Indo-Pakistan Conflict: Operation Sindoor and Escalating Tensions

On April 22, 2025, a terrorist attack in Pahalgam,



Indian-administered Kashmir, killed 26 civilians, mostly Hindu tourists, sparking a sharp escalation in Indo-Pakistan tensions. India launched "Operation Sindoor" on May 7, targeting nine sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, aiming at Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed infrastructure. India claimed over 100 militants were killed, while Pakistan reported 31 civilian deaths, alleging strikes hit mosques and civilian areas. Pakistan retaliated with drone and missile attacks. A U.S.-mediated ceasefire was agreed on May 10, but both sides reported violations, with cross-border shelling killing civilians. Diplomatic efforts by the U.S., China, and Saudi Arabia urged de-escalation. The conflict, rooted in the Kashmir dispute, risks further escalation, with both nuclear-armed nations on edge.

China Hosts Neighboring Countries Conference, Xi Visits Southeast Asia

China convened a rare Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries, claiming its regional ties are at their best. President Xi Jinping visited Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia, promoting China as a reliable partner amid U.S. tariffs. The tour emphasized regional unity against U.S. protectionism, reinforcing China's diplomatic push in the Indo-Pacific. The conference highlighted Beijing's focus on countering U.S.-China tensions while expanding influence in Southeast Asia.

Deepening Japan-Philippines Defense Ties

Japan and the Philippines agreed to deepen defense collaboration, focusing on shared military information protection. This move addresses concerns over China's actions in the South and East China Seas, strengthening the U.S.-aligned security network in the Indo-Pacific. The agreement highlights growing regional cooperation to counter Beijing's territorial assertiveness, with both nations prioritizing maritime security and stability.

Erdogan Backs Pakistan Amid Escalating Clash with India

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan spoke with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, expressing solidarity after India launched missile strikes on Pakistan and Pakistani-administered Kashmir. Pakistan claimed to have downed five Indian aircraft and pledged further retaliation. The incident marks the worst escalation between the nuclear-armed rivals in over 20 years, drawing international concern over regional stability.

May 08

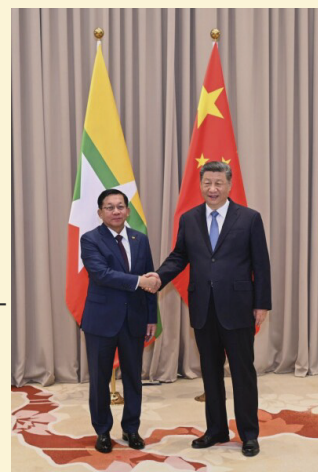
Tensions Flare Between China and Philippines at Scarborough Shoal

China and the Philippines traded accusations over a maritime incident near the disputed Scarborough Shoal. Manila reported "aggressive and unsafe" manoeuvres by Chinese navy vessels, while Beijing accused a Philippine frigate of "attempting to invade" its waters. Both sides deployed naval forces, underscoring growing tensions in the South China Sea.

May 09

Xi, Min Aung Hlaing Reaffirm China-Myanmar Ties Amid Moscow Meeting

President Xi Jinping met Myanmar's junta leader Min Aung Hlaing in Moscow during the 80th anniversary of the Soviet victory in World War II. Xi emphasised the long-standing China-Myanmar friendship, citing the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and pledging continued support, especially after Myanmar's recent deadly earthquake. He reiterated China's commitment to the Belt and Road Initiative, security cooperation, and safeguarding regional stability. Xi urged Myanmar to protect Chinese personnel and combat cross-border crimes. Min Aung Hlaing praised China's swift humanitarian response and reaffirmed support for China's global initiatives. Both leaders committed to advancing economic projects, including the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and deepening their "pauk-phaw"



(fraternal) friendship despite international criticism of Myanmar's military regime.

May 10

IMF Approves \$1.4 Billion Climate Loan for Pakistan

On May 10, 2025, the IMF approved a \$1.4 billion loan to Pakistan under its climate resilience fund and cleared the first review of a \$7 billion bailout package. This unlocks around \$1 billion in immediate funds. The IMF praised Pakistan's policy efforts for stabilising the economy and restoring investor confidence despite global challenges.

Contributors

Debi Karmakar

Research Assistant at Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)

debi@cgs-bd.com

Bahauddin Ahmed

Digital Coordinator at Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)

bahauddin@cgs-bd.com

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Governance Studies