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Indo-Pacific Insights

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

Lai Says Taiwan Will Not Yield to Chinese Pressure

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te said Taiwan would not bow to external pressure after returning from a surprise visit to Eswatini, one of Taipei's few remaining diplomatic allies. The visit followed the cancellation of an earlier trip after Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar reportedly denied overflight permission, which Taipei blamed on Chinese pressure. Lai's aircraft took a longer route over the southern Indian Ocean and was escorted by Taiwan's F-16 fighter jets after entering Taiwanese airspace. China condemned the visit and reiterated that Taiwan has no right to formal state-to-state relations.

Thailand Pushes ASEAN to Re-engage Myanmar Junta

Thailand's Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow said he wants Myanmar's foreign minister to brief ASEAN diplomats as part of a gradual effort to re-engage the country's military-backed government. Myanmar has been excluded from high-level ASEAN meetings since the 2021 coup. Sihasak said ASEAN should listen, raise questions and search for common ground while continuing to push its stalled five-point peace plan. Myanmar remains trapped in deep conflict, with millions displaced and thousands of civilian

May 5, 2026

Banerjee Refuses to Step Down After BJP's Historic Bengal Victory

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee refused to resign after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP defeated her Trinamool Congress in the state election. BJP secured more than two-thirds of the 294 seats, ending TMC's rule that began in 2011 and marking the party's first-ever victory in West Bengal. Banerjee also lost her own constituency and accused the Election Commission of bias, a claim officials denied. Her term expires on May 7, and the governor may either seek her resignation or wait for the new assembly process to begin. Banerjee has not indicated whether she will challenge the result in court.

deaths reported since the coup. Thailand said its approach is aimed at regional cooperation rather than unilateral diplomacy.

May 6, 2026

US and Iran Near Short Peace Framework Pakistani Source Says

The United States and Iran are close to finalising a one-page memorandum intended to end their war, a Pakistani source involved in mediation efforts told Reuters. The source confirmed an earlier Axios report and said both sides were nearing agreement, adding that the process could conclude soon. The Reuters report did not disclose details of the proposed framework or whether Washington and Tehran had formally accepted it. Pakistan appears to be playing an increasingly active role in efforts to mediate between the two countries and help bring the conflict to an end.

Seoul Pauses Review of US Hormuz Escort Mission

South Korea has halted its review of whether to join the US-led "Project Freedom" mission to escort commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz. The presidential office said further review was unnecessary after US President Donald Trump placed the operation on hold. National Security Adviser Wi Sung-lac said Seoul no longer saw a need to examine participation at this stage. The proposed mission had emerged amid rising security concerns surrounding the strategic shipping route during the ongoing Iran conflict.

Australia Prepares for Return of IS-linked Families from Syria

Australia said 13 citizens linked to Islamic State families in Syria intend to return home, although the government will not assist their travel. Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke said the group includes four women and nine children, and authorities have limited legal grounds to prevent citizens from re-entering the country. Police and intelligence agencies have been preparing for such returns since 2014. Some returnees may face arrest or investigation, while children are expected to receive reintegration support.

Many of them had been living in Syrian camps since the collapse of Islamic State in 2019.

May 7, 2026

ASEAN Plans New Myanmar Talks Amid Continuing Crisis

ASEAN foreign ministers have agreed to hold a virtual meeting with Myanmar's foreign minister, Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn said. Myanmar is seeking to restore normal ties with the regional bloc after years of exclusion following the 2021 military coup and subsequent civil war. ASEAN, however, wants clear progress on reducing violence, encouraging political dialogue and ensuring humanitarian access. Myanmar's nominally civilian government remains led by former junta chief Min Aung Hlaing. Kao also said negotiations between ASEAN and China over a South China Sea code of conduct are making steady progress.

Indian Elections Reveal Deepening Religious Polarisation

Recent state election results in India suggest a widening Hindu-Muslim divide in voting patterns. Analysts say Muslim voters are increasingly supporting Congress and other anti-BJP alliances, while Hindu voters continue consolidating behind Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP. Congress performed poorly overall, winning power in only one state with coalition partners, while BJP-led alliances secured victories in three states. In Assam, 18 of Congress's 19 victorious lawmakers were Muslim, while BJP fielded no Muslim candidates in either Assam or West Bengal. Analysts warn that growing religious polarisation could further reshape India's secular political landscape.

Paraguay Reaffirms Diplomatic Ties with Taiwan

Paraguayan President Santiago Peña reaffirmed his country's long-standing ties with Taiwan during a visit to Taipei, describing the relationship as rooted in shared democratic values and practical cooperation. Speaking after receiving an honorary doctorate, Peña said the partnership extended beyond formal diplomacy. Taiwan's Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim welcomed Paraguay's continued support. Paraguay remains Taiwan's

only diplomatic ally in South America, maintaining relations since 1957. China, which claims Taiwan as its territory, again urged Paraguay to sever ties with Taipei and accept Beijing's "One China" principle.

May 8, 2026

Seoul Investigates Ship Fire Near Hormuz Amid Rising Iran Tensions

South Korea has launched an investigation into an explosion and fire aboard the Korean-operated bulk carrier HMM Namu near the Strait of Hormuz. The vessel was towed to Dubai, where investigators boarded it after docking. The blaze reportedly began in the engine-room area while the ship was anchored near the UAE coast. All 24 crew members, including six South Koreans, were safely evacuated. Seoul said authorities are examining whether the incident resulted from an internal malfunction or an external attack. Iran denied involvement after US President Donald Trump accused Tehran of targeting the vessel.

ASEAN Pushes Oil-sharing Plan as Iran War Threatens Energy Supplies

Southeast Asian leaders concluded their summit in Cebu by calling for faster approval of a regional oil-sharing mechanism, although they stopped short of agreeing on an immediate response to the economic impact of the Iran war. ASEAN countries, which rely heavily on imported fuel, face mounting pressure following disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said key issues such as allocation and payment arrangements still require agreement. Leaders also supported renewed negotiations between the United States and Iran and called for the reopening of Hormuz. The summit additionally addressed food security, South China Sea coordination and Myanmar's stalled peace process.

May 9, 2026

US Sanctions Firms Accused of Assisting Iran's Weapons Programme

The United States has imposed sanctions on 10 individuals and companies accused of helping Iran acquire weapons components and materials linked to Shahed drones and ballistic missile systems. The targeted entities include firms based in China, Hong Kong, Dubai, Belarus and Iran. The US Treasury said Washington remained

prepared to take further economic measures against Iran's military-industrial network and foreign companies supporting it. The move comes ahead of President Donald Trump's planned visit to China and amid stalled diplomatic efforts to end the Iran war.

May 10, 2026

UK Deploys HMS Dragon Ahead of Potential Hormuz Mission



Britain has deployed the air-defence destroyer HMS Dragon to the Middle East as part of preparations for a possible multinational mission to protect commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. The UK government said the deployment forms part of joint planning with France to secure the strategic waterway when conditions permit. HMS Dragon had earlier been sent to the Eastern Mediterranean following the outbreak of the Iran war to help defend Cyprus. The proposed mission aims to restore confidence in shipping operations through one of the world's most important oil transit routes.

May 11, 2026

Trump Says Iran Ceasefire Close to Collapse

US President Donald Trump said the ceasefire with Iran was "on life support" after rejecting Tehran's response to a US peace proposal. Iran demanded an end to the war on all fronts, compensation for war damage, removal of sanctions, the lifting of the US naval blockade, and recognition of its control over the Strait of Hormuz. Trump dismissed the response as unacceptable, fuelling fears that the 10-week conflict could

continue and further disrupt shipping through one of the world's most critical energy corridors.

Iran War Adds New Pressure to Trump-Xi Summit

The Iran war has intensified tensions between the United States and China ahead of planned talks between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on May 14-15. The conflict is expected to dominate discussions alongside trade and regional security issues. Washington may seek Beijing's support in pushing Iran towards a ceasefire, but China has competing priorities, including energy security, ties with Tehran and resistance to US pressure. The war has also disrupted global oil markets and increased the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz.

May 12, 2026

UK Joins International Mission to Protect Hormuz Shipping

Britain will deploy mine-hunting drones, Typhoon fighter jets and the warship HMS Dragon as part of a multinational mission aimed at protecting shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. Defence Minister John Healey said the operation would be defensive, independent and credible. The move comes as the Iran war continues to reduce traffic through the strategic waterway, disrupting oil exports and driving up global energy prices. London will also provide £115 million in additional funding for mine-hunting drones and counter-drone systems. Roughly one-fifth of the world's oil supply passes through the strait.

Iraq and Pakistan Reach Energy Transit Deals with Iran

Iraq and Pakistan have concluded separate agreements with Iran to secure the passage of oil and liquefied natural gas through the Strait of Hormuz amid escalating regional tensions, according to sources familiar with the discussions. The arrangements underline Tehran's growing influence over one of the world's most critical energy chokepoints during the ongoing US-Israeli conflict with Iran. Iraq reportedly secured safe transit for major crude shipments, while Pakistan arranged the passage of Qatari LNG cargoes to meet rising domestic energy demand. Analysts warned that such agreements

could normalise Iranian control over Hormuz and reshape regional energy politics and global supply chains.

May 13, 2026

Singapore Looks to AI Investment to Secure Future Growth

A government-appointed economic committee said Singapore must attract major artificial intelligence firms and strengthen its position as an energy and trading hub in order to sustain long-term economic growth. The panel warned that intensifying global competition, geopolitical tensions and an ageing population could weaken the economy if the country fails to adapt quickly. Recommendations included expanding AI infrastructure, developing digital talent and improving energy connectivity across Southeast Asia. Officials said Singapore's future as a trusted global business centre would increasingly depend on innovation, technological leadership and deeper regional integration.

Nvidia Chief Supports Trump Effort to Rebuild China Trade Ties

Jensen Huang joined US President Donald Trump on a trip aimed at improving commercial relations with China as Washington and Beijing attempt to ease tensions over trade and technology. Huang has repeatedly argued that strict US export controls on advanced chips could strengthen Chinese competitors while damaging American firms. The visit included senior business leaders seeking improved market access and renewed cooperation despite continuing disputes over semiconductors, tariffs and national security concerns.

Iran Conflict Overshadows BRICS Ministers' Meeting in Delhi

The ongoing Iran war dominated discussions at a meeting of BRICS foreign ministers in New Delhi, exposing divisions within the expanded bloc. Iran urged member states to condemn US and Israeli actions, while differences involving the United Arab Emirates complicated efforts to establish a unified position. India, hosting the meeting as BRICS chair, hoped to secure a joint statement despite rising tensions among members. The conflict's impact on oil prices, global trade routes and economic stability also emerged as a major concern during the talks.

China Warns Against Any Move Towards Taiwan Independence

China said it is prepared to firmly block any attempt to push Taiwan towards formal independence ahead of a summit involving US President Donald Trump. Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office accused Taiwan's leadership of escalating tensions and reiterated that reunification remains a core national objective. The warning came as military activity around Taiwan continued and diplomatic pressure intensified before high-level US-China talks expected to address trade, regional security and broader strategic stability.

US and China Explore Tariff Relief Ahead of Leaders' Summit

Officials from the United States and China are discussing possible tariff reductions on approximately \$30 billion worth of imports ahead of talks between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping, according to Reuters. The negotiations form part of a broader "managed trade" effort aimed at easing economic tensions and stabilising global supply chains. Discussions have focused on selected industrial and consumer goods, although major disagreements over technology, market access and trade imbalances remain unresolved. Both governments are seeking limited progress before the summit as businesses continue to face uncertainty caused by tariffs and export controls.

May 14, 2026

Xi and Trump Seek a "New Positioning" in US-China Relations



Chinese President Xi Jinping called for a "constructive, strategically stable relationship" with the United States following his summit with US President Donald Trump in Beijing. The new framework reflects Beijing's attempt to move away from years of increasingly hostile rhetoric

and redefine bilateral ties through a combination of cooperation and managed competition. Analysts viewed the language as an effort to build institutional "guardrails" around the world's most important bilateral relationship amid tensions over Taiwan, sanctions and the Iran conflict. While both sides emphasised stability and partnership, major geopolitical disagreements continue to test the durability of this diplomatic reset.

Foreign Airlines Expand as Air India Faces War-related Disruptions

The Iran conflict and Pakistani airspace restrictions have disrupted Air India operations, allowing foreign carriers such as Lufthansa and Cathay Pacific to expand their presence in India's rapidly growing international travel market. Air India has reduced flights to Europe and North America because of longer flight paths and rising fuel costs. Industry data showed foreign airlines increased their share of international passenger traffic from India as travellers shifted towards carriers offering more stable schedules. The disruptions have added pressure to Air India's recovery strategy amid intensifying competition.

TSMC Says AI Boom Could Drive Chip Market to \$1.5 Trillion

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company said the global semiconductor market could reach \$1.5 trillion by 2030, driven primarily by rapid expansion in artificial intelligence technologies. The company expects demand for advanced chips used in AI servers, smartphones, autonomous systems and data centres to grow sharply over the next decade. TSMC executives said artificial intelligence is reshaping the semiconductor industry and increasing the need for high-performance computing chips. The forecast reflects strong long-term optimism in the sector despite continuing geopolitical tensions and supply chain risks.

Seoul Points to Iran in Hormuz Ship Attack Investigation

A senior South Korean official said it is unlikely that any country other than Iran was responsible for the recent attack on a South Korean cargo vessel near the Strait of Hormuz. Seoul is reviewing US intelligence assessments and conducting a forensic investigation after the ship suffered fire damage and hull impact earlier this month. Iran has denied involvement, while South Korea said any response would depend on the final findings

of the investigation. The incident has further heightened tensions and security concerns surrounding one of the world's most strategically important shipping routes.

15 May, 2026

Trump leaves Beijing with warm words but few concrete gains

US President Donald Trump concluded his Beijing visit without securing major breakthroughs on trade, Taiwan, or the Iran war, despite an unusually cordial summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping. While both leaders praised the importance of stable ties and agreed to continue engagement, China offered no clear support for Washington's position on Iran. Trump highlighted possible trade and aviation deals, though details remained limited and investors reacted cautiously. Xi used the summit to promote a new framework of "constructive strategic stability" in US-China relations, while also warning that mishandling Taiwan could trigger serious conflict.

Trump and Japan reaffirm 'ironclad' alliance after China trip



Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said she and US President Donald Trump reaffirmed the "ironclad" US-Japan alliance during a phone call following Trump's China visit. The two leaders discussed China, Indo-Pacific security, and the Iran conflict, while pledging continued close coordination on regional issues.

South Korea and Japan Leaders Continue "Shuttle Diplomacy"

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi are set to meet in the South Korean city of Andong on May 19-20 as part of ongoing efforts to deepen bilateral relations. The summit follows Lee's earlier visit to Takaichi's hometown of Nara under the countries' renewed "shuttle diplomacy"

framework. The two leaders are expected to discuss regional security, economic cooperation and broader international challenges amid rising geopolitical tensions across East Asia.

World Bank Predicts Slower but Strong Growth for Vietnam

The World Bank has forecast that Vietnam's economic growth will ease to 6.8% in 2026 as weaker global demand and continued trade uncertainty weigh on exports and investment. Despite the projected slowdown, the bank said Vietnam is expected to remain one of Asia's fastest-growing economies because of strong manufacturing activity and sustained foreign investment inflows. The report also urged Vietnamese authorities to improve infrastructure, strengthen the banking sector and invest more heavily in climate resilience to support long-term economic stability and growth.

16 May, 2026

China says Trump summit deals remain preliminary

China's commerce ministry has described the trade and investment agreements announced during US President Donald Trump's Beijing visit as only "preliminary", signalling that key details remain unresolved. The deals include proposed tariff reductions, agricultural market access, and aircraft purchases involving China and the United States. While Trump hailed the summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping as a major success, Beijing said negotiations on timelines, values, and implementation are still ongoing. China confirmed discussions on Boeing aircraft purchases and reciprocal trade concessions but stressed that all agreements must still be finalised through further talks.

Pageantry overshadowed policy during Trump's China visit

US President Donald Trump's two-day Beijing visit was marked by grand ceremony and warm rhetoric but produced few concrete policy breakthroughs with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Despite discussions on Iran, Taiwan, trade, and investment, both sides released limited details on agreements. Trump failed to secure clear

Chinese support on ending the Iran conflict, while trade deals involving Boeing and agricultural goods remained vague. Xi promoted a long-term framework of “constructive strategic stability”, but tensions over Taiwan and broader strategic rivalry persisted. Analysts said the symbolism of the summit ultimately outweighed its practical outcomes.

May 17, 2026

Trump and South Korea's Lee discuss US-China summit

US President Donald Trump and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung discussed the outcome of the recent US-China summit during a phone call on Sunday. Trump briefed Lee on his talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, including issues related to trade, the Korean Peninsula, and the Middle East. Both leaders stressed the importance of stable US-China relations and reaffirmed cooperation for peace and stability in the region.

May 18, 2026

Kim calls for an “impregnable fortress” along Korean border

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called for stronger military fortifications along the border with South Korea, describing the frontier as an “impregnable fortress” necessary to deter war. Speaking at a rare meeting with army division and brigade commanders, Kim stressed the need to modernise military training and operational strategies in response to changing forms of warfare. South Korean officials said North Korea has increased fortification work near the border since March, including wall

Iran sends revised proposal to US through Pakistan

Iran has sent a revised proposal to the United States through Pakistan in an effort to revive stalled negotiations over the Middle East conflict, according to Pakistani and Iranian officials. Tehran's response comes as a fragile ceasefire remains under strain and disagreements persist over Iran's nuclear programme, control of the Strait of Hormuz, and regional conflicts involving groups such as Hezbollah. Iranian officials say any discussion on nuclear issues depends on a “permanent end of

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