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Indo-Pacific Insights

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

Kim unveils new economic strategy keeps nuclear focus

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has presented a new five-year economic plan aimed at boosting key industries and improving living standards. The strategy prioritises agriculture, electricity generation and technology, while reaffirming the central role of nuclear weapons in national defence. Approved unanimously by parliament, the plan seeks to address chronic shortages amid sanctions and isolation. Kim also emphasised self-reliance, or *juche*, and warned against external interference.

Japan begins major oil reserve release

Japan has begun releasing a substantial portion of its strategic oil reserves to ease supply disruptions caused by the Middle East crisis. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said millions of barrels will be made available to domestic refiners in the country's largest release to date. The move comes as global oil prices surge and shipping through the Strait of Hormuz remains constrained. Heavily dependent on Middle Eastern imports, Japan is turning to reserves to stabilise its energy market.

March 24

Pakistan offers to host US-Iran peace talks

Pakistan has offered to host talks between the United States and Iran to help end the ongoing conflict triggered by US and Israeli strikes. Islamabad, alongside Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, has been working to facilitate dialogue. Officials say both Tehran and Washington trust Pakistan as a mediator, with talks potentially held directly or through intermediaries. Analysts, however, warn that deep divisions persist, making progress uncertain. The move reflects growing regional efforts to push for diplomacy despite continued military escalation.

March 25

Taiwan warns of China exploiting US distraction

Taiwan has warned that China may seek to exploit the United States' focus on the Middle East conflict to intensify pressure across the Taiwan Strait. Defence officials said Beijing could increase military drills or coercive actions while US attention is diverted. Taipei has responded by boosting defence spending, strengthening alliances and enhancing readiness. The warning underscores persistent concerns over China's long-term goal of reunification and its willingness to act during moments of global distraction.

Asia weighs COVID-style measures to tackle fuel shortages

Countries across Asia are considering pandemic-era measures to manage fuel shortages caused by the Iran war and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz. Governments are exploring options such as remote work, reduced travel and public awareness campaigns to curb energy demand. South Korea is reviewing work-from-home policies, while the Philippines has already shortened some work weeks. The International Energy Agency has urged demand-reduction steps to ease pressure on global oil supplies.

Philippines seeks US support for oil access

The Philippines is working with the United States to secure oil supplies from sanctioned countries to address domestic shortages. Manila is exploring imports from states such as Iran and Venezuela, despite existing US restrictions. Officials said Washington has shown flexibility in response to energy security concerns. The move highlights growing cooperation between the two allies as they navigate rising prices and supply disruptions linked to geopolitical tensions.

March 26

Trump reschedules China trip for mid-May

US President Donald Trump will visit Beijing on May 14–15 for talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, after postponing the trip due to the Iran war. The White House said the delay was under

stood by Beijing. The meeting will be their first since October and is expected to address trade, Taiwan and broader tensions. Trump said Xi is also expected to visit Washington later this year.

US reaffirms support for Taiwan's security and energy needs

A senior US diplomat has reaffirmed Washington's commitment to Taiwan's defence and energy security amid rising global tensions. Citing the Taiwan Relations Act, he emphasised continued military support and cooperation. He also highlighted efforts to assist Taiwan in securing stable energy supplies, including access to crude oil and natural gas. The remarks underline sustained US backing for Taipei despite China's opposition to deepening security ties.

March 27

Report flags China's drone jet deployment near Taiwan

A new report says China has deployed converted J-6 fighter jets as attack drones at bases near the Taiwan Strait. Analysts say these could be used in the early stages of a conflict to overwhelm Taiwan's air defences and force it to expend costly missiles. Taiwanese officials view the move as part of Beijing's asymmetric strategy and say counter-drone systems are being developed. Though not China's most advanced assets, the drones could still exert significant pressure in a cross-strait crisis.

Myanmar military signals leadership reshuffle

Myanmar's military has indicated a leadership reshuffle ahead of parliament's process to select a new president, a post closely tied to junta chief Min Aung Hlaing. State media said deputy commander Soe Win hinted at changes following Armed Forces Day. The signal comes after a disputed election won by a military-backed party, reinforcing expectations of a tightly controlled transition. Analysts say the unusual public messaging may reflect internal tensions over the redistribution of power.

Philippines, France deepen defence ties

The Philippines and France have signed a visiting forces agreement allowing joint military training on each other's territory, strengthening defence ties amid rising tensions in the South China Sea.

The deal was signed in Paris during talks on regional security and a rules-based order. It follows Manila's accusation that a Chinese warship carried out an unsafe manoeuvre near Thitu Island. Officials say the pact will enhance coordination and legal protection as the Philippines expands its security partnerships.

March 28

Philippines, China resume talks on sea dispute

The Philippines and China have resumed senior-level talks on the South China Sea after more than a year, discussing possible oil and gas cooperation alongside energy and fertiliser concerns. Manila said it raised recent incidents involving Filipino fishermen while emphasising diplomacy and international law. Talks also covered renewable energy, trade and confidence-building measures such as coast guard communication. The renewed dialogue comes as the Philippines faces energy pressures linked to the Middle East crisis.

March 29

China rebukes US over Hong Kong security warning

China has protested after the US consulate in Hong Kong issued a warning about tightened national security rules. The updated measures criminalise refusal to provide passwords or assist in unlocking devices in security cases. Beijing said the advisory interfered in its internal affairs. The US did not comment on the diplomatic exchange. The dispute underscores continuing tensions over Hong Kong's security regime and growing international concern over its enforcement powers.

Pakistan leads regional push to ease Iran crisis

Pakistan has hosted talks with Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt to reduce tensions around Iran and reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Discussions reportedly included proposals to restore shipping, such as a management mechanism and transit fees. Officials said the talks also touched on possible US–Iran negotiations in Islamabad. The initiative comes amid continued conflict, Iranian warnings, and rising oil market concerns, with China expressing

March 30

Min Aung Hlaing moves closer to presidency



Myanmar's military leader Min Aung Hlaing has moved closer to the presidency after stepping down as army chief and being nominated in parliament. The move follows a widely criticised election that excluded key opposition groups and was rejected by the UN and Western governments. Analysts say the military is seeking to maintain control through a civilian framework. The development comes as Myanmar remains engulfed in conflict and economic crisis.

Pakistan–Afghanistan border clashes flare again

Pakistan and Afghanistan have exchanged heavy fire along their border days after agreeing to a temporary pause. Officials said artillery was used in clashes near Kunar province and Pakistan's Bajaur district. Kabul reported civilian casualties, while Islamabad said it responded to Afghan shelling and denied targeting civilians. The renewed fighting adds strain to regional stability as Pakistan positions itself for a diplomatic role in broader geopolitical tensions.

March 31

Pakistan, China propose five-point Middle East peace plan

Pakistan and China have proposed a five-point plan to address the ongoing Middle East conflict. The initiative calls for an immediate ceasefire, the launch of peace talks, and the protection of sovereignty and civilian lives. It also emphasises securing key shipping routes, including the Strait of Hormuz, and ensuring humanitarian access.

The proposal underscores dialogue as the only path to lasting peace, with Pakistan positioning itself as a mediator, backed by China.

April 1

North Korea-linked hack hits global software supply chain

A cyberattack linked to North Korean hackers has targeted a widely used but largely unseen software component underpinning many online services. The breach exploited a trusted developer tool, allowing malicious code to spread across dependent systems. Security researchers warn that such “dependency” attacks can affect thousands of applications without detection. The group involved is known for targeting cryptocurrency platforms and conducting cyber-espionage, highlighting growing risks in global software supply chains.

Albanese warns of economic fallout from Middle East war

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has warned of sustained economic pressure from the Middle East conflict, particularly on fuel prices and supply. In a national address, he said the coming months “may not be easy” as energy markets tighten. Albanese urged citizens to conserve fuel and avoid panic buying, while outlining government support measures for households and businesses facing rising costs.

April 2

New Zealand, Cook Islands reset security ties

New Zealand and the Cook Islands have signed a defence and security declaration in Rarotonga to stabilise relations after tensions over the islands’ engagement with China. The agreement outlines cooperation on defence and shared challenges, reaffirming Wellington as the primary security partner. New Zealand will also resume previously suspended financial support. Leaders described the deal as a step towards a clearer and more cooperative partnership.

April 3

US fighter jet downed over Iran; search ongoing

A United States fighter jet was shot down over Iran during the ongoing conflict, marking the first known loss of a manned US aircraft in the nearly five-week war. The F-15E jet had two crew members, both of whom ejected. One has been rescued, while search operations continue for the second. Iranian authorities have urged civilians to report any survivors and offered rewards, raising concerns over escalation and the safety of personnel.

Myanmar junta chief eyes presidency

Myanmar’s military leader Min Aung Hlaing has signalled his intention to seek the presidency through a parliamentary vote. The move follows the 2021 coup and a contested political process dominated by the military. Under the constitution, the armed forces retain significant influence over leadership selection. Analysts say the bid reflects efforts to formalise military rule despite ongoing domestic resistance and international criticism.

South Korea, France elevate ties to strategic partnership

South Korea and France have agreed to upgrade their relationship to a strategic partnership, focusing on defence, economic cooperation and energy security. President Emmanuel Macron and his South Korean counterpart discussed collaboration in defence technology, semiconductors, critical minerals and renewable energy. Both sides also highlighted the need to address global challenges linked to the Middle East crisis, signalling closer alignment on strategic priorities.

China says Afghanistan–Pakistan talk progressing

China has said peace talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan are making steady progress, with both sides showing willingness to engage. Acting as a mediator, Beijing has maintained communication with both governments to ease tensions. The talks, which began last year, aim to reduce border friction and improve relations. Chinese officials expressed cautious optimism that dialogue will continue and help stabilise ties between the two neighbours.

April 4

Russia evacuates more staff from Iran’s Bushehr plant

Russia has evacuated another 198 personnel from Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant amid rising regional tensions. The facility, Iran's only operational nuclear site, relies on Russian expertise for maintenance and oversight. Officials did not specify the reasons for the latest evacuation but emphasised the need to ensure the safety of foreign workers. The move follows earlier departures and highlights growing concerns over security conditions near the strategic site.

US intelligence says Iran unlikely to ease Hormuz control

US intelligence assessments indicate that Iran is unlikely to loosen its grip on the Strait of Hormuz despite mounting global pressure. The vital waterway carries about one-fifth of global oil shipments, giving Tehran significant leverage. Officials say Iran is using control of the strait as a bargaining tool in wider geopolitical negotiations, suggesting that restrictions may persist as tensions continue.

Iran claims use of new air defence system

Iran says it deployed a newly introduced air defence system to engage a US fighter jet during ongoing hostilities. The Khatam al-Anbiya command said the system was activated to assert control over national airspace but did not confirm whether the aircraft was hit. The announcement, carried by state media, underscores Tehran's efforts to strengthen its defensive capabilities amid escalating tensions.

April 5

Trump sets deadline for reopening Strait of Hormuz

US President Donald Trump has warned Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz by a specified deadline or face strikes on key infrastructure. He said failure to comply could trigger attacks on facilities such as power plants and bridges. The warning comes as the strait remains effectively blocked, disrupting global energy markets and raising the risk of further escalation.

Russia urges US to abandon ultimatums, return to talks

Russia has called on the United States to drop "the language of ultimatums" and return to negotiations with Iran. The appeal followed a call between

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Iran's Abbas Araqchi. Moscow urged restraint and warned against actions that could undermine diplomacy, including moves at the United Nations, reiterating its support for de-escalation and long-term stability.

April 6

Pakistan shares peace blueprint with US and Iran

Pakistan has circulated a draft peace framework to both Washington and Tehran aimed at ending the conflict. The two-stage plan proposes an immediate ceasefire followed by broader negotiations on sanctions, nuclear limits and regional security. While the proposal includes reopening the Strait of Hormuz, Iran has yet to accept the terms and has indicated it will not do so under a temporary truce.

North Korea softens tone after Seoul apology

North Korea has responded positively to South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's apology over recent drone incursions, calling it a constructive step. Lee said the flights were unauthorised civilian actions and acknowledged they heightened tensions. Pyongyang's measured response stands out amid otherwise strained relations between the two sides.

Indonesia files genocide case against Myanmar leader

Indonesia has filed a complaint at the International Court of Justice accusing Myanmar's leader Min Aung Hlaing of genocide over actions against the Rohingya. The case cites killings and forced displacement. Jakarta said the move reflects its commitment to human rights, while Myanmar rejected the allegations. The filing adds to growing international pressure on the military government.

April 7

Taiwan opposition visit underscores cross-strait divide

Taiwan's opposition leader Cheng Li-wun of the Kuomintang has begun a rare visit to China, describing it as a "peace" mission amid rising cross-strait tensions. The trip, the first by a KMT chair in a decade, may include talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and focuses on dialogue and reconciliation. It comes as Beijing intensifies

military pressure while promoting “peaceful reunification”, even as Taiwan’s government insists the island’s future must be decided by its people.

Taliban say talks with Pakistan ease tensions

The Afghan Taliban say recent talks with Pakistani officials were “useful and positive”, aimed at reducing tensions along their shared border. Both sides agreed to maintain communication and cooperation to improve security and stability. Pakistan has accused the Taliban of allowing militant groups to operate from Afghan territory, though details of the discussions remain limited.

April 8

Trump to respond to Pakistan’s deadline proposal

The White House says President Donald Trump will soon respond to Pakistan’s proposal for a two-week extension to a deadline set for Iran. Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt provided no details. Pakistan has been mediating efforts to de-escalate the conflict, urging a temporary ceasefire and continued diplomacy.

UN envoy moves to Tehran for peace push

A United Nations envoy appointed by Secretary-General António Guterres is travelling to Tehran as part of efforts to end the Iran conflict. Diplomat Jean Arnault has begun consultations in the region, with Iran signalling openness to engaging in credible peace initiatives. The move reflects wider international efforts to revive dialogue.

April 9

Jet fuel shortages may linger after Hormuz reopening

Jet fuel shortages could persist for weeks or even months after the Strait of Hormuz reopens, the head of the International Air Transport Association has warned. Director General Willie Walsh said supply chains have been severely disrupted by the Middle East conflict, leaving inventories low and prices high. He cautioned that restoring fuel flows and distribution networks will take time, prolonging pressure on airlines and global air travel.

April 10

China, North Korea pledge closer coordination



China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang, calling for stronger coordination on regional and global issues. Both sides stressed deeper communication and expanded exchanges to safeguard shared interests. The visit signals renewed engagement after pandemic disruptions, as Pyongyang balances ties with Beijing and Moscow amid shifting geopolitical dynamics.

April 12

US, Australia pledge \$3.5bn to secure critical minerals

The United States and Australia have committed over \$3.5 billion to expand cooperation on critical minerals, nearly doubling earlier pledges under a six-month-old agreement. The funding will support Australian projects to mine and refine rare earths and other strategic materials vital for defence, advanced manufacturing and clean energy. Backed by agencies including Export Finance Australia and the US Export-Import Bank, the initiative aims to reduce reliance on China’s dominance in processing and strengthen supply chain resilience, while boosting high-tech industrial capacity in both countries.

US moves to blockade Iranian ports after talks fail

The United States will begin blockading maritime traffic to and from Iranian ports after talks in Islamabad failed to produce a deal, escalating tensions in the region. President Donald Trump said the move targets vessels linked to Iran, while the US military stressed freedom of navigation for

non-Iranian routes. Iran warned any enforcement would breach the ceasefire. Both sides blamed each other for the stalemate, though Trump signalled talks could continue. The move threatens global energy flows, as the Strait of Hormuz handles about one-fifth of the world's oil supply.

April 13

China warns Hormuz blockade threatens global interests

China has warned that a U.S.-led blockade of the Strait of Hormuz would undermine global interests and escalate tensions, urging restraint from all sides. Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for a lasting ceasefire through diplomacy, while spokesperson Guo Jiakun said disputes must be resolved politically. Beijing also rejected claims of supplying arms to Iran and signalled readiness to play a constructive role in easing the crisis.

Allies stage fresh South China Sea drills amid tensions

The United States, Australia and the Philippines have held their second joint maritime exercises in the South China Sea this year, underscoring deepening defence ties amid tensions with China. The four-day drills involved warships, fighter jets and surveillance aircraft. Manila deployed FA-50 jets, while Australia sent P-8A Poseidon aircraft and the US deployed USS Ashland. The exercises precede the annual Balikatan war games, which will include Japan as a full participant for the first time.

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