1-15 October, 2026

Indo-Pacific Insights

Centre for Governance Studies



A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events



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1 October, 2026

US intelligence assessment suggests Chinese invasion of Taiwan unlikely before 2028

US officials increasingly believe that China is unlikely to launch a military invasion of Taiwan before 2028, despite President Xi Jinping's directive for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to develop the capabilities needed for a possible attack by 2027. According to Reuters, disruptions within China's military, partly resulting from Beijing's anti-corruption campaign, have complicated operational preparations and exposed weaknesses in military readiness. Chinese leaders may also prefer to await the outcome of Taiwan's 2028 presidential election before considering further escalation, particularly if the result offers prospects for improved cross-strait relations. Although Washington's assessment suggests a reduced likelihood of an invasion in the immediate future, China's continuing military preparations and refusal to renounce the use of force remain significant concerns for regional security.



Colombo Security Conclave discusses maritime pollution and regional cooperation

Representatives of Colombo Security Conclave member states discussed strengthening maritime cooperation, including responses to marine pollution and other threats to regional waters. The discussions, facilitated through Sri Lanka's maritime information-sharing arrangements, highlighted the importance of coordinated surveillance, information exchange and emergency preparedness. Marine pollution poses significant risks to fisheries, coastal ecosystems and commercial shipping across the northern Indian Ocean.

Investigation documents destruction of Rohingya villages under Arakan Army control

A Guardian investigation documented allegations of widespread displacement, land confiscation, forced labour and destruction of Rohingya villages in areas controlled by the Arakan Army. Drawing on satellite imagery, survivor testimony and UN research, the investigation reported that at least 800 hectares of land across 23 villages had been seized or repurposed. Rohingya residents described losing homes and farmland, while others reported coercive recruitment and restrictions on movement. The findings raised concerns about whether displaced communities would be able to return to their original villages. For Bangladesh, these developments present additional obstacles to sustainable Rohingya repatriation.

Philippines deploys largest coast guard vessel to challenge Chinese research ship

The Philippines deployed its largest coast guard vessel, BRP Teresa Magbanua, alongside an aircraft to challenge a Chinese research ship operating near the country's northern Batanes province. Philippine authorities said the vessel had remained approximately 37 nautical miles north-west of Itbayat Island since 28 September and was conducting unauthorised marine scientific research. A Chinese coast guard vessel was also reported in the area. Manila said its intervention disrupted the research vessel's activities and forced it to leave its position. The confrontation underscores growing maritime tensions in the strategically important waters near the Luzon Strait, which connects the South China Sea with the Philippine Sea and lies close to Taiwan.

2 October, 2026



Taiwan receives first new F-16V fighter jets to strengthen defences against China

Taiwan received its first two newly manufactured F-16V Block 70 fighter jets from the United States on 2 October, marking an important development in its efforts to modernise its air force. The aircraft are part of a 66-jet order placed in 2019, deliveries of which have faced repeated delays. Equipped with advanced radar, avionics and weapons systems, the fighters are intended to strengthen Taiwan's ability to respond to China's expanding military aviation activities around the island. Defence Minister Wellington Koo indicated that additional aircraft were expected before the end of 2026. The delivery also highlights Washington's continuing role in supporting Taiwan's defence preparedness amid growing concerns over cross-strait security.

Satellite images reveal accelerating Chinese military infrastructure development in South China Sea

Satellite imagery examined by Reuters revealed substantial progress in China's construction of a runway on Antelope Reef in the disputed Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. Images captured in late September showed extensive land preparation, construction equipment and materials being transported to the developing facilities. Security analysts estimated that the runway could be completed by mid-2027, potentially strengthening Beijing's ability to deploy aircraft and sustain military operations across the South China Sea. The development raises concerns about China's expanding strategic presence in contested maritime territory, where competing sovereignty claims involving China, Vietnam and Taiwan continue to complicate regional security.

3 October, 2026

North Korea launches ballistic missile as military tensions intensify on Korean Peninsula

North Korea launched a ballistic missile towards the sea off its eastern coast on 3 October, prompting heightened surveillance by South Korea and Japan. South Korean authorities reported that the missile was fired from the Wonsan area and travelled more than 700 kilometres. The launch came amid heightened tensions following a dispute over a landmine explosion in the Demilitarised Zone that seriously injured South Korean soldiers. Pyongyang rejected Seoul's accusations and demands for an apology. South Korea, Japan and the United States moved to assess the missile test, which added to concerns about escalating hostility and deteriorating security conditions on the Korean Peninsula.



India and Pakistan summon diplomats over deadly border incident

India and Pakistan summoned each other's senior diplomats following a border incident on 2 October that left two Pakistani nationals dead. Islamabad accused India's Border Security Force of killing unarmed civilians in the Bedian sector and demanded an investigation. New Delhi rejected the allegations, maintaining that the individuals had crossed illegally into Indian territory. Both governments lodged formal diplomatic protests, highlighting persistent mistrust between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

Japan adjusts economic messaging to reassure investors over inflation concerns

Japan's government has adjusted its economic messaging to counter financial market perceptions that Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's policies could fuel inflation. Finance Minister Satsuki Katayama said in an interview with TV Tokyo that officials were working to communicate the administration's economic intentions more clearly to investors. She also referred to discussions with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who considered Japan's policy direction appropriate for current economic conditions but questioned whether the government had adequately explained it to financial markets. The effort reflects Tokyo's attempt to maintain investor confidence while addressing concerns over inflation, fiscal spending and financial stability.

North Korea confirms intermediate-range missile test under Kim Jong Un's supervision

North Korea confirmed that its latest missile launch involved an intermediate-range strategic weapon, providing further details after South Korean and Japanese authorities reported the firing on 3 October. Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of leader Kim Jong Un, said the launch formed part of a military exercise conducted by a specialised unit under her brother's supervision. The announcement highlighted Pyongyang's continuing emphasis on developing and demonstrating its missile capabilities amid strained relations with Seoul. The test also reinforced concerns among neighbouring countries about North Korea's weapons development and the possibility of further military provocations affecting regional stability.

4 October, 2026

Philippines accuses Chinese Coast Guard of obstructing maritime law enforcement operation

The Philippines accused Chinese Coast Guard vessels of obstructing an operation against a foreign fishing boat suspected of illegal dynamite fishing near Thitu Island in the disputed South China Sea. Philippine authorities said Chinese vessels blocked and shadowed their patrol boats while a Chinese military helicopter flew overhead. The suspected fishing vessel subsequently escaped towards Subi Reef. Manila condemned the interference, saying it had obstructed legitimate maritime law enforcement activities. Separately, Philippine officials reported that a Chinese fighter jet had approached a Philippine patrol aircraft at a dangerously close distance near Scarborough Shoal, further intensifying maritime tensions between the two countries.

US aircraft carrier visits Thailand following extended Middle East deployment

The US aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush arrived off Thailand's Phuket Island with approximately 4,800 personnel aboard following six months of operations in the Middle East. The visit marked the carrier strike group's first port call since departing the United States in March. According to the US Navy, personnel were expected to participate in cultural, recreational and community activities during the 4–9 October visit. The arrival followed another American aircraft carrier's visit to Thailand in September. Although primarily intended for rest and recreation, the visit also reflects continuing US naval engagement with Thailand, a longstanding treaty ally in Southeast Asia.

Asian Games conclude in Japan amid record performances and organisational difficulties

The 2026 Asian Games concluded in Japan's Aichi-Nagoya region following two weeks of outstanding athletic achievements and significant organisational challenges. China dominated the competition with 169 gold medals, while host nation Japan secured a record 83 gold medals. Approximately 17,000 athletes and officials participated in 469 medal events across 43 sports. However, transport failures, accommodation shortages, registration delays and disappointing spectator attendance attracted criticism throughout the competition. Despite these shortcomings, the Olympic Council of Asia declared the Games a success. The closing ceremony also marked the transition towards the next Asian Games, scheduled to be hosted by Qatar in 2030, although a possible postponement to 2031 remained under consideration.

5 October, 2026

South Korea blames North Korean landmines for explosion in Demilitarised Zone

South Korea attributed a recent explosion in the Demilitarised Zone to landmines allegedly installed by North Korean forces, saying the incident had seriously injured two South Korean soldiers. Military authorities said investigations conducted with the United Nations Command supported their findings. Seoul also reported that Pyongyang had deployed thousands of personnel to reinforce border defences through mine-laying and fencing operations. North Korea rejected the allegations and dismissed demands for an apology. The dispute illustrates worsening relations between the two countries, which remain technically at war, and highlights the continuing risks of unintended military confrontation along their heavily fortified border.

6 October, 2026

Myanmar military airstrikes kill displaced civilians in Rakhine

Myanmar's military carried out airstrikes on camps sheltering internally displaced people in Rakhine State, killing at least eight people over two days, according to the Arakan Army and a local youth association. Reuters reported the attacks on 5 October, following another deadly strike near a marketplace in Kyauktaw that reportedly killed dozens of civilians. The violence underscored the continuing humanitarian crisis in western Myanmar, where fighting between the military and the Arakan Army has displaced large populations.

US and China discuss reciprocal nuclear site visits amid strategic security concerns

The United States and China have reportedly discussed the possibility of reciprocal visits to their nuclear facilities. The proposed arrangement could provide both countries with greater insight into each other's nuclear activities and encourage transparency amid growing strategic competition. Such exchanges could support confidence-building measures as Washington and Beijing navigate concerns about nuclear weapons development and regional security. However, the discussions remain preliminary, and no formal agreement has been announced. The talks highlight the importance of maintaining communication between the two powers to reduce misunderstandings and manage risks associated with their evolving military capabilities.

Middle East conflict prompts ASEAN to strengthen regional energy security

The ongoing Middle East conflict has intensified concerns over Southeast Asia's dependence on imported energy, prompting ASEAN governments to strengthen regional energy security initiatives. With more than half of the region's refinery crude supplies originating from the Middle East, disruptions to shipping routes and rising oil prices have exposed significant economic vulnerabilities. Energy ministers meeting in Manila were expected to discuss emergency petroleum-sharing arrangements, strategic fuel reserves and stronger regional coordination. Longer-term priorities include expanding renewable energy, improving energy efficiency and developing the ASEAN Power Grid to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels. The discussions reflect growing recognition that regional cooperation is essential to protecting Southeast Asian economies from external energy supply shocks.

Chinese military aircraft and vehicles spotted at new China-Laos base, satellite images reveal

Satellite imagery examined by Reuters revealed military aircraft and vehicles at a newly established China-Laos joint training facility at Ban Keun, near Vientiane, raising questions about Beijing's expanding military presence in Southeast Asia. Images captured on 30 September showed what analysts identified as eight K-8 light attack and training aircraft and more than two dozen support vehicles on a runway still under construction. Although officially presented as a bilateral military training facility, analysts suggested that its expanding infrastructure could eventually support broader military operations. The development highlights China's deepening defence ties with Laos and its efforts to establish a stronger strategic presence in mainland Southeast Asia.

7 October, 2026

Climate summit calls for stronger global action to combat rising temperatures

International climate discussions ahead of COP31 highlighted the urgent need for stronger measures to limit global warming and address escalating environmental risks. Participants emphasised the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, accelerating the transition to renewable energy and strengthening climate adaptation efforts. Particular attention was given to the challenges facing vulnerable countries, including Pacific Island nations threatened by rising sea levels, extreme weather and coastal erosion. The discussions also underscored the need for greater climate finance to help developing countries adapt to worsening environmental conditions. The central message was that governments must translate existing climate commitments into concrete policies and sustained action to prevent further environmental damage and protect vulnerable communities.

8 October, 2026

Former Taiwan president Tsai warns of sustained Chinese pressure amid rising cross-strait tensions

Former Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen highlighted China's continuing military, economic and political pressure on Taiwan during an address to a US audience. She warned that Beijing's expanding military activities, cyber operations and other coercive measures threatened stability across the Taiwan Strait. Tsai emphasised the importance of strengthening international partnerships to safeguard Taiwan's democratic institutions and security. She also underscored Taiwan's strategic significance to global technology supply chains and regional economic stability. Her remarks reflected growing concerns over China's attempts to increase pressure on the island through military intimidation and other forms of coercion without triggering a direct military confrontation.

US opens direct talks with Myanmar's military-backed government

The Trump administration has opened direct talks with Myanmar's military-backed government, marking a significant departure from Washington's policy of isolating the country's military leadership following the 2021 coup. Reuters reported that senior US officials met Min Aung Hlaing in September, with discussions focused on shutting down cyber-scam centres, securing the release of an American citizen and potentially accessing Myanmar's rare-earth minerals. The outreach raises questions about US policy towards Myanmar and competition with China over critical minerals.

South Korea tests hypersonic missile as regional defence competition intensifies

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung oversaw the test-firing of a domestically developed hypersonic missile, highlighting Seoul's efforts to strengthen its advanced military capabilities. The development came amid growing security concerns on the Korean Peninsula, particularly regarding North Korea's expanding missile programme. Hypersonic weapons can travel at exceptionally high speeds and manoeuvre during flight, making them potentially more difficult to intercept than conventional ballistic missiles. The test underscored South Korea's increasing investment in indigenous defence technology and its determination to improve military readiness. It also reflected broader strategic competition and evolving security challenges across the Indo-Pacific region.

9 October, 2026

China introduces new guidelines to regulate artificial intelligence and emerging technologies

China announced new policy guidelines aimed at accelerating the development of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies while preventing speculative investment and managing associated risks. The measures include monitoring, early-warning and emergency-response mechanisms to ensure that AI development remains safe, reliable and controllable. Authorities also pledged stricter accountability for major financial losses resulting from reckless investment in advanced industries. Beijing intends to strengthen computing infrastructure, algorithms and data resources while supporting the orderly development of its low-altitude economy, including civilian drones and air taxis. The initiative reflects China's efforts to advance technological self-reliance, strengthen industrial competitiveness and manage the risks associated with rapid technological expansion amid intensifying strategic competition with the United States.

Taiwan displays giant national flag in defiance of Beijing amid rising cross-strait tensions

Taiwan displayed a giant national flag suspended beneath a US-made Chinook helicopter during preparations for its 10 October National Day celebrations, symbolising national identity amid mounting Chinese pressure. The annual display, introduced in 2019, reflects Taiwan's determination to maintain its international visibility despite Beijing's efforts to restrict the appearance of its national symbols abroad. The 12-by-18-metre flag was flown over Taipei as part of preparations for the celebrations. President Lai Ching-te was expected to address relations with China and outline his administration's policy priorities. The event also highlighted Taiwan's emphasis on democratic values, sovereignty and national unity while navigating increasingly strained cross-strait relations.

10 October, 2026

US expresses concern over China's growing maritime activities near Taiwan

The United States expressed concern over China's expanding maritime activities near Taiwan's eastern coast, warning that such operations could heighten regional tensions. Since June, Beijing has reportedly increased coast guard patrols in the area, while a vessel associated with China's maritime militia was observed in August. Taiwanese officials suspect that these activities could form part of preparations for a possible naval blockade, potentially threatening vital shipping routes and access to the island. Washington has repeatedly urged Beijing to reduce military pressure and pursue dialogue with Taiwan's elected leadership. The developments reflect growing concern over China's use of maritime forces to expand its operational presence around Taiwan without resorting to conventional military conflict.

12 October, 2026

Taiwan closely monitors Chinese live-fire drills along mainland coast

Taiwan's Defence Minister Wellington Koo said the island's military was closely monitoring a series of Chinese live-fire drills scheduled along China's coastline. Chinese maritime authorities had issued navigation warnings covering five areas, stretching from the South China Sea to Liaoning province in the north-east. None of the designated areas directly surrounded Taiwan, although one was located off Zhejiang province, relatively close to the island. Taiwan's preliminary assessment suggested that the exercises involved coastal artillery and related military units. Officials nevertheless said they would continue monitoring the activities without drawing premature conclusions about their purpose or scale. The developments came shortly after President Lai Ching-te's National Day speech, which Beijing condemned, adding to existing cross-strait tensions.



Pakistan imposes emergency rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa amid political and security crisis

Pakistan's federal government imposed emergency rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, suspending the provincial administration led by former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party. Authorities detained Chief Minister Sohail Afridi and several provincial officials, citing the administration's alleged failure to contain militant violence. PTI rejected the justification, arguing that the intervention was intended to suppress protests demanding Khan's release and medical treatment. The developments triggered demonstrations, heightened security measures and further tensions between federal and provincial authorities. The crisis highlighted Pakistan's overlapping challenges of political polarisation, militant violence and institutional confrontation, with implications for governance and security along the Afghan border.

13 October, 2026

BIMSTEC adopts Delhi Declaration to strengthen regional security

The first BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting adopted the Delhi Declaration, committing member states to stronger cooperation against terrorism, human trafficking, cybercrime, illicit financial flows and maritime security threats. The meeting also emphasised disaster preparedness and coordination among law enforcement agencies across the Bay of Bengal region. The declaration reflected growing recognition that transnational security challenges require closer cooperation among the seven member states.

Indian Navy strengthens maritime ties with Seychelles through port visit

Indian naval training ships INS Tir and INS Sujata, accompanied by Indian Coast Guard vessel Sarathi, visited Seychelles as part of an overseas training deployment. The visit included professional exchanges, coast guard training, meetings with senior Seychelles defence officials and community engagement. A reception was held aboard the visiting vessels on 14 October, attended by senior Seychelles government representatives. The deployment reinforced India's maritime security partnership with Seychelles, a strategically located island state in the western Indian Ocean. The engagement also demonstrated India's emphasis on defence capacity-building, naval diplomacy and cooperation with smaller Indian Ocean states under its MAHASAGAR vision.

North Korea reports tactical ballistic missile test following multiple launches

North Korea's state media reported that the country had tested a tactical ballistic missile on 12 October, describing the launch as a successful test of an upgraded component of its weapons systems. The announcement followed South Korea's report that Pyongyang had fired multiple ballistic missiles towards the sea off its eastern coast. South Korean authorities said at least one missile had travelled more than 900 kilometres. The launches marked another episode in a period of heightened missile activity. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had also visited a defence industry museum, where he reaffirmed the country's commitment to developing its weapons capabilities. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said he might meet Kim during an upcoming visit to Asia, keeping the possibility of renewed diplomacy in focus.

Taiwan warns Europe against overdependence on Chinese supply chains

Taiwan's Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung urged European countries to reconsider excessive dependence on Chinese suppliers, arguing that economic reliance could create political vulnerabilities. Speaking at the Warsaw Security Forum in Poland ahead of an EU summit, Lin presented supply-chain dependence as a question of both economic security and political autonomy. European leaders were expected to discuss trade with Beijing amid concerns about trade imbalances and strategic reliance on China. Taiwan also promoted closer economic cooperation with Europe, highlighting its strengths in technology and innovation. Beijing opposes high-level overseas engagement by Taiwanese officials and claims sovereignty over the island, a position rejected by Taipei. The remarks reflected Taiwan's broader efforts to deepen international partnerships despite Chinese diplomatic pressure.

Domestic protests, US tensions and currency pressure converge for Modi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi faced a convergence of political, diplomatic and economic pressures, according to Reuters. A youth-led protest movement that initially emerged over examination paper leaks had expanded into opposition to changes in electoral rolls, while authorities detained demonstrators and restricted internet access in parts of New Delhi. Meanwhile, trade negotiations with the United States had stalled amid tensions over tariffs, India's purchases of Russian oil and restrictions affecting Indian technology workers. The rupee also remained under pressure from elevated oil prices and substantial foreign portfolio outflows, prompting further central bank intervention. Although India's economy continued to grow at more than seven percent, rising inflation and these overlapping challenges complicated the government's political position and efforts to maintain economic stability.

US condemns China's sanctions on officials from Taiwan's diplomatic partners

The United States criticised China's decision to impose sanctions on officials from Belize and Paraguay over their relations with Taiwan. Both countries maintain formal diplomatic ties with Taipei, placing them among a small group of states that have resisted Beijing's efforts to isolate the island internationally. Washington described the sanctions as coercive and said countries should be free to conduct their foreign relations without intimidation. Taiwanese officials also accused China of interfering in the diplomatic affairs of sovereign states. Although the sanctions were largely symbolic, the dispute illustrated how Taiwan's contested international status affects diplomatic relations well beyond East Asia, including China's competition for influence in Latin America and the Caribbean.



14 October, 2026



Taiwan advances talks on major Alaska LNG project

Taiwan reported progress in negotiations to purchase liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Alaska, with state-owned CPC Corporation considering an investment of up to $4.4 billion in the proposed project. US President Donald Trump said Taiwan would purchase 30 percent of the project's output, while Taiwan's economy ministry confirmed plans to buy six million tonnes annually once production begins. The project, estimated to cost between $44.5 billion and $54.5 billion, aims to supply Asian markets directly from Alaska, reducing shipping time by avoiding the Panama Canal. However, substantial construction costs and questions about commercial viability remain significant obstacles. Final investment and purchasing agreements had not been confirmed, and Taiwan could begin receiving gas as early as 2032 if the project proceeds according to schedule.

15 October, 2026

IMF calls for stronger Chinese fiscal stimulus to counter deflationary pressures

The International Monetary Fund urged China to expand fiscal support, arguing that existing measures were insufficient to revive domestic demand and address persistent deflationary pressures. IMF Asia and Pacific Department Director Krishna Srinivasan said China's growth remained heavily dependent on external demand rather than a sustained recovery in household consumption. The Fund projected economic growth to slow from five percent in 2025 to 4.5 percent in 2026 and four percent in 2027. It also highlighted the prolonged property-sector downturn, which continued to undermine consumer confidence and economic activity. The IMF recommended stronger support for households, improvements in social safety nets and measures to restore confidence in the property market, while encouraging China to move towards a more consumption-driven growth model.





IMF signals continued engagement with Sri Lanka's economic recovery

The International Monetary Fund reaffirmed its willingness to continue supporting Sri Lanka as the country pursued economic recovery and reforms under its ongoing financial assistance programme. Sonali Jain-Chandra, deputy director of the IMF's Asia and Pacific Department, said the Fund stood ready to provide further assistance as appropriate and in line with Sri Lanka's needs. The statement followed earlier progress in the country's IMF-supported reform programme, including improvements in fiscal management, debt restructuring and economic stabilisation. Earlier in October, the Fund had reached a staff-level agreement on the seventh review of Sri Lanka's Extended Fund Facility arrangement. Completion of the review would make approximately $345 million available, subject to approval by the IMF's executive board. The latest remarks indicated that the Fund remained open to continued engagement, although no new financing arrangement was announced.