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# Indo-Pacific Insights

**CGS** Centre for  
Governance Studies



## A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

### September 11

#### Rohingya and Chin Refugees Protest Indefinite Detention in Assam

In India's largest detention centre for undocumented migrants, over 100 Rohingya Muslims and 30 Christian Chin refugees from Myanmar have launched a hunger strike to protest their indefinite detention. Many possess refugee cards from the UNHCR, but despite completing their terms, they remain stuck. Conditions in the camp are reportedly poor, with no family visits allowed. The protesters are calling for intervention from the Assam government and wish to be transferred to the UNHCR for resettlement in a third country. Assam's senior bureaucrat, Ravi Kota, confirmed that state officials are investigating their grievances.

### September 12

#### Pakistan Secures IMF Bailout with International Support

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced that "friendly" countries have aided Pakistan in fulfilling requirements for a \$7 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Islamabad is implementing IMF conditions to complete the 37-month loan programme, which it hopes will be its final financial assistance.

### September 10

#### Putin Warns US Against Military Dominance in Asia Amid Naval Drills

President Vladimir Putin cautioned the United States against attempting to outgun Russia in Asia, coinciding with joint naval exercises involving Russian and Chinese warships—the largest since the Soviet era. Announcing the "Ocean-2024" strategic exercise, which spans from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, Putin emphasised its focus on combat readiness and high-precision weaponry. He expressed concerns over the US bolstering its military presence near Russia's borders under the guise of countering threats from Moscow and China. Putin reaffirmed Russia's commitment to enhancing its naval forces, including nuclear capabilities, in response to perceived American aggression.

## September 13

### China Boosts Support for Maldives Amid Debt Concerns

The Maldives received a boost in its efforts to avoid a debt crisis after China agreed to enhance trade and investment, as confirmed by a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the People's Bank of China and the Maldivian Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. This agreement aims to facilitate transactions in local currencies and promote direct investments, improving sentiment around the Maldives' sharia-compliant sukuk bond. With growing worries over potential defaults on Islamic sovereign debt, this partnership underscores the Maldives' pivot towards China, following a recent electoral victory for President Mohamed Muizzu's party, who has prioritised strengthening ties with Beijing.

## September 14

### Kim Jong Un and Sergei Shoigu Discuss Strengthening North Korea-Russia Ties



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met with Russian security official Sergei Shoigu to discuss enhancing strategic dialogue and cooperation between their countries, according to state media KCNA. The leaders exchanged views on regional and international situations, reaching consensus on bolstering cooperation to protect mutual safety interests. Kim reaffirmed North Korea's commitment to expanding ties with Russia, amidst allegations from the U.S. and Ukraine that North Korea is supplying military aid to Russia in exchange for support. Both nations have denied these claims while pledging to deepen military collaboration, following the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership earlier this year.

## September 15

### Myanmar Flood Death Toll Reaches 113 Amid Typhoon Yagi Havoc

Myanmar's death toll from recent floods has risen to at least 113, as reported by the military government following heavy rains from Typhoon Yagi.

Approximately 320,000 people have been displaced, with 64 individuals still missing. The government is conducting rescue and rehabilitation efforts, but challenges remain due to damaged infrastructure and communication disruptions. The floods have severely impacted central Myanmar and affected regions including Naypyitaw and Mandalay. While the UN estimates that a third of Myanmar's 55 million people require humanitarian aid, many agencies face access restrictions and security concerns in the ongoing turmoil since the 2021 military coup.

## September 16

### Philippines to Maintain Coast Guard Presence at Sabina Shoal

The Philippines Coast Guard (PCG) has pledged to maintain a continuous presence in the contested Sabina Shoal in the South China Sea, following the return of its vessel, Teresa Magbanua, after a five-month deployment. PCG Spokesperson Jay Tarriela confirmed the commitment to monitor the area amid concerns over potential Chinese land reclamation activities. He clarified that the ship's return was for repairs and crew medical needs, not due to Chinese demands for withdrawal. Sabina Shoal, claimed by both China and the Philippines, lies within Manila's exclusive economic zone. The PCG aims to ensure ongoing surveillance despite China's sovereignty claims over the region.

## September 17

### Former Kashmiri Separatists Contest First Poll Since Region Lost Autonomy



Hafiz Mohammad Sikander Malik, a former Kashmiri independence advocate, filed his nomination for Jammu and Kashmir's local election, the first since India revoked the region's semi-autonomy in 2019. Wearing a GPS ankle tracker due to ongoing "terror" charges, the 37-year-old is one of 10 former separatists running. These candidates, once advocating for Kashmir's independence, aim to restore the region's autonomy. However, New Delhi has rejected such demands. Malik's Jamaat-e-Islami party, banned in 2019 for alleged militancy support, is focused on lifting the ban, securing amnesty for prisoners, and addressing ignored local issues. The election runs until October.

## India Condemns Iran's Supreme Leader's Comments on Muslim Treatment

India has condemned remarks by Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei regarding the treatment of Muslims in the country, labelling them "misinformed and unacceptable." Khamenei stated that Muslims should be aware of the suffering faced by their brethren in places like India and Myanmar. In response, India's foreign ministry strongly deplored his comments, advising countries to examine their own records before commenting on others. Despite their historically strong relations, highlighted by a 10-year agreement to develop the Iranian port of Chabahar, Khamenei has previously criticized India over issues affecting Indian Muslims and the Kashmir region.

### September 18

## Chinese Aircraft Carrier Enters Japan's Contiguous Waters, Raising Tensions

For the first time, a Chinese aircraft carrier entered Japan's contiguous waters on Wednesday, accompanied by two destroyers, the Japanese defence ministry reported. The vessels sailed between Japan's Yonaguni and Iriomote islands, prompting Tokyo to express "serious concerns" to Beijing. Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroshi Moriya called the incident "utterly unacceptable" for Japan's security. The manoeuvre is part of an uptick in Chinese military activity in the region, which has raised tensions. Japan has responded by building up its defence to deter potential Chinese aggression, particularly around Taiwan, which China claims as its territory.

### September 19

## China and Japan Reach Consensus on Fukushima Water Discharge

China and Japan have reached an agreement in August over the discharge of treated radioactive water from Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant, ending a two-year diplomatic dispute. Beijing initially criticised the release, calling it a "nuclear safety issue with cross-border implications," and imposed a ban on Japanese aquatic imports. Japan defended the discharge, supported by the International Atomic Energy Agency, which deemed the release safe. The agreement involves Japan establishing a long-term international monitoring system. However, China will gradually resume imports of Japanese aquatic products following further technical consultations, according to Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning.

### September 20

## Philippines Eyes Missile Capability Amid U.S.-China Tensions

The Philippines plans to enhance its military by procuring mid-range missiles and utilising the U.S.-deployed Typhon missile system for training, according to National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano. The Typhon system, sent in April for joint U.S.-Philippine drills, remains in place with no immediate plans for withdrawal despite China's demands. Beijing has expressed concerns, citing risks of a geopolitical confrontation, but Ano emphasized that no foreign nation can dictate the Philippines' defence policies. The Typhon, capable of striking Chinese targets, highlights growing tensions over the South China Sea and serves as a potential future asset for the Philippine military.

### September 21

## Quad Leaders' Summit 2024: Strengthening Indo-Pacific Cooperation

On September 21, 2024, President Joe Biden hosted the fourth Quad Leaders' Summit in Delaware, welcoming Prime Ministers Anthony Albanese (Australia), Kishida Fumio (Japan), and Narendra Modi (India). The Quad, established as a global force for good, is executing projects across the Indo-Pacific, addressing challenges like pandemics, maritime security, and climate change. Leaders announced initiatives to bolster economic resilience, infrastructure development, and technology leadership. A key highlight was the launch of the Quad Cancer Moonshot, aiming to reduce cancer mortality in the region. The summit reaffirmed the Quad's commitment to long-term collaboration and strengthening partnerships in the Indo-Pacific.

## Manipur on High Alert Amid Reports of Kuki Militants Influx

India's northeastern state of Manipur has been placed on high alert following intelligence reports of 900 suspected Kuki militants crossing from Myanmar, according to security adviser Kuldip Singh. Border police have intensified vigilance, and combing operations are underway, particularly in hill districts populated by Kuki tribes. However, the Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO) denied the claims, accusing Singh of spreading false information and calling for his resignation. Manipur has faced ongoing violence since May 2023, driven by ethnic tensions between the Meitei and Kuki communities, resulting in over 237 deaths and 60,000 displaced residents.

September 22

## Sri Lanka Elects Anura Kumara Dissanayake as New President

Sri Lankans elected Anura Kumara Dissanayake, a Marxist-leaning politician, as president, signalling their desire for change following the nation's worst financial crisis in decades. Dissanayake, 55, who ran on an anti-corruption platform, defeated incumbent President Ranil Wickremesinghe and opposition leader Sajith Premadasa. His promises to reduce poverty and reform economic policies resonated with voters, frustrated by austerity measures under Wickremesinghe's leadership. Garnering 42.3% of the vote, Dissanayake's victory was confirmed after a second tally, making him the first president in Sri Lanka's history to win in this manner.

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