



Consortium of Indo-Pacific

Researchers

Indo-Pacific Weekly Mail February 23 – March 1, 2026

Greetings Colleagues,

The Consortium is pleased to share its latest newsletter for the Indo-Pacific. Press the reply button for your feedback and comments.

Operation Epic Fury and its Implications for the Indo-Pacific



Figure 1: U.S. strike on the headquarter of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) /Image/
<https://www.centcom.mil/OPERATIONS-AND-EXERCISES/Epic-Fury/>

A joint US-Israel military operation named Epic Fury, launched on February 28 that killed Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei. US President Donald Trump states that the operation can go up to 4-5 weeks or until the objectives are met. The Epic Fury operation's objective is to eliminate the imminent nuclear threat posed by the Iranian regime, destroy its ballistic missile arsenal, degrade its proxy terror networks, and cripple its naval forces. The US military operation followed a year of unsuccessful negotiations and failed diplomatic talks with Iran. White House states that Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei Regime is responsible for attacks on American citizens, sponsorship of global terrorism, and oppression of Iranians and it's the right time to end the "rein of 47 years of killing of people by the Iranian Regime."

Ali Khamenei died in the joint US-Israel strike on the very first day followed by Iran's retaliatory attack and the conflict enters the 5th day. Surprisingly, the European allies except Germany have not been supporting US attack on Iran though allies have opened their bases for the use of defense purposes. US's biggest ally the UK is against the US action in Iran and didn't allow US to use the Diego Garcia base for the strike on Iran. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer stated, "We are not getting involved in offensive action that the US and Israel are taking."

The main geopolitical impacts of the conflict involving Iran are as follows:

Middle East Instability: The Middle East has been significantly disrupted, with Iranian forces targeting Gulf counties and the US Embassies in the region.

Hezbollah, a proxy group based in Lebanon, is currently conducting operations against Israel.

Energy Security and the Strait of Hormuz: Iran intends to close the Strait of Hormuz, a critical passage for over 20 million barrels of oil per day. If conflict is not contained, the resulting energy scarcity will have a severe impact across multiple continents.

Increased Terrorist Threats: The risk of terrorist attacks has escalated significantly. As regional stability weakens, extremist groups have become increasingly active, posing a high risk to both the region and the U.S.

Furthermore, in South Asia, significant developments have emerged following the US attack on Iran. Protests erupted in Pakistan, against the attack, fueled by feelings of remorse due to the death of the Shiite Supreme leader Khaemni. Pakistani protesters stormed the US consulates in Karachi and Islamabad. India, which has a good relationship with Iran, has invested in Iran's Chabahar Port and cooperates closely with Iran. Simultaneously, India maintains friendly relations with Arab countries as well as Israel. In fact, India has strengthened its ties with Israel following Operation Sindoor, and Indian Prime Minister Modi visited Israel the day before the attack on Iran.

Southeast Asian countries have expressed growing concern regarding the widening conflict and the potential disruption of oil flows. Additionally, these nations are worried about the safety of their citizens working in the Middle East. In response, these countries have called upon all parties to exercise

restraint. It is important to note that Indonesia, Brunei, and Malaysia are Muslim-majority nations that do not officially recognize the state of Israel.

Multinational Military Exercise Cobra Gold Begins

US and Thailand cohosted the Cobra Gold 2026 military exercise. Cobra Gold is Indo-Pacific's largest annual military exercise that brings together participants from multiple nations for military training and humanitarian projects. that strengthen regional partnerships and demonstrate U.S. commitment to Indo-Pacific security. The exercise's 45th iteration provides tactical, scenario-based instruction to more than 8,000 military personnel from 30 nations. As per reports the exercise will enhance capabilities across land, sea, air, space, and cyber domains, emphasizing command and control, field operations, and humanitarian civil assistance.

The participant countries are Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and the U.S., with other participants including Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Fiji, France, India, Italy, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, the Philippines and the United Kingdom. Observer nations include Brunei, Germany, Jordan, Laos, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. [Read More](#)

Canada's Carney Visits India, Australia, and Japan

Canadian Prime Minister visited India, Australia, and Japan to deepen cooperation with so called middle powers. After his speech at Davos regarding the “rupture of the world order,” Carney seeks to foster connections between countries based on shared interests and issue based.

Carney on his first visit to India as Prime Minister of Canada and the first bilateral Canadian prime ministerial visit since 2018 welcomed by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Canada and India have reset their relations after Canada accused New Delhi of involvement in the extrajudicial killing of a Sikh separatist in 2023. Both leaders [signed several agreements](#) on trade, energy, education, technology, critical minerals, AI, and Indo-Pacific partnership.

Canada and Australia have close relations. Both countries are expected to sign agreements on defense and maritime security, critical minerals, trade, and artificial intelligence. [Read More](#)

Nepal’s National Vote: A Crucial Election for Gen Z

Nepal heads to parliamentary polls on March 5, 2026, with nearly 19 million voters, including 800000 first-time voters, participating in a crucial election since the youth uprising in September 2025. The protests, initially sparked by a social media ban, evolved into a broader anti-corruption movement that threatened the country's political and economic stability.

The established parties, mainly the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), led by Mr. K P Oli (whose Prime Minister resigned during the protest), and the Nepal Communist Party (formerly the Maoist movement), which now forms part of the political mainstream, are in fierce competition. Another two parties, the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), are also in the race.

Citizens, especially young voters, are expressing high expectations for a transparent government that prioritizes youth welfare, employment opportunities, climate action, and economic revival. [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

Where is Strait of Hormuz located?

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| a. Indian Ocean | c. Pacific Ocean |
| b. Persian Gulf | d. South China Sea |

Which country imports 90 percent of Iranian oil?

- | | |
|-------------|----------|
| a. Russia | b. China |
| c. Pakistan | d. Syria |
-

Consortium Highlights

- ❖ Upcoming webinar **Iran War: Implications for the Indo-Pacific**, March 11, 10:00 AM EST

- ❖ Upcoming webinar **Dynasty, Power, and Stability: Post Election Bangladesh and South Asia**
 - ❖ Upcoming podcast on **Meiji Japan and what it teaches about rising Asian powers**
 - ❖ CIPR is now accepting applications for internship positions.
-

Indo-Pacific Quiz Key

Here are the **Answers** for February 22 Newsletter Quiz

Q. Which conflict has reached its fifth year as of February 24?

b. Russia-Ukraine

Q. In which city was the India AI Impact Summit 2026 held?

a. New Delhi

Contributions: Indu Saxena