



Consortium of Indo-Pacific
Researchers

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Greetings Colleagues,

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

ASEAN-Australia Summit Held in Melbourne



Figure 1: ASEAN leaders in Melbourne/ IMAGE: Australian Government/PMC

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Australia celebrated their 50 years of partnership and convened the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit in Melbourne from March 4-6, 2024.

The ASEAN-Australia summit forum has proved vital for strategic and economic purposes. It strongly emphasizes the unwavering commitment to a comprehensive strategic partnership between the two regions. The leaders came together and solidified their shared vision for mutually beneficial and trusted partnerships for the sustainable growth and holistic development of their regions. The gathering resulted in the release of a [Leaders' Vision Statement](#), which set out their strategic vision for the next 50 years, and a [Joint Leaders' Declaration](#) (the Melbourne Declaration).

To put it briefly, both documents stand for 3 S's- sustainable growth, Security, and the Sea Code of Conduct. In the joint statement leaders promised to work for sustainable growth and jointly tackle the global challenges of sustainability like climate change, pandemics, food, water, and energy security etc. They reaffirmed their commitment to recognize and respect the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982 to ensure the freedom of navigation in the Pacific. They further stated, "We strive for a region where differences are managed through respectful dialogue, not the threat or use of force." They also pledged their unwavering support towards preserving the Southeast Asia region as a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, and to ensure that it remains free from all other weapons of mass destruction.

It is noted that ASEAN and Australia are critical players in the Indo-Pacific region, and they are firmly committed to advancing a vision of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific. In the joint statement, leaders affirmed a rule-based regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific region where the U.N. Charter, the ASEAN Charter, and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) are respected and upheld. The ASEAN-Australia partnership has achieved significant milestone; however, Myanmar proved the outlier and was officially not invited to the summit. The leaders denounced the ongoing violence in Myanmar, expressed their apprehension about the deteriorating human rights situation in the country, and voiced their support to resolve the political crisis in accordance with ASEAN's Five-Point consensus.

To sum up, ASEAN and Australia's partnership is expected to be fundamental in the wake of shifting regional dynamics and to promote a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific as leaders vowed to tackle challenges posed by changing strategic, political, and economic spheres in the region. [Read More](#)

India's Foreign Minister Visits South Korea and Japan

India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, visited the Republic of Korea (ROK) and chaired the 10th India-ROK Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) with his counterpart H.E. Mr. Cho Tae-yul, Minister of

Foreign Affairs. As per the [press release](#), during their meeting, the leaders discussed the progress of bilateral cooperation between India and the Republic of Korea. They reviewed various areas of collaboration, including trade, investments, development cooperation, defense and security, science and technology, culture, and people-to-people exchanges. They also deliberated on potential measures to augment cooperation in emerging technologies, semiconductors, and green hydrogen. Furthermore, they discussed common interests and concerns in the shared Indo-Pacific region and exchanged their respective Indo-Pacific visions and strategies. In Japan, Dr. Jai Shankar [participated](#) in Strategic Dialogue along with Japan's Foreign Minister Kamikawa. Both leaders discussed bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, and technology. Furthermore, they also discussed the shared values, histories and interests, peace and security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. [Read More](#)

U.S.-ROK Conducts Marine Exercise

The United States and South Korea recently carried out their annual joint military exercise, Freedom Shield 24. This drill is designed to enhance the two nations combined defensive capabilities. Reports indicate that this year's training is centered on multidomain operations,

utilizing land, air, sea, and non-kinetic assets to safeguard the shared security interests of both nations. [Read More](#)

Maldives Signs Defense Pact with China

The Maldives signed a defense agreement with China that provide free military assistance and training to Maldives. The Defense Ministry of Maldives said that deal will foster “stronger bilateral ties” between two countries. Since Maldives President Muizzu came to power, his inclination towards maintaining close ties with China has become evident. He is known to be “pro-China” and prefers stronger ties with China over India. Also, Muizzu asked India's military personnels to leave the Maldives. He [visited](#) China as his first state visit and China and both countries agreed to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership."

China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean is another significant factor that has been a cause of concern for India. India worries that the Maldives' increasing closeness with China could lead to the Chinese military's establishment in the Indian Ocean. This move could have a significant impact on Indian Ocean security, given that the Indian Ocean is a vital waterway for trade, energy, and strategic interests for the countries in the Indo-Pacific. [Read More](#)

India to Deploy More Soldiers to Himalayan Border

India plans to move 10,000 troops to the China border in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh amid the tense relations between the two countries after the Galwan Valley clash in 2020. While China's foreign ministry spokesperson warns that increasing troops is "not conducive to easing tensions." [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

Which country's capital is on the banks of the Tuul River?

- a. Vietnam
- b. Laos
- c. Mongolia
- d. Timor-Leste

In which year Australia became ASEAN's first dialogue partner?

- a. 1968
 - b. 1972
 - c. 1974
 - d. 1975
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Consortium Highlights

Podcast: **Prabowo's Presidency and Indonesia's Future**

Trajectory. Consortium intern ERIN Katrina Titiharuw talks extensively with Mr. Muhammad Waffaa Kharisma. [Listen Here.](#)

Blog Post: **The 14th Annual NPC Session: What Could Be the Possible**

Ramifications Arising Among Like-Minded Countries? A blog by

Consortium Member Vineet Malik. [Read Here.](#)

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