



Consortium of Indo-Pacific
Researchers

Indo-Pacific Weekly Mail April 15 - 21, 2024

Greetings Colleagues,

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

Balikatan Military Exercise 2024 Kicks Off



Figure 1: French Floréal-class frigate FS Vendémiaire (F734) participates in Balikatan Exercise close to Taiwan in the South China Sea. IMAGE / Naval News

The largest military drill between the United States and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) [begins](#) in the South China Sea. This is the 36th edition of the bilateral exercise, which supports the U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty by enhancing military cooperation and readiness between the two militaries.

This is the first time the French Navy has participated with the U.S. Navy and the Philippines Navy in the Philippines's Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ). Additionally, [14 countries will join as observers](#): Brunei, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The participant navies will execute a range of complex missions across domains, including maritime security, sensing and targeting, air and missile defense, dynamic missile strikes, cyber defense, and information operations.

“Balikatan” is a Tagalog phrase that means “shoulder-to-shoulder,” describing the spirit of the annual exercise and the close friendship between the Philippines and the United States.

Recent high-level meetings have further solidified the U.S.-Philippine alliance. At the [trilateral summit](#) in Washington, President Biden reiterated the U.S.'s unwavering commitment to the defense of the Philippines. This was followed by a meeting at the Pentagon, where U.S. Defense Secretary Austin hosted President Marcos Jr. and underscored the expanded partnership under the Mutual Defense Treaty. These engagements underscore the ongoing commitment to the alliance and the shared security interests in the region.

Underlining the commitment to the alliance, the President's fiscal year 2025 budget request includes a substantial allocation of \$128 million. This funding is specifically earmarked for 36 infrastructure projects on Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement sites in the Philippines. This amount is more than double the previous investment made by the U.S. at these sites. [Read More](#)

World's Largest Democracy on Ballot

The first phase of India's Parliamentary elections, which involve 543 seats, commenced on April 19. The voting process will take place over seven phases from April 19 to June 1, and the results will be announced on June 4, 2024. During the first phase, [more than 60 percent](#) of voters exercised their right to vote. Interestingly, in the northeastern states, the turnout was above 70 percent, while in some states, it reached more than 80 percent.

The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), is led by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and Prime Minister Modi, seeks a vote on the ambitious plan of "[Viksit Bharat 2047](#)." It envisions transforming India into a developed country and a major global power by 2047, that is centenary of India's Independence. In the domestic arena the ruling party pitches on religion, eliminating dynastic politics, reducing corruption, and development.

On the other side, the India Alliance coalition, led by the Congress Party and informally headed by [Mr. Rahul Gandhi](#), the great-grandson of India's first Prime Minister Pt. J. L. Nehru, presents a contrasting view. They assert that this election is about ideology, with their primary focus on saving democracy and addressing issues such as poverty and unemployment, which they believe are the pressing concerns of the nation.

It is important to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of India's elections and the various factors that influence the elections. **Religion**, for example, plays a significant role in many parts of the country, with candidates often appealing to voters based on their religious beliefs. **Caste** is another crucial factor, with candidates seeking to gain the support of specific castes or communities. **Regionalism** also comes into play, with voters often identifying more strongly with their local region or state. Finally, **Corruption** remains a pervasive issue in Indian politics, with allegations of bribery, fraud, and other forms of malfeasance often surfacing during election campaigns. Moreover, **Unemployment** and **Poverty** are also pivotal issues in the election.

If Modi is elected as the PM for the 3rd time, he will become the second P.M. in India's history to serve a 3rd term, a potential game-changer in Indian politics. [Read More](#)

Wang Wi Visits Indonesia

China's Foreign Minister Wang Wi met his Indonesian counterpart Retno and the President-elect Prabowo Subianto in Jakarta. [As per reports](#), two leaders agreed to strengthen ties and maintaining peace and stability in the region. During their conversation, they also talked about the ongoing conflict in Gaza. Both parties emphasized the significance of implementing a cease-fire to resolve the situation. It is worth noting that Indonesia's President-elect visited China as his first visit to a foreign country in early April and met with Chinese President Xi. [Read More](#)

U.S and China Defense Ministers Meet Virtually

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin held met via videoconferencing with China's Defense Minister Adm. Dong Jun. As per the reports both leaders discussed regional and global issues along with U.S.-China defense relations. As per the Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, "Austin underscored the importance of respect for high seas freedom of navigation guaranteed under international law — especially in the South China Sea — and reiterated that the United States will continue to fly, sail and operate safely and responsibly, wherever international law allows." [Read More](#)

U.S. Imposes Sanctions on Suppliers to Pakistan's Missile Program

The United States has imposed sanctions on foreign entities that provide assistance to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The Belarus-based Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant, People's Republic of China (PRC) entities, Xi'an Longde Technology Development Company, Tianjin Creative Source International Trade Co Ltd, and Granpect Company Limited have been found responsible for assisting Pakistan's National Development Complex (NDC) in the development of Missile Technology Control Regime Category (MTCR) ballistic missiles. [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

What is the lower house of India's Parliament known as?

- a. Sansad
- b. Raj Sabhya
- c. Lok Sabha
- d. Senate

In which country Mount Ruang volcano is located?

- a. Japan
- c. Philippines

b. Malaysia

d. Indonesia

Consortium Highlights

- ❖ CIPR Intern Yoojung Kwon, writes **East Asia's Carbon Neutrality Progress: How Far?** [Read Here.](#)
- ❖ CIPR Roundtable discussion, **U.S.-Japan-Philippines Summit: Bolstering Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific.** [Watch Here](#)



Consortium of Indo-Pacific Researchers
invites for a Roundtable discussion on
U.S.-Japan-Philippines Summit: Bolstering Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific

April 18, 8:00 PM EST, 5:00 PM PST, 2:00 PM HST, April 19, 9:00 AM JST



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