



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

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INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

This publication is a monthly analytical survey of developments and policy trends that impact India's interests and define its challenges across the extended Indo-Pacific maritime space, which has become the primary theatre of global geopolitical contestation. It is authored by Cmde. Lalit Kapur (Retd.), DPG Senior Fellow for Maritime Strategy, assisted by Ms. Divya Rai, based on open source reports and publications. Your comments and feedback may be addressed to the author at lalit@dpg.org.in. To subscribe, please [click here](#).

Cover Images:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomes Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong to Hyderabad House on September 04, 2025. Source: [MEA](#)

Family photo of the Tianjin SCO Summit, September 01, 2025. Source: [PIB](#)

INS Teg and ESPS Mendez Nunes conduct PASSEX off Mumbai on September 11, 2025. Source: [Indian Navy](#)

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INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

September 2025

Abstract

The month was marked by changes of government in Thailand and Nepal. In Thailand, Anutin Charnvirakul was named by parliament as the third prime minister in two years on September 05, following the removal of Paetongtarn Shinawatra from the post. In Nepal, violent protests against a social media ban and public outrage at rampant corruption forced the resignation of Prime Minister KPS Oli and the nomination of former Supreme Court Chief Justice Sushila Karki as the Prime Minister on September 12.

Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba announced on September 08 that he would resign as leader of the ruling LDP and Prime Minister. Elections for the new leader of the LDP will be held on October 04.

Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong visited India from September 02-04 and formalised an ambitious roadmap for the bilateral Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. His visit was followed by that of the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, who was in India from September 09-16. India announced a special economic package for Mauritius during the visit.

Australia and Papua New Guinea agreed on the text of a mutual defence treaty on September 17. The treaty will be signed on completion of cabinet processes in both countries.

Indonesia and Canada signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement on September 24, during the visit of President Prabowo Subianto to Canada. They also signed an MoU on cooperative activities in the field of defence, complementing the previously signed MoU on military cooperation.

Australia and the UAE elevated their relations to a strategic partnership on September 29, during the visit of Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to the UAE. An ambitious free trade agreement between the two countries will come into force on October 01.



The 12th Australia-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting was held in Tokyo on September 05. The two countries have stated their intention to elevate their Special Strategic Partnership and redefine the direction of their cooperation for the next 50 years based on shared strategic goals.

The 2025 edition of India's Technology Perspective Capability Roadmap (TPCR) was unveiled by the Ministry of Defence on September 05. It follows TPCR 2013 and TPCR 2018, and seeks to convey the perspective of India's Armed Forces on emerging futuristic combat technologies and their capability requirements, enabling industry to step up R&D efforts and build production lines and assemblies to meet these needs.

China designated the disputed Scarborough Shoal as a national nature reserve on September 10, ostensibly to maintain the diversity, stability and sustainability of the ecosystem. The Philippines protested, with the US supporting the Philippine position.

India's planned Great Nicobar development project was in the news on account of concerns over the island's vulnerable communities. The project envisages the construction of an international container transshipment terminal, an international airport, two cities and gas and solar based power plants.

India's Union Cabinet approved on September 24 a package of ₹ 69,725 crores (about \$ 7.9 billion) to revitalize India's shipbuilding and marine ecosystem. The intent, as part of India's maritime Amrit Kaal vision, is to raise shipbuilding capacity from the present 0.1 million tonnes to 4.5 million tonnes, while creating 250 million tonnes of additional port capacity. Meanwhile, India's Mazagon Docks Limited began exploring the development of a world-class greenfield shipyard on India's East Coast.

Australia announced on September 14 the commitment of A\$ 12 billion (about USD 7.9 billion) towards upgrading Perth's Henderson Shipyard to support the nuclear-powered submarine fleet as well as to build surface combatants, including Mogami class frigates. The Pentagon's policy review, meanwhile, appeared to green light the provision of SSNs to Australia under the AUKUS programme.

The US Navy sought the lease of 25,000 m² of climate-controlled warehousing facilities in Subic Bay, with operations to begin in September 2026. The development marks a return of the USN to the base after its withdrawal in 1992.



Singapore's Prime Minister Visits India

A year ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made his fifth visit to Singapore and upgraded the bilateral relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP). Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong reciprocated by visiting India from September 02-04 to formalise an ambitious road map for the CSP¹.

The road map adopted envisages deepening cooperation in eight areas: economic cooperation; skills development; digitalisation; sustainability; connectivity; healthcare and medicine; people-to-people and cultural exchanges; and defence and security cooperation. On the economic front, Singapore is presently India's sixth largest trading partner, accounting for nearly 3% of India's total trade, and is also the largest source of FDI into India, accounting for 24% of the total FDI inflows. The countries resolved to deepen bilateral trade and access to markets through a review of both the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) and the ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA). They resolved to support the growth of India's semiconductor industry and ecosystem; develop sustainable industrial parks with advanced manufacturing capabilities; enhance capital market connectivity; strengthen partnerships and collaboration between the business communities in the two countries; promote joint collaboration in the space sector; and enhance legal and dispute resolution cooperation.

The countries agreed to jointly develop a National Centre of Excellence in Advanced Manufacturing in Chennai and collaborate with the private sector to develop skill centres in sectors of mutual interest, including advanced manufacturing, aviation and Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO). They further agreed to promote cooperation in capability development in technical vocational education and training and skills development.

Five agreements/MoUs were concluded, including cooperation on a green and digital shipping corridor; promoting collaboration in space; cooperation in training and R&D in civil aviation; and cooperation on digital asset innovation. The Prime Ministers jointly virtually inaugurated the phase two development of the Bharat Mumbai Container Terminal at Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNP), operated by PSA International of Singapore. Phase two has doubled the PSA's terminal capacity to 4.8 million TEUs annually, making it India's largest single container terminal and making JNP the largest container port in the country.

¹ India Singapore Joint Statement, September 04, 2025, <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/Newsroom/Press-Statements-Transcripts-and-Photos/2025/09/PM-Wong-Official-Visit-to-India>

The leaders acknowledged defence cooperation as an important area of the bilateral partnership. They agreed to further the momentum of exchanges and training cooperation as well as engagement between the two sides, including all three services. They also agreed to explore cooperation in defence technology, in areas such as Quantum Computing, AI, Automation and Unmanned Vessels. Cooperation in maritime security and submarine rescue will continue, as will working closely with regional security architectures. Cooperation in maritime domain awareness between respective Information Fusion Centres is to be strengthened. Singapore acknowledged with appreciation India's interest in the Malacca Straits Patrol.

Strategically located at the mouth of the Malacca Strait linking the Pacific and Indian Ocean's, Singapore is a city state with a population of about 6 million and a per capita GDP of around \$93,000 (nominal). It has emerged as one of the world's richest and most advanced nations. It is China's largest trading partner, with 25% of its exports going to China and Hong Kong. It is also a key US security partner and commands significant influence in ASEAN. From the launch of the Look East Policy in 1992, Singapore has consistently been India's gateway to Southeast Asia. Its importance is reflected by the frequency of summit-level exchanges it has with India.

The visit by Prime Minister Lawrence Wong signals Singapore's commitment to broadening and deepening the relationship with India. The ambitious roadmap adopted has the potential to take the bilateral partnership to a higher level, addressing trade and investment, technology and security. Effective execution of the roadmap will play a significant part in India's development in the years ahead.

Mauritius Prime Minister's State Visit to India

Six months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Mauritius and unveiled India's MAHASAGAR vision², Mauritius Prime Minister Dr. Navin Ramgoolam reciprocated with a state visit to India from September 9-16, 2025. Dr. Ramgoolam is a four time Prime Minister of Mauritius whose present term began in November 2024. India was his first international destination in the present term.

Located in the Southern Indian Ocean, about 200 Km Northeast of Reunion, 900 Km East of Madagascar and 3800 Km Southwest of Kanyakumari, Mauritius is a former

² For an overview, see Lalit Kapur, "Transforming SAGAR into MAHASAGAR – The Modi visit to Mauritius", Indo-Pacific Monitor Volume VI Issue 3, March 2025, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2110718>https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/storage/uploads/publications_file/indo-pacific-monitor-5292.pdf



French and British colony that gained independence in 1968³. The country has a population of about 1.2 million and a land area of barely 2100 Km². However, following the assumption of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago (which includes the US base at Diego Garcia) in May 2025, Mauritius has an EEZ of around 2.3 million Km², nearly the same size as India's EEZ. All maritime traffic in the Southwestern Indian Ocean, including that rounding the Cape of Good Hope or passing through the Mozambique Channel, passes in the vicinity of Mauritius. Also, the French territory of Reunion is located close to Mauritius.

India's connect with Mauritius dates back to 1729, when the first batch of Indians were brought to the island from Puducherry, to work as artisans and masons. A little over a century later, the British brought half a million Indians to the island to work as indentured labour in sugarcane plantations. People of Indian origin now make up nearly 70% of the country's population. Independent India's diplomatic relationship with Mauritius dates back to 1948, before the island country's independence. Its chief security concerns are piracy and trafficking of narcotics. Mauritius has no regular military forces. The Mauritius Police Force (MPF) functions under the Ministry of Defence and includes a paramilitary unit known as the Special Mobile Force, a Police Helicopter Squadron, a Special Support Unit and the National Coast Guard. India is the MPF's primary security partner and has traditionally been the first responder in times of crisis.

In March 2025, Prime Minister Modi had elevated relations with Mauritius to an enhanced strategic partnership built on ten pillars⁴: political exchanges, development partnership, HRD and capacity building, space and climate change, health and education cooperation, economic and trade cooperation, digital cooperation, defence and maritime security cooperation, regional and multilateral cooperation, and cultural and people-to-people ties. As part of the follow-up, a special economic package for Mauritius was announced during the current visit⁵. This comprises four projects estimated to cost \$ 215 million to be undertaken on grant basis, including the provision of helicopters, and four other projects to be undertaken on grant/LOC basis, worth \$ 440 million. The two sides also agreed to the redevelopment and restructuring of Port Louis in Mauritius, and assistance in the development and surveillance of Chagos Marine Protected Area. It was agreed that India would assist Mauritius in augmenting its maritime security and defence preparedness, and contribute to the

³ India – Mauritius Bilateral Relations, August 2025,

<https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-Mauritius-Aug-2025.pdf>

⁴ India-Mauritius Joint Vision for an Enhanced Strategic Partnership, March 12, 2025,

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2110718>

⁵ India – Mauritius Joint Announcement: Special Economic Package, September 11, 2025,

https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/40127/India_Mauritius_Joint_Announcement_Special_Economic_Package

safeguarding of the waters around Mauritius and in the broader region. A new MoU on telemetry tracking and command of satellites and launch vehicles has been put into place⁶.

The geostrategic location, cultural and diaspora connect and long history of friendship with India make Mauritius a key part of India's Neighbourhood First and Indian Ocean policies. Mauritius hosts India's only extra-territorial maritime outpost in the Indian Ocean at Agalega, where India has developed a naval and air facility including a 3000m airstrip and a deep-water jetty, enabling regional surveillance and the gathering of maritime intelligence. The visit of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam to India marked an important step in the continued development of the bilateral relationship.

The Australia Japan 2+2 Ministerial

Middle powers separated by a distance of around 5000 Km, the bilateral relationship between Japan and Australia, two of the staunchest allies of the US in the Pacific, has grown substantially from the time the two were on opposing sides during WWII. Bilateral relations were re-established in 1952. A 1957 Commerce Agreement led to the establishment of a mutually beneficial trading relationship. In 1976, the two countries committed to enduring peace and friendship through the Nara Treaty. Recognising the changing strategic environment, they signed a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in March 2007, with the first 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting being held in June 2007. They were at the forefront in adopting the Indo-Pacific concept: Japan through Abe's Confluence of the Seas speech to India's parliament in 2007, followed by adoption of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy in 2016; Australia through the 2013 Defence White Paper. In 2014, they elevated bilateral relations to a Special Strategic Partnership. Their Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation was revised in October 2022. Apart from economic interest, the factors driving them closer have been their alliance with the US and shared concern about doing more to check China's growing assertion and coercion in the Western Pacific. Both countries have been recent victims of this assertion.

The most recent step in evolution of relations was the 12th 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial held in Tokyo on September 05, 2025. The joint statement issued on the occasion recognises the elevated importance of the Japan-Australia relationship in the

⁶ List of Outcomes: State visit of Prime Minister of Mauritius to India, September 11, 2025, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/40128/List_of_Outcomes_State_visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Mauritius_to_India_September_0916_2025



changed Indo-Pacific environment⁷. The countries have stated their intention to elevate their Special Strategic Partnership and redefine the direction of their cooperation for the next 50 years based on shared strategic goals. These, inter alia, include a rules-based order where states resolve disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law, and where sovereignty and territorial integrity are respected; maintenance of a favourable strategic balance that deters aggression and behaviour that undermines international rules and norms; an open, stable, and secure maritime domain underpinned by adherence to international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, in which States can exercise freedom of navigation and overflight and are not subject to coercive or destabilising actions; inclusive and transparent institutions, norms and standards that guide cooperation on shared challenges in domains such as cyber, space, critical and emerging technologies and telecommunications; countries that are resilient to aggression, coercion, disinformation, malicious cyber activity and other forms of interference, as well as to global challenges such as pandemics, natural disasters and climate change; and continuing regional economic integration underpinned by a rules-based and market-oriented trade and investment system, as well as diverse and resilient supply chains. Their intent is underpinned by their commitment to working with the US and other partners to keep the US engaged in the region and uphold the international system.

Japan and Australia share a common strategic perspective on a multitude of geopolitical issues. In the Indo-Pacific, these include opposition to attempts to change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, the East China Sea and the South China Sea by force or coercion; the unsafe interactions and unusual approaches by Chinese military aircraft and naval vessels, including their conduct of live-fire exercises in the Tasman Sea without adequate notification; North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in violation of UNSC resolutions; and the worsening humanitarian situation in Myanmar. Globally, they include opposing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, concern about the worsening situation in Gaza and the fundamental objective that Iran never develops a nuclear weapon.

Japan is Australia's second largest trading partner, after China. Nearly half of Australia's exports to Japan are made up by energy (coal and LNG). Japan is also Australia's fourth largest foreign investor, with significant investment in extraction of coal, LNG and iron ore. The ministers appreciated Japan's investment to expand cooperation in strengthening critical minerals supply chains. Other sectors where

⁷ Joint Statement on the 12th Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations, September 06, 2025, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100900655.pdf>



cooperation is being strengthened include cyber security, space, foreign information manipulation and information security.

One sector that has witnessed considerable advancement in cooperation is defence and security. Japan and Australia have an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) that entered into force in January 2013 and a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) that entered into force in August 2023. Cooperation under these agreements has grown substantially, with over 40 activities including participation in joint exercises having taken place under the RAA. Plans are afoot for HMAS Brisbane to pursue its first assisted maintenance period in a Japanese port shortly. Australia and Japan have placed a liaison officer at each other's joint headquarters. On the defence industry front, the selection of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' upgraded Mogami-class frigate as the preferred platform for Australia's future general purpose frigates is the largest ever Japan-Australia defence industrial collaboration. The two countries are also working together on a cutting-edge laser technology co-development project. Further, the AUKUS partners and Japan have successfully tested underwater autonomous systems using an advanced acoustic communications capability.

The two countries reaffirmed their backing for the Quad, welcoming its leadership in driving practical cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. They emphasised the importance of enhanced cooperation between Japan, Australia and the Republic of Korea to advance shared interests in the region. They also underscored the importance of ongoing operational coordination and defence cooperation between Japan, Australia, the Philippines and the US in the South China Sea, including through regular Maritime Cooperation Activities and exercises to support regional maritime security. They noted efforts to enhance Japan-Australia-India-US maritime domain awareness cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, including through Exercise Malabar this year.

Both countries have committed to increasing their defence spending, though not to the extent desired by the US. Australia's 2025 defence budget is A\$55.7 billion (USD 36.7 billion, about 2.02% of GDP), while Japan has sought a budget of 8.8 trillion Yen (USD 60 billion) for the coming year. The amount is dwarfed by China's budget of around USD 246 billion in 2025. Although both are technologically advanced, their advancement is not sufficient to counter China's growing capability. Moreover, China is a nuclear power, while both Japan and Australia depend on the US nuclear umbrella for their security. So even though the relationship between Japan and Australia has transformed into the most consequential bilateral partnership in support of US objectives in the Western Pacific, the reality is that the Japan-Australia relationship

rests on the foundations of US backing. Without it, both are too far apart and limited in their security capability to effectively deter China's revisionism in the Indo-Pacific.

The Greater Nicobar Project

by Divya Rai

The Great Nicobar project, a flagship initiative under India's Holistic Development of Islands programme, has again sparked scrutiny over concerns about the impact on the island's vulnerable communities, particularly the largely uncontacted Shompen tribe and the Nicobarese people⁸. Initiated in 2021 following a feasibility report from NITI Aayog, the project leverages Great Nicobar's strategic location and envisions transforming the southernmost island of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago into a hub of trade, tourism, and strategic military presence.

The project involves the construction of an international container transshipment terminal (ICTT), a greenfield international airport, 450 MVA gas and solar-based power plants and two greenfield cities. The most crucial component of the project is the ICTT planned on the eastern side of Galathea Bay, which is anticipated to have a total capacity of 16 million TEU. Adjacent to this, the Great Nicobar International Airport (GNIA), a dual-use civilian and military airport, will be developed as a greenfield development on the northeast side of Galathea Bay. The project also includes the development of two greenfield coastal cities—one on the southeast (between Campbell Bay and Galathea Bay) and another on the southwest (west of Galathea Bay). These cities are intended to support population growth, tourism, and industrial activity, integrating modern urban planning with eco-friendly infrastructure⁹. Additional components include an international cruise terminal to attract global tourism, a free trade zone, and a shipbreaking and shipbuilding yard. The project will be implemented by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO) in three phases from 2025 to 2047¹⁰.

The core rationale behind the project is twofold: economic competitiveness and strategic security. Geographically, Great Nicobar sits astride the mouth of the Strait of Malacca, one of the world's busiest maritime chokepoints. For India, establishing a

⁸ The Hindu. "The Making of an Ecological Disaster in the Nicobar." September 8, 2025. Accessed September 19, 2025. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-making-of-an-ecological-disaster-in-the-nicobar/article70022939.ece>.

⁹ Press Information Bureau, Government of India. "International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP)." January 26, 2023. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1894045>.

¹⁰ Press Information Bureau, Government of India. "Shri Sarbananda Sonowal Visits Galathea Bay in Great Nicobar Island and Reviews Progress of Proposed International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP)." November 22, 2023. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1979157>



robust presence here enhances its ability to monitor and secure traffic along this critical artery. India has no port on the world's trunk container routes; international cargo from India must be shipped on the large container carriers that ply trunk routes to Dubai, Colombo or Singapore and then transhipped to smaller vessels for the journey to Indian ports. The reverse applies to cargo from India. This causes losses of millions annually; port handling fees at overseas hubs and transshipment increase expenses for Indian businesses. Currently, Colombo, Singapore and Klang handle more than 85% of this cargo. The proposed transshipment port at Great Nicobar aims to reduce this dependency and capture 20–30% of regional cargo rerouting from the Malacca Strait. With an initial handling capacity of about 4 million TEU, the facility is projected to expand to 16 million TEU by 2058. The project is expected to save \$200–220 million each year on transshipment costs alone, reducing logistics inefficiencies for Indian trade, and creating an opportunity for the country to emerge as a major shipping hub for the eastern coast of India and South Asia¹¹.

One of New Delhi's priorities is to extend the runway of INS Baaz at Great Nicobar from the current length of about 1000 metres to around 4000 metres¹². This expansion will enable wide-body aircraft operations, including the deployment of P-8I Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft and fighter jets, significantly enhancing India's maritime surveillance and operational reach in Southeast Asia. This expansion aligns with the broader Greater Nicobar Project, which features new transshipment terminals, jetties for larger vessels, upgraded logistics and storage facilities, and a greenfield international airport. These infrastructure upgrades complement the military buildup by securing trade and energy routes and ensuring rapid deployment capabilities in the strategic Strait of Malacca. Furthermore, with China expanding its maritime footprint in the Bay of Bengal and beyond, advanced surveillance assets will strengthen the ANC's communication and operational capabilities and build up a strong military deterrence at Great Nicobar.

Despite the strategic and economic advantages, the project has faced criticism since its launch in 2021. Project opponents have cited concern about the impact on the island's unique biodiversity, including nesting grounds for giant leatherback sea turtles and the habitat of indigenous tribes. Although environmental clearance in 2022 mandated mitigation measures—including a leatherback turtle sanctuary and commitments to rainforest and coral reef restoration—scepticism persists over the adequacy of safeguards¹³. In addition, the project also has limited mainland connectivity, which

¹¹ Press Information Bureau, Government of India. "International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP)." January 26, 2023. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1894045>.

¹² NITI Aayog, "Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Islands Pre-Feasibility", pg. 51-52, March 2021. environmentclearance.nic.in

¹³ The Economic Times. "Airport, Container Depot, Township in 16,610 Hectares of Pristine Nicobar Cleared." Published September 14,



will result in increased construction and operational costs, raising concern about the long-term viability and competitiveness of its transshipment port against well-connected hubs like Singapore and Colombo. In the near term, these limitations may prevent Great Nicobar from displacing existing transshipment hubs.

Additionally, the Great Nicobar project overlaps with Sabang Port in Aceh Province, which could potentially undermine the viability of collaborative projects between India and Indonesia. The construction of a port in Sabang, which is less than 100 nm from Great Nicobar, seeks to improve Aceh-Andaman maritime connectivity and provide India with easier access to the Malacca Straits. The simultaneous rise of Great Nicobar as a hub could diminish the urgency and economic appeal for India to invest heavily in a competing facility like Sabang. If the two ports are vying for the same region and shipping traffic, it may dilute the potential benefits of their planned partnerships.

Notwithstanding the challenges, there is no denying that India's security and economic aspirations remain closely tied to the Indian Ocean, making the Great Nicobar project pivotal in its long-term strategy. After decades of neglect toward the significance of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Indian government has taken proactive steps to harness the capabilities of this southernmost part of India. Although the project is now at the core of national debate, in true essence, the Nicobar Project is much more than infrastructure development; it is an investment in India's strategic posture. It provides India with the opportunity to strengthen its naval presence, reduce logistical dependence on foreign ports, and unlock regional growth, thereby positioning India as a major player in the Indo-Pacific.

Other Indo-Pacific Developments

Thai Prime Minister. Business tycoon Anutin Charnvirakul of the Bhumjaithai Party was chosen by parliament as Thailand's third Prime Minister in two years, following the removal of Paetongtarn Shinawatra by the Constitutional Court for ethical violations over her handling of the border dispute with Cambodia¹⁴. The new Prime Minister's party broke from the coalition headed by Shinawatra's Pheu Thai and was able to win sufficient support in parliament for its nominee.

2022. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/shipping/-transport/airport-container-depot-township-in-16610-hectares-of-pristine-nicobar-cleared/articleshow/94208294.cms>.

¹⁴ Thailand names third prime minister in two years, September 05, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cr4q051zxgyo>

Unrest in Nepal. Nepal plunged into political chaos on September 09 as protests over the social media ban and rampant corruption turned violent, resulting in the Supreme Court and Parliament buildings been set on fire, along with the homes of three former Prime Ministers. Nepal's Prime Minister KPS Oli resigned. The Army stepped in and calmed the situation down. An interim government, led by former Supreme Court Chief Justice Sushila Karki, was sworn in on September 12. India welcomed formation of the new government and hoped it would help in fostering peace and stability¹⁵.

Japan's Prime Minister to Resign. Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba announced that he would resign in response to mounting pressure in his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)¹⁶. The LDP has lost majority in both of Japan's Houses of Parliament after Ishiba became the LDP leader. Elections for the LDP leadership will be held on October 04, 2025. Those who have thrown their hat into the ring include Sanae Takaichi, former Economic Security Minister; Shinjiro Koizumi, Agriculture Minister; Toshimitsu Motegi, former Foreign Minister; Yoshimasa Hayashi, Chief Cabinet Secretary; and Takayuki Kobayashi, former Economic Security Minister.

Australia PNG Mutual Defence Treaty. Papua New Guinea and Australia have on September 17 agreed on the text of a Mutual Defence Treaty (the Pukpuk Treaty), which will be signed following completion of Cabinet processes in both countries¹⁷. The treaty recognises that an armed attack on any of the countries would be a danger to the peace and security of both. It will result in the expansion and modernisation of the bilateral defence relationship linking PNG with its former colonial master.

Canada Indonesia Relations. Canada and Indonesia signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement on September 24, during the visit of President Prabowo Subianto to Canada¹⁸. The countries also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperative Activities in the Field of Defence, complementing the previously signed Memorandum of Understanding on Military Cooperation.

¹⁵ Formation of Interim Government in Nepal, September 12, 2025, https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/40135/Formation_of_Interim_Government_in_Nepal

¹⁶ Japanese Prime Minister Ishiba Steps Down, September 08, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/japanese-prime-minister-ishiba-steps-down>

¹⁷ Joint Communique – Papua New Guinea and Australia on a Mutual Defence Treaty, September 17, 2025, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/joint-communique-papua-new-guinea-and-australia-mutual-defence-treaty>

¹⁸ Joint Statement on the bilateral meeting between Prime Minister of Canada Mark Carney and President of Republic of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto, September 24, 2025, <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2025/09/24/joint-statement-bilateral-meeting-between-prime-minister-canada-mark-carney>

Australia UAE Strategic Partnership. Australia and the UAE elevated their bilateral relations to a strategic partnership on September 29¹⁹. The partnership seeks to advance shared prosperity, strengthen people-to-people relations, advance education and research collaboration, advance cooperation on energy, sustainability and climate action, build a partnership in peace and security and address global and regional challenges. An ambitious bilateral free trade agreement will come into force on October 01²⁰.

Technology Perspective Capability Roadmap. The 2025 edition of India's Technology Perspective Capability Roadmap (TPCR) was unveiled by the Ministry of Defence on September 05²¹. It follows TPCR 2013 and TPCR 2018, and seeks to convey the perspective of India's Armed Forces on emerging futuristic combat technologies and their stated requirements, enabling industry to step up R&D efforts and build production lines and assemblies to meet these requirements. Among the maritime platforms envisaged for induction over the next 15 years are an aircraft carrier, 5-10 next generation destroyers/frigates, seven next generation corvettes, 10 or more MCM vessels, five fleet support ships, four landing platforms dock and 100 or more next generation fast interceptor craft. The TPCR posits a requirement of 10 nuclear propulsion plants for the future aircraft carrier and other surface combatants, as well as electric propulsion for 8 ships.

Scarborough Shoal. China designated the Scarborough Shoal (Huangyan Dao) as a national nature reserve on September 10²², ostensibly to maintain the diversity, stability and sustainability of the ecosystem, continuing with its design to disregard the 2016 judgement of the Permanent Court of Arbitration and establish control over the contested shoal. The development is likely to lead to ramping up of China's "law enforcement" actions in the region. The Philippines protested, observing that the shoal was a longstanding and integral part of the Philippines over which it had sovereignty and jurisdiction²³. The US said it stood with the Philippines in rejecting

¹⁹ Joint declaration of the elevation of ties to a strategic partnership between the United Arab Emirates and Australia, September 29, 2025, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/joint-declaration-elevation-ties-strategic-partnership-united-arab-emirates>

²⁰ UAE trade agreement to come into effect, September 29, 2025, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/uae-trade-agreement-come-effect>

²¹ Technology Perspective Capability Roadmap TPCR 2025, <https://www.mod.gov.in/dod/sites/default/files/FINAL-TPCR-2025.pdf>

²² China releases details of Huangyan Dao national nature reserve, September 11, 2025, https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202509/11/content_WS68c2639dc6d00fa19f7a25c5.html

²³ Philippines Rejects Chinese Scarborough Shoal Nature Reserve Claim, September 15, 2025, <https://news.usni.org/2025/09/15/philippines-rejects-chinese-scarborough-shoal-nature-reserve-claim>

China's plans to establish a nature reserve²⁴. Meanwhile, China's military conducted "routine" patrols in the region and warned the Philippines to immediately stop provoking incidents and engaging in actions that heighten tensions in the South China Sea²⁵.

Expanding India's Shipbuilding Capacity. India's Union Cabinet approved on September 24 a package of Rs 69,725 crores (about \$ 7.9 billion) to revitalise India's shipbuilding and maritime ecosystem²⁶. The package seeks to strengthen domestic capacity, improve long-term financing, promote greenfield and brownfield shipyard development, enhance technical capabilities and skilling, and implement policy reforms to create a robust maritime infrastructure. In addition, a Maritime Development Fund (MDF) with a corpus of Rs 25,000 crores (about \$ 2.8 billion) has been approved to provide long-term financing to the sector. A national shipbuilding mission is to be established to oversee implementation of all initiatives. The intent is to raise India's shipbuilding capacity from the present 0.1 million tonnes to 4.5 million tonnes and create 250 million tonnes of additional port capacity.

MDL Explores Shipyard on East Coast of India. Mazagon Docks has inked a Memorandum of Understanding with Tamil Nadu on September 19 to explore the development of a world-class greenfield shipyard on India's eastern coast²⁷. The new shipyard is part of the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047.

Australia Defence Buildup. Australia announced on September 14 the commitment of A\$ 12 billion (about USD 7.9 billion) of a total planned investment of A\$ 25 billion towards upgrading Perth's Henderson Shipyard to support the nuclear powered submarine fleet to be acquired under AUKUS, as well as to build Mogami-class frigates²⁸. The investment will also support sustainment of Australia's surface combatant vessels and includes the construction of graving docks for depot level maintenance. The investment also opens the possibility of maintenance for USN and RN submarines. The announcement indicates confidence on Australia's part that the

²⁴ On Scarborough Reef, September 12, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/09/on-scarborough-reef/>

²⁵ PLA conducts routine patrols in South China Sea, September 14, 2025, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/2025xb/H_251454/L_251456/16409556.html

²⁶ Comprehensive 4-Pillar Approach to Strengthen Shipbuilding, Maritime Financing and Domestic Capacity, September 24, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2170573>

²⁷ MDL signs MoU with Tamil Nadu Government to develop world-class Greenfield Shipyard on Eastern Coast, September 23, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2170194>

²⁸ Additional Defence Funding to Deliver the Henderson Defence Precinct, September 14, 2025, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2025-09-14/additional-defence-funding-deliver-henderson-defence-precinct>

AUKUS plan is on track, notwithstanding the review presently being carried out by the US.

USN Return to Subic Bay. The US Navy is reported to have sought the lease of 25,000 m² climate controlled warehouse and maintenance shop in Subic Bay, with operations in the storage facility beginning in September 2026²⁹. The storage facility is within 10 miles of the 57,000 m² US Marine Corps prepositioning program site. The report follows another regarding re-opening of the Subic Bay Shipyard following investment from the US and South Korea³⁰. The developments mark a return of the US to Subic Bay.

Renaming of US Department of Defence. The US Department of Defense was renamed as Department of War by an executive order from US President Donald Trump on September 05³¹. The rationale is that the name “Department of War” ensures peace through strength, as it demonstrates US ability and willingness to fight and win wars at short notice, not just to defend. The change in name must be ratified by the US Congress in due course.

US Funding for Indo-Pacific Maritime Law Enforcement. The US State Department announced \$ 55 million in new funding on September 25 to enhance the maritime law enforcement capacity of Indo-Pacific countries³². The funding will enable US partner countries to counter illicit maritime activities, interdict illicit fishing and maritime trafficking operations and exercise their sovereign rights.

India Secures Additional Seabed Mining Site in Indian Ocean. India announced on September 20 the signing of a new 15-year contract with the International Seabed Authority (ISA) for exclusive rights to explore Polymetallic Sulphides (PMS) in a

²⁹ US Navy wants to open Subic Bay storage facility in the Philippines, September 23, 2025, <https://news.usni.org/2025/09/23/u-s-navy-wants-to-open-subic-bay-storage-facility-in-the-philippines>

³⁰ Subic Bay Shipyard re-opens after US, South Korean investments, September 05, 2025, <https://news.usni.org/2025/09/05/subic-bay-shipyard-re-opens-after-u-s-south-korean-investments>

³¹ Restoring the United States Department of War, September 05, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/restoring-the-united-states-department-of-war/>

³² Reinforcing Cooperation to Achieve a Secure and Stable Maritime Domain, September 25, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/09/reinforcing-cooperation-to-achieve-a-secure-and-stable-maritime-domain/>

10,000 sq. km. area of the Carlsberg Ridge in the Indian Ocean³³. India already has contracts to explore PMS in the Central Indian Ridge and the Southwest Indian Ridge in the Indian Ocean.

Taiwan Strait Transits. HMAS Brisbane and HMCS Ville de Quebec sailed through the Taiwan Strait on September 06³⁴, prompting protests from China. Days later, on September 12, USS Higgins and HMS Richmond also carried out a Taiwan Strait transit³⁵, prompting China to say that their actions sent out wrong signals and undermined peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait.

Exercise Yudh Abhyas. The 21st edition of India-US Exercise Yudh Abhyas took place at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, from September 01-14³⁶. Troops exercised a spectrum of tactical drills, including heliborne operations, employment of surveillance resources and unmanned aerial systems, mountain warfare, casualty evacuation, combat medical aid and the integrated use of Artillery, Aviation and Electronic Warfare systems. The development came even as the downturn in bilateral relations following the US imposition of 50% tariffs on India showed no sign of letting up.

Exercise Maitree 2025. The 14th edition of India-Thailand joint military Exercise MAITREE-XIV took place at the joint training node Umroi, Meghalaya, from September 01-14³⁷. The exercise focused on counter-terrorist operations in semi-urban terrain.

Exercise Zapad 2025. A 65 man Indian Armed Forces contingent participated in multilateral joint military exercise at Nizhniy, Russia, from September 10-16³⁸. The contingent included seven representatives from the IAF and one from the Indian Navy. The exercise focuses on joint company level operations in open and plain terrain.

³³ Science Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh Announces Historic Milestone: India Secures Exclusive rights for Exploration of Polymetallic Sulphides in the Carlsberg Ridge in the Indian Ocean, September 20, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2168923>

³⁴ Canadian, Australian Warships Sail Through Taiwan Strait, September 08, 2025, <https://news.usni.org/2025/09/08/canadian-australian-warships-sail-through-taiwan-strait>

³⁵ Chinese Military Tracks, Monitors US, UK Warships Transiting Through Taiwan Strait, September 12, 2025, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/2025xb/H_251454/L_251456/16409409.html

³⁶ Indian Army Contingent Departs for India-USA Joint Military Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2025, September 01, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2162738>

³⁷ India-Thailand Joint Military Exercise MAITREE-XIV Commences in Meghalaya, September 02, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2163075>

³⁸ Indian Armed Forces Contingent Departs for Multilateral Exercise Zapad 2025 in Russia, September 09, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2164916>

Commissioning of Second ASW SWC. The Indian Navy will commission Androth, the second of 16 ASW Shallow Water Craft, on October 06³⁹. The ship was delivered to the IN on September 13. INS Arnala, the first ship of the class, was commissioned on June 18, 2025.

CDS' Tenure Extended. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the extension of the tenure of General Anil Chauhan as the Chief of Defence Staff till May 30, 2026, or till further orders⁴⁰. General Chauhan, who assumed the appointment of CDS on September 30, 2022, will attain the age of 65 years on May 22, 2026.

Flight Test of Rail Mobile Agni-Prime. DRDO and the Strategic Forces Command successfully carried out the maiden flight test of a rail mobile Agni-Prime IRBM on September 24⁴¹. A road-mobile Agni-Prime has already been inducted.

IN Deployments Abroad

Dates	Ships	Port Visited	Remarks
30 Aug-05 Sep	Kadmatt	Port Moresby ⁴²	For international fleet review
Sep 01-10	Trikand	Alexandria ⁴³	For Ex Bright Star
Sep 01-04	Tir, Shardul, Sarathi	Port Victoria ⁴⁴ , Seychelles	Training Squadron Visit
Sep 08-11	Tir, Sarathi	La Reunion ⁴⁵	Training Squadron Visit

³⁹ Indian Navy set to commission Androth, second in ASW-SWC series, September 23, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2170171>

⁴⁰ Government Extends the Service of General Anil Chauhan as Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) & Secretary, Department of Military Affairs, September 24, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2170934>

⁴¹ DRDO carries out the successful launch of Intermediate Range Agni-Prime Missile from a Rail based Mobile launcher system, September 25, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2170979>

⁴² INS Kadmatt Leads Mobile Fleet Review at Papua New Guinea's 50th Independence Day, September 06, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2164385>

⁴³ INS Trikanth Arrived at Alexandria, Egypt, September 03, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2163382>

⁴⁴ First Training Squadron Departs Seychelles, September 05, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2164167>

⁴⁵ Engagement of Indian Navy's 1TS on Long Range Training Deployment, September 10, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2165413>



Sep 08-11	Shardul	Mauritius ⁴⁶	Training Squadron Visit
Sep 10	Mumbai, Delhi	Muscat ⁴⁷	N Arabian Sea deployment
Sep 13-16	Trikand	Salamis Bay ⁴⁸	Mediterranean Sea deployment
Sep 14	Nistar	Singapore ⁴⁹	Ex Pacific Reach
Sep 15-17	Kadmatt	Suva, Fiji ⁵⁰	Goodwill visit
Sep 16-19	Tir, Shardul, Sujata, Sarathi	Maputo ⁵¹ , Mozambique	Training Squadron Visit
Sep 21-24	Satpura	Colombo ⁵²	To serve as platform for CNS
Sep 21-24	Trikand	Limassol, Cyprus ⁵³	Mediterranean deployment
Sep 22-25	CNS	Sri Lanka ⁵⁴	Official visit
Sep 25-27	Kadmatt	Cairns ⁵⁵ , Australia	OTR
Sep 25-28	Tir, Shardul, Sujata, Sarathi	Mombasa ⁵⁶ , Kenya	Training Squadron Visit

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ https://x.com/IN_WesternFleet/status/1965524453452075103

⁴⁸ INS Trikanth at Salamis Bay, Greece, September 14, 2025,

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2166545>

⁴⁹ Indian Naval Ship Nistar Enters Changi Naval Base Singapore to Participate in Exercise Pacific Reach 2025, September 15, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2166790>

⁵⁰ Indian Naval Ship Kadmatt Arrives in Suva, Fiji, September 16, 2025,

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2167274>

⁵¹ First Training Squadron Arrives at Maputo, Mozambique, September 17, 2025,

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2167704>

⁵² <https://x.com/indiannavy/status/1969756961794355533>

⁵³ Operationally deployed INS Trikanth visits Limassol, Cyprus, September 24, 2025,

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2170708>

⁵⁴ Chief of the Naval Staff visit to Sri Lanka, September 22, 2025,

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2169374>

⁵⁵ <https://x.com/HCICanberra/status/1971116307463684099>

⁵⁶ Indian Navy's First Training Squadron Makes Port Call at Mombasa, Kenya, September 26, 2025,

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2171728>



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