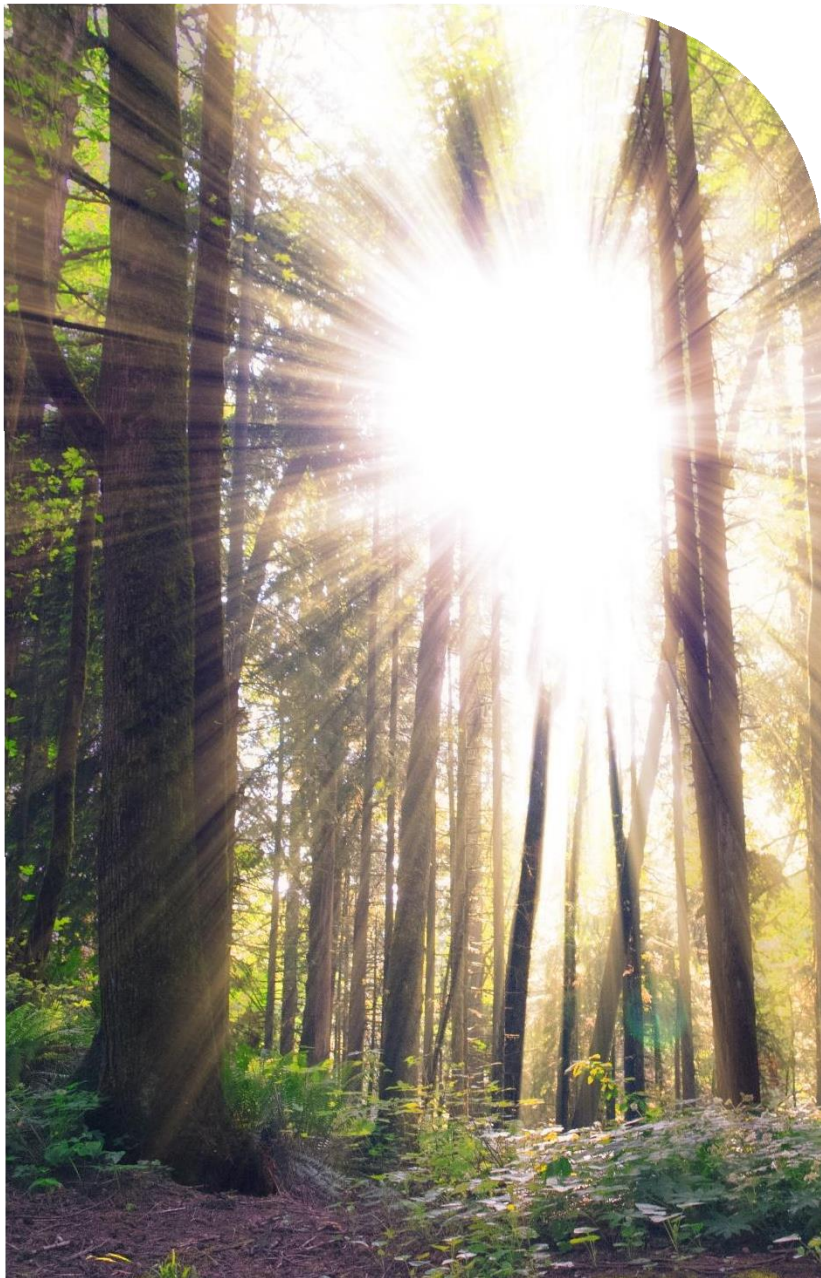


Far and Wide

Every week we share selection of six news from six continents that we believe will impact our world in the near or distinct future

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Europe blinks in its commitment to a great green transition

Welcome to the next edition of Far and Wide, where we bring a collection of interesting stories from around the world. Our lead story this week covers the challenges Europe is facing in balancing environmental regulations along with attracting investment, industry and development. The ambitions set for 'Net Zero' are huge and come with a massive cost; but as the deadlines become tangible, pressure is building up for the governments of Europe. As record-breaking heatwaves are being observed across the north of Mediterranean, climate activists are protesting Rishi Sunak's decision to open the North Sea to more oil and gas drilling, by draping a black fabric on his house. But, on the other hand, it is also true that an opposition is building up against the high targets. For instance, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni is pushing back on bloc-wide efficiency standards that could require mass renovation of buildings across Europe. According to her, climate policy shouldn't affect ordinary citizens. Despite those claims, analysts say that rolling back the already agreed-upon EU rules remains a long shot. However, new agreements are more vulnerable.

During a speech on how to revive French industry, President Emmanuel Macron in May called for "a European regulatory break." Last year, the 27-nation bloc reached a pioneering settlement to end the sale of nonelectric cars by 2035 for good. But this year, a group of countries sought to water down the rules. The EU has reduced its per capita emissions by 29 percent since 1990 but still has far to go. But with a war affecting global prices and driving up inflation, especially in western countries, Europeans are emphasizing on costs. Research is showing strong backing for reducing emissions in Britain and Europe. Then again, the enthusiasm weakens when the investigators ask more detailed questions about the public's inclination to make changes in their way of life or shell out money for the cause. It remains to be seen how they will fulfil their obligations.

We hope this story and the others in this edition of our newsletter will provoke thought and discussion among our readers.

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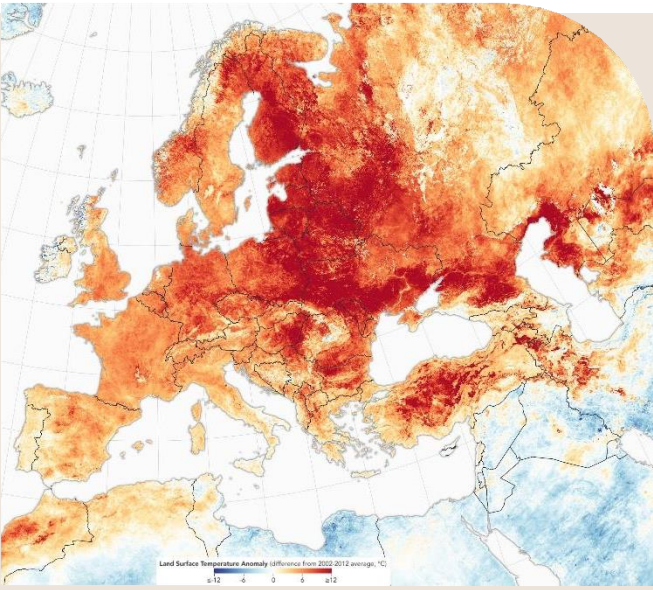
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Europe [Europe blinks in its commitment to a great green transition](#)



Source: Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/08/06/europe-britain-carbon-cost/>

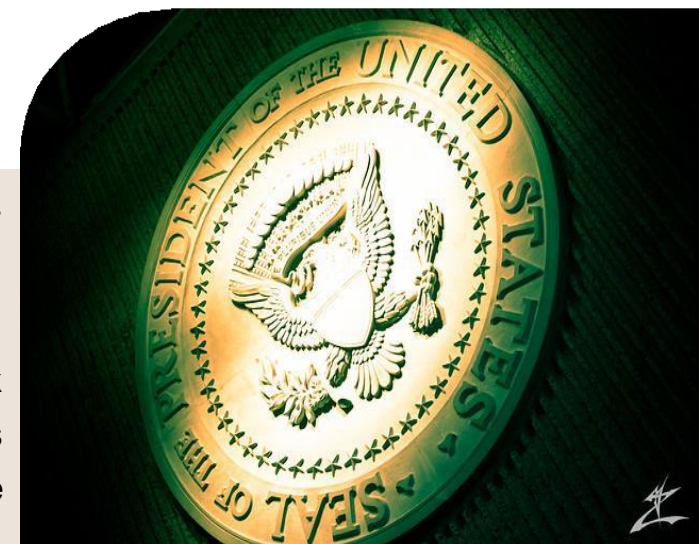
As Europe grapples with the costs and challenges of transitioning away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, backlash is growing against the **ambitious green targets set** to combat climate change. Despite commitments to reduce carbon emissions and **achieve "net zero" by 2050**, European governments are facing political and economic pressures as they attempt to implement far-reaching changes. British Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak's decision to expand oil and gas drilling in the North Sea** faced **criticism** from climate activists who draped his mansion in "oil-black fabric." This move comes after opposition to pollution charges aimed at limiting petrol car usage in London. The European Union (EU) is also facing challenges in its transition to **electric vehicles**. While the bloc reached an agreement to end the sale of non-electric cars by 2035, some countries seek to weaken these rules due to **concerns about the auto industry and job losses linked to traditional internal combustion engines**. Italy and other EU nations are pushing back against stricter emissions regulations for vehicles. Discontent arises when climate policies affect people's daily lives, and this pushback can gain traction. The right-wing government of **Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni** is advocating for pragmatic solutions that balance environmental concerns with economic realities.

Despite climate pledges, **right-wing voices argue that the costs of transitioning to net zero are too high**, especially when major polluters like China are not following suit. Record-breaking heatwaves and environmental changes are met with calls for **adaptation rather than massive investments** in renewable energy. On a grass-roots level, Europeans are voicing concerns about the impacts of climate policies on their lives. **Dutch farmers**, for example, have protested against emissions reduction measures that affect their livelihoods. While there is strong support for emissions reduction, detailed questions about **lifestyle changes** and costs dampen enthusiasm. As Europe navigates these challenges, the **tension between environmental goals and practical considerations underscores the complexity of the transition to a sustainable future**.



North America

[US Presidential Race: Indian Americans Nikki Haley, Vivek Ramaswamy, Hirsh Vardhan Singh, challenging Trump](#)



Source: Livemint

<https://www.livemint.com/politics/news/us-presidential-race-indian-americans-hirsh-varadhan-singh-nikki-haley-vivek-ramaswamy-challenging-trump-11690701858067.html>

As the 2024 US presidential election approaches, speculation is rife about potential candidates for the Republican Party's nomination. Former President **Donald Trump, despite facing legal challenges, is considered the frontrunner**. However, three Indian-American leaders are aiming to challenge his position and "make America great again." These contenders include Vivek Ramaswamy, Nikki Haley, and Hirsh Vardhan Singh. The Republican Party's national convention is scheduled for July 15-18, 2024, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where the official presidential nominee will be formally selected. **Nikki Haley, the former governor of South Carolina** and Trump's initial ambassador to the United Nations, is the sole female contender in the Republican primary. Although initially underestimated, she touts her tenure in the Trump administration while criticizing his post-election pursuit of voter fraud claims. Despite lower poll numbers, Haley has showcased strong fundraising abilities, amassing \$26 million. **Vivek Ramaswamy, a tech entrepreneur** and son of Indian immigrants, started as an outsider in the race but has risen to the third position. He garners **9% support** among Republican leaders, focusing on **healthcare innovation** and **reducing reliance on China**. Ramaswamy raised \$7.7 million, with a significant portion from personal funds. **Hirsh Vardhan Singh, a 38-year-old engineer**, has entered the presidential race as a conservative Republican, aiming to **prioritize citizens** and restore the conservative wing of the New Jersey Republican Party. Despite past election setbacks, Singh remains committed to his "America First" principles and has drawn attention for his **strong conservative values and vaccination stance**.



South America

[India, Peru to restart negotiations on FTA](#)



The Indian government has taken significant strides in expanding trade relations with countries in Latin America. Currently, negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) are in progress with Peru, and there are plans to explore similar talks with Chile, as per Union Secretary for Commerce, Sunil Barthwal. "If the countries are interested in FTAs, we will also look into possibilities," he said. The negotiations with Peru are likely to start after the G20 Summit in September. Considering that **imports from India constitute less than 2 per cent of Latin American Countries (LAC's) total imports, there is significant scope for expansion** of India-LAC bilateral trade, he said. While efforts are underway to double the bilateral trade to \$100 billion, that will also call for a new approach to broad based trade exchanges, such as **integrating with diversified global value chains in a re-globalized world**.

Officials are suggesting a **Joint Economic and Trade Co-operation (JETCO)** model for cooperation between the two regions on important issues outside an FTA. Government insiders have disclosed that India's goal is to address **crucial gateway issues** and prioritize key areas of interest for FTA negotiations. Scope lies in: **renewables, battery manufacturing, energy storage technology, chemical industry impact, etc., that are aligned with Net Zero goals**. These discussions will be aimed at improving market access for goods and services, facilitating investment opportunities, and encouraging greater cooperation across sectors of mutual interest. Additionally, the Indian government has **warmly received Chile's expression of interest in initiating FTA** negotiations with India, as per insider sources.

Source: The Hindu BusinessLine
<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/india-peru-to-restart-negotiations-on-fta/article67159271.ece>



Asia

[India, Nepal and Bangladesh finalize tripartite power trade agreement draft](#)

India, Nepal, and Bangladesh have reached an agreement on a draft tripartite power trade agreement, marking a significant step towards **enhancing energy connectivity in the region**. The agreement, the first of its kind, will **allow the trading of power through the Indian grid and fulfill long-standing demands** from Nepal and Bangladesh. The plans were initially unveiled during Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's visit to New Delhi at the beginning of June. The pact is expected to be signed in the coming months and will facilitate the **export of hydropower from Nepal to Bangladesh**. India's efforts aim to strengthen energy connectivity with neighboring countries and align with its goals to reduce dependence on China and bolster regional cooperation. The recent **guidelines for Cross-Border Trade of Electricity (CBTE)** have paved the way for these new arrangements, which earlier could be done only through bilateral agreements. The guidelines also prioritize energy flow between neighboring countries, enhancing connectivity and reducing energy wastage. India will act as a fulcrum and the modalities will be decided by market forces. India will also benefit from transit fees. It has also been decided that the second phase of South Asia's first trans-border petroleum pipeline will be built to link Siliguri in India and Jhapa in Nepal.

The tripartite power trade agreement highlights India's role as a hub for energy connectivity, benefiting all parties involved. It also aligns with India's **"Neighbourhood First" policy**, emphasizing energy cooperation as a key element. India's efforts extend beyond electricity trade, including the construction of cross-border pipelines to facilitate petroleum trade with Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. India's diplomatic efforts have led to significant achievements in energy cooperation, such as importing over 450 MW of power from Nepal and collaborating with Bhutan for hydropower. Looking ahead, plans for a **regional power grid involving Myanmar, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka are being considered**.



Hindustan Times
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-nepal-bangladesh-finalise-tripartite-power-trade-agreement-draft-101686842536062.html>



Australia

[Australia's fourth largest pension fund suspends ties with PwC after scandal](#)



UniSuper, Australia's fourth largest pension fund, has decided to cut ties with the Australian arm of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) due to a scandal involving the **accounting firm leaking critical government tax plans**. The leak occurred **earlier in the year** and raised concerns for UniSuper, leading them to suspend new contracts with PwC for the immediate future. Although PwC assured UniSuper that their relationship had not been affected, the pension fund sought further assurances.

The decision came shortly after PwC **terminated eight of its partners**, including the **former CEO**, as part of an effort to rebuild trust following the scandal. The leak involved a former PwC partner who shared confidential government information with colleagues, who then used it to attract more business.

The scandal has had significant consequences for PwC, as they **lost high-profile clients, including the Reserve Bank of Australia**, and were forced to offload their government consulting business for just one Australian dollar. UniSuper's move to sever ties with PwC is part of a broader trend, as four other major pension funds, managing a total of over \$650 billion, have also distanced themselves from the accounting firm.

Source: Wion
<https://www.wionews.com/business-economy/australias-fourth-largest-pension-fund-suspends-tie-with-pwc-after-scandal-612038>



Africa

[Gabon releases tender for Africa's first 'debt-for-nature swap'](#)

Gabon has become the **first African nation to initiate a debt-for-nature swap**, a conservation finance strategy aimed at promoting environmental preservation. The country plans to purchase approximately \$450 million of its own government debt through the issuance of an eco-friendly blue bond. Debt-for-nature swaps have gained traction in conservation finance, with Ecuador's significant deal being a notable example. **Ecuador's in fact, raised \$1.6 billion** in debt-for-nature swap earlier this year which is noteworthy. It released the funds for conserving the Galapagos Islands. In these swaps, creditors offer **debt relief to developing nations committed to environmental conservation** efforts, such as decarbonizing their economies, investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, and safeguarding biodiverse ecosystems. Vulnerable **countries affected by climate change, which lack resources for climate resilience investments**, benefit from this mechanism. Gabon's decision is significant due to its rich coastal biodiversity, hosting a **substantial proportion of the world's leatherback turtles**. The move prompted a positive response from investors, with bond values rising following the announcement. Debt-for-nature swaps provide a **win-win situation for financiers, countries, and conservationists**, allowing governments to enhance climate resilience while freeing fiscal resources. The United States International **Development Finance Corporation (DFC)** is expected to offer political risk insurance, as it has done for similar deals with Ecuador and Belize.



Source: Wion
<https://www.wionews.com/business-economy/gabon-launches-africas-first-debt-for-nature-swap-tender-what-is-it-619427>