

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 distant future

December 2024 | Issue #73



India-Japan Forum Highlights Stronger Ties, Tourism, and Technology Collaboration

Welcome to the latest edition of Far and Wide, where we embark on a journey to explore intriguing stories and global developments.

At the inaugural session of India-Japan Forum, EAM S. Jaishankar spoke on transforming the longstanding goodwill between India and Japan into actionable plans. He noted that while relations have been amicable, it is essential to capitalize on mutual goodwill for greater collaboration.

Jaishankar highlighted the surge in Indian tourists to Japan, with 13-15 million passports issued annually. However, Indian tourism in Japan remains limited compared to destinations like Southeast Asia, the Gulf, and Europe.

Addressing shared regional challenges, Jaishankar pointed to India and Japan's proximity to China. While India's trade relationship with China has grown, issues like imbalanced trade and market access persist. Both nations' experiences as China's neighbours underline the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation.

Japan's ambitious \$65 billion initiative to revive its semiconductor industry and enhance AI capabilities presents an opportunity for deeper collaboration with India. In July 2023, Japan's Minister for Economy, Trade, and Industry Nishimura and India's IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw signed a memorandum of cooperation. This agreement focuses on semiconductor design, manufacturing, equipment research, talent development, and supply chain resilience, encompassing both government-to-government (G2G) and business-to-business (B2B) partnerships.

The India-Japan Forum marks a pivotal moment in expanding cooperation across tourism, trade, and technology, reinforcing the nations' shared vision for economic growth and regional stability.

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Europe

India-Italy Strategic Conference Highlights Space, Maritime, and Trade Partnership Opportunities

An India-Italy conference was organized in Mumbai focusing on space and maritime economic opportunities at Villaggio Italia during the Vespucci World Tour's India stop. It was inaugurated by Italian Ambassador Antonio Bartoli and was attended by Indian Ports Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Italian Enterprise Minister Adolfo Urso. Sonowal celebrated India's space achievements, while Urso reflected on Italy's legacy, including its 1964 satellite launch.

A panel on space cooperation emphasized integrating technological value chains. Enrico Savio of Leonardo International highlighted the importance of a collaborative partnership and shared goals, while Marco Brancati of Telespazio advocated incorporating AI, big data, and digital twins into space programs targeting the Moon and Mars.

The maritime panel focused on sustainable seas with highlights of collaboration of Italian stakeholders with Indian partners to enhance maritime security and sustainability.

Italy announced the "Cotton Route" initiative to boost India-Italy trade, aiming to build on the historic Silk Route. Minister Urso outlined plans for Italy to become India's third-largest EU trade partner, leveraging its "Made in Italy 2030" plan targeting aerospace, marine, and high-tech sectors

Italy's defence spending increase, including space projects further showcased collaboration opportunities. Bilateral trade reached \$14 billion in 2023, with ambitions to grow and enhance industrial ties. Italy envisions India as a gateway to Asia, while offering itself as a hub for Indian firms in Europe.

Source : Economic Times

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/italy-aims-to-be-indias-3rd-largest-eu-trade-partner/articleshow/115873870.cms?from=mdr>

North America



India-US Partnership to Unlock Northeast's Connectivity and Climate Potential



Source: Observer Research Foundation

<https://www.orfonline.org/event/us-indo-pacific-strategy-north-eastern-dialogues>

The Northeast region of India is crucial for Indo-Pacific connectivity but faces challenges like poor infrastructure, limited cross-border trade, and climate vulnerabilities. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy: North-Eastern Dialogues (USIPS NED) aims to address these issues through India-US partnerships, focusing on trade, connectivity, and sustainable infrastructure.

The project will engage 200 stakeholders, with 50% female participation, from sectors including government, business, civil society, and academia. It highlights improving physical and digital connectivity in the region, particularly via riverine and maritime infrastructure, linking the Northeast to the Indo-Pacific through the Bay of Bengal. Policy dialogues in states like Meghalaya, Assam, Sikkim, and Tripura, and national-level discussions in Kolkata and Delhi, aims to raise awareness and identify solutions. A core focus area is sustainability, addressing climate-resilient infrastructure and reducing plastic pollution in river ecosystems. Surveys conducted before and after the dialogues will assess stakeholders' awareness of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy and perceptions of India-US collaboration.

The initiative showcases the potential of the Northeast region as a gateway to the Indo-Pacific while ensuring eco-friendly and inclusive development. By fostering India-US cooperation, it seeks to create a climate-resilient, well-connected Northeast that contributes to a free and open Indo-Pacific. The upcoming Assam chapter in December 2024 will further discussions on leveraging trade and connectivity for regional growth.

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South America

India-Peru Ties: A Vision for Progress, Sustainability, and Trade Expansion

India and Peru share a rich history, cultural heritage, and diverse natural resources, forming the foundation for a strong bilateral partnership. Recently, the Peruvian Ambassador H.E. Javier Manuel Paulinich Velarde, highlighted Peru's ancient civilization parallel to India's Harappan culture and emphasized on both the nations' shared vision of "Progress and Sustainability" at an event hosted by WTC Mumbai and All India Association of Industries (AIAI). Peru serves as a gateway to global markets for Indian companies with stable macroeconomic conditions, open trade policies, and 22 free trade agreements. The ongoing negotiations for an India-Peru Free Trade Agreement are expected to further reinforce trade and investment, particularly in sectors like mining, agriculture, tourism, and fisheries.

Peru, a leading exporter of commodities like blueberries, quinoa, fishmeal, and minerals, offers significant opportunities for Indian investment in mining and food processing. Tourism is also a focus area, with iconic sites like Machu Picchu strengthening cultural ties. Trade Specialist, Promperu India Roy Postigo invited Indian businesses to leverage Peru's business-friendly policies and strategic location in South America.

Source: World Trade Centre, Mumbai

<https://www.wtcmumbai.org/news-2024-27%20Nov%20Interactive%20meeting%20Peru.html>

WTC Mumbai Chairman Dr. Vijay Kalantri proposed doubling bilateral trade from USD 4 billion to USD 8 billion in three years by targeting sectors like pharmaceuticals, engineering, and chemicals. The planned India-Latin America Economic Conclave also aims to deepen economic and cultural exchanges, strengthening the growing partnership between India and Latin America.

Asia



India-Japan Collaboration: Semiconductors to Reshape Geopolitical Equations

At the India-Japan Forum's inaugural session, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar showcased the transformative potential of India-Japan semiconductor collaboration. This strategic partnership aims to revitalize both nations' semiconductor industries while fostering cooperation with Taiwan who is a global leader in chip production. Jaishankar highlighted the nascent yet crucial nature of this initiative, marking it as a top priority despite its being in the beginning stage. He also showcased the capacity of the alliance between the two nations to reshape geopolitical dynamics over the next decade. He described the partnership as a step toward addressing past shortcomings in bilateral ties and strengthening shared strategic interests. This renewed focus on India-Japan relations reinforces a commitment to advancing shared goals in technology, education, and global stability

Beyond semiconductors, Jaishankar pointed to emerging collaborations in education and workforce development. Industry-level initiatives, such as training programs and language skill development reflect growing determination among both the stakeholders to deepen ties. The minister also highlighted India's openness to higher education partnerships, including student exchanges and joint campuses, signaling broader opportunities for collaboration



Source: India Narrative

<https://www.indianarrative.com/india-news/eam-jaishankar-highlights-potential-of-india-japan-semiconductor-collaboration-164904.html>

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Australia Sets 16 as Minimum Age for Social Media Access

The Australian government, led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, has enacted a landmark law setting 16 as the minimum age for social media access. Passed with bipartisan support in Parliament, the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 aims to protect young Australians during critical stages of development. The law, developed after consultations with parents, youth, experts, and civil organizations, requires social media platforms like Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, and X to take “reasonable steps” to ensure users under 16 cannot create accounts.

The legislation does not mandate government ID for age verification, addressing privacy concerns raised by the opposition. While most major social media platforms are covered, YouTube and messaging apps like WhatsApp are expected to be exempt. The government assured that educational and health-related services for children under 16 would remain accessible.

Source : ANI News

<https://aninews.in/news/world/pacific/australia-sets-16-as-minimum-age-for-social-media-access-in-historic-legislation20241129030245/>

Prime Minister Albanese highlighted social media's responsibility to protect young users, emphasizing widespread parental concerns about its impact on children's well-being. Minister Michelle Rowland reiterated the need for strong safety measures, holding platforms accountable with significant penalties for non-compliance. The law reflects a balanced approach to safeguarding youth while respecting privacy and access to essential services.

Africa



India and Nigeria: A Strategic Partnership for a Multipolar World

The historic visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's to Nigeria, the first by an Indian Prime Minister in 17 years, highlights the growing significance of Africa in India's Global South diplomacy. Nigeria being Africa's largest democracy and economy, holds strategic importance as a regional hegemon and a key player in the African Union and ECOWAS.

PM Modi's discussions with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu were focused on defence, energy, technology, trade, education, and health, reflecting a comprehensive partnership model encouraging mutual growth and local empowerment. The visit showcased the developmental approach of India, contrasting with China's infrastructure-heavy investments, and emphasized sustainable alternatives to debt-driven models. Arms exports and counterterrorism expertise of India will further upgrade its role as an emerging defence partner for Nigeria. Despite challenges like declining bilateral trade and China's expansive footprint, PM Modi's visit signals a commitment to diversifying economic ties and strengthening cultural exchanges.

As Nigeria awarded Modi its second-highest civilian honour, symbolizing a deeper relationship between the two nations. Enhanced India-Nigeria ties can catalyze broader South-South collaboration, positioning both nations as pivotal players in a multipolar global order.



Source: The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/indias-strategic-focus-on-west-africa/article68946565.ece>