

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

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India and Indonesia Chart a Course for Cooperation

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

During President Prabowo Subianto's visit to India as the Chief Guest for the 76th Republic Day celebrations, India and Indonesia reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing regional cooperation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Prabowo discussed key issues, including the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and the importance of promoting peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Both leaders emphasized the ongoing collaboration under the India-Indonesia-Australia trilateral format, focusing on challenges such as maritime domain awareness, marine pollution, and advancing the blue economy. They also agreed to further deepen people-to-people connections, with 2025 marked as the ASEAN-India Year of Tourism.

The leaders committed to implementing the ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, with a shared focus on sovereignty, territorial integrity, and adherence to the rule of law. They highlighted Indonesia's leadership in the Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI) on maritime resources and encouraged expediting collaborative efforts in sustainable aquaculture, tackling illegal fishing, and addressing environmental concerns. They also reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

India and Indonesia also reinforced their multilateral cooperation, notably within the UN and G20 frameworks, and emphasized the importance of South-South Cooperation. President Prabowo expressed gratitude for the warm hospitality during his visit and invited Prime Minister Modi to Indonesia. Both nations also celebrated Indonesia's inclusion in BRICS and reaffirmed their joint efforts in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), particularly in the Working Group on Blue Economy. The visit underscored the growing strategic and economic partnership between India and Indonesia, with a focus on fostering sustainable development and regional cooperation.



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Europe

India, EU Make Significant Progress in Free Trade Agreement Talks

Negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the European Union (EU) have made significant progress, as reported by an official on Thursday. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal met with European Commissioner for Trade Maros Sefcovic in Brussels last week to assess the advancements in talks. The two sides are focused on establishing a commercially meaningful trade agenda aimed at creating a mutually beneficial trade pact. They have outlined political directions to expedite negotiations, particularly in light of global challenges.

The upcoming 10th round of discussions is scheduled for March 10-14 in Brussels, following the ninth round, where topics such as goods, services, investment, and government procurement were addressed. India and the EU resumed negotiations in June 2022 after an eight-year hiatus, which began in 2013 due to unresolved differences. In the current fiscal year 2023-24, trade between India and the EU reached \$180 billion, with India exporting \$75.18 billion in goods and \$31.13 billion in services, while EU exports to India amounted to \$63.44 billion in goods and \$31.35 billion in services. Additionally, the EU represents a significant source of foreign direct investment in India, with the total FDI estimated at \$117.34 billion.

Source : The Economic Times

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/significant-progress-in-talks-on-india-eu-free-trade-agreement/articleshow/117493831.cms>

North America



Strengthening US-India Strategic Cooperation and Bilateral Relations

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in Washington, DC, to reaffirm the shared commitment to strengthening the US-India relationship. This was Rubio's first bilateral meeting since taking office, and the discussion covered a wide range of topics, including regional issues, strategic cooperation, and opportunities to deepen ties. The two leaders emphasized areas such as defence, emerging technologies, energy, and the importance of a free and open Indo-Pacific region. Rubio also highlighted the Trump Administration's goal of enhancing economic relations and addressing concerns related to irregular migration.

Minister Jaishankar expressed optimism about the future of the bilateral partnership, commending Rubio's advocacy for US-India relations. He shared his views on various regional and global issues during the meeting, signaling a continued focus on strengthening collaboration in critical areas.

The US-India relationship has flourished in recent years, particularly in defence and trade. A notable aspect of this partnership is the contribution of the Indian-American community, which plays a crucial role in fostering closer ties. The community's influence is reflected in the political arena, with five individuals of Indian origin currently serving in the US Congress.



Source: ANI

<https://aninews.in/news/world/us/us-secretary-of-state-rubio-meets-eam-jaishankar-discusses-strategic-cooperation20250122083541/>

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South America

India Exports Military Uniforms to Suriname, Strengthening Defence Ties in South America

India has made history by exporting military uniforms to The Republic of Suriname for the first time. The Ordnance Clothing Factory (OCF) in Avadi, Chennai, shipped 4,500 digital camouflage uniforms, worth ₹1.71 crores, to the Suriname Army. The Indian government covered the cost as a gesture to strengthen defence ties. The uniforms were flagged off by OCF's General Manager, BS Reddy, who noted that future orders worth ₹5 crores might follow. The shipment is expected to reach Suriname within 60 to 70 days after a 10-month design and production process.

Established in 1961, OCF Avadi, a unit under the Ministry of Defence, primarily supplies the Indian Army but has expanded its production to include bullet-resistant jackets and armoured vehicle protection. It has played a crucial role in supplying gear during conflicts like the 1962 Indo-China War, the 1971 India-Pakistan War, and the 1999 Kargil War. The factory also serves police forces, including the Tamil Nadu Police.

As a Center of Excellence for Ballistic Defence Gears, OCF Avadi is investing in research and development, collaborating with institutions like IIT Madras, IIT Roorkee, and CSIR Labs. One of its key projects, the "Future Soldier System," aims to develop technologically advanced solutions for modern warfare. This export marks a significant step in India's defence manufacturing sector and global outreach.

Source: DT NEXT Bureau

<https://www.dtnext.in/in-a-first-india-exports-military-uniforms-from-ocf-avadi-in-chennai-to-suriname-in-south-america>



Asia



India and Indonesia Renew Maritime Security Cooperation Agreement

India and Indonesia have extended their maritime security agreement for another three years. This agreement, signed during the 2nd High-Level Meeting in New Delhi on January 27, 2025, aims to reinforce cooperation in critical areas such as maritime search and rescue, pollution response, and maritime law enforcement. The meeting saw the participation of an Indonesian delegation, led by BAKAMLA Chief Vice Admiral Irvansyah.

Key aspects of this cooperation include enhancing joint mechanisms to respond to emergencies at sea, tackling maritime environmental issues, and addressing illegal activities like smuggling and illegal fishing. Both nations underscored the importance of sharing best practices and maintaining professional exchanges to bolster regional resilience.

As part of these efforts, an Indian Coast Guard ship is currently deployed in Jakarta to enhance interoperability with the Indonesia Coast Guard through joint exercises and knowledge-sharing initiatives. This renewed agreement showcases the commitment of India and Indonesia to maintaining a secure and cooperative maritime environment in the Indo-Pacific region. This cooperation builds upon historical and strategic ties between the two countries, recognizing their critical role in ensuring maritime safety and security in one of the world's most vital trade corridors.



Source: India Today

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-indonesia-maritime-security-agreement-3-more-years-2671663-2025-01-29>

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Australia

Australian EdTech Delegation Explores Opportunities in Chennai

A 10-member Australian EdTech delegation visited Chennai in January 2025 to explore collaboration opportunities in India's growing online education sector. Organized by the Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade), the visit aimed to strengthen ties between Australia and India and foster partnerships within the EdTech ecosystem. The delegation, which included Australian EdTech companies, universities, and Registered Training Organizations (RTOs), sought to understand the Indian online education landscape and explore potential partnerships.

Earlier in the week, the delegation participated in the India Digital Summit 2025 in Delhi, where they met with leading Indian EdTech companies, educational institutions, and tech giants. In Chennai, they engaged with senior officials from public-private partnerships, educational institutions, and tech businesses to explore further collaboration opportunities.

Australia's EdTech industry is known for its innovation, with over 700 companies creating world-leading products and services for the education sector. Australian EdTech startups are globally focused, with 77% serving international markets. The sector's offerings include platforms for student management, digital learning content, and specialized consulting services, all contributing to the development of the global education ecosystem.

Africa

India-Africa Trade Council Holds India-Sierra Leone Conference in Kochi

The India-Africa Trade Council (IATC) hosted the India-Sierra Leone Trade Conference in Kochi, fostering stronger bilateral trade relations and economic collaboration between the two nations. The event brought together South Indian business leaders and a diplomatic delegation led by Rashid Sesay, High Commissioner of Sierra Leone to India. Dr. Asif Iqbal, President of the Indian Economic Trade Organization (IETO), welcomed the delegation, which included the Information Attaché from the Sierra Leone Embassy in Abu Dhabi. High Commissioner Sesay highlighted Sierra Leone's potential in pharmaceuticals, IT, and industrial growth while expressing gratitude for India's support in the nation's development.

A significant milestone was the appointment of C. Krishna Shankar, the Chairman and Managing Director of Finovest Group, as Trade Commissioner for Sierra Leone in India. Shankar announced that a business delegation from Kerala and Chennai will visit Sierra Leone in May 2025 to explore opportunities in mining, tourism, poultry, pharmaceuticals, and infrastructure.

The conference facilitated MoUs in education, infrastructure, and healthcare, reinforcing a shared vision for economic growth and cooperation.



Source: ANI News

<https://www.aninews.in/news/business/india-africa-trade-council-hosts-india-sierra-leone-trade-conference-in-kochi20250123131357/>