

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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Towards a Safer Digital Landscape: Inaugural ASEAN-India Cyber Policy Dialogue

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

On October 16, 2024, the inaugural ASEAN-India Track 1 Cyber Policy Dialogue took place in Singapore, marking a pivotal moment for collaboration on cybersecurity and digital governance. Co-chaired by India's Joint Secretary for Cyber Diplomacy, Amit A. Shukla, and the Philippines' Undersecretary for Cybersecurity, Jeffrey Ian Dy, the event aimed to enhance cooperation amidst a rising tide of cyber incidents affecting both regions.

Central to the discussions was the increasing complexity of cyber threats, including data breaches and state-sponsored cyber espionage. The dialogue facilitated an exchange of insights regarding national cyber policies and aimed to identify shared challenges and potential collaborative actions. Emphasis was placed on the necessity for a unified global approach to tackle these evolving threats, with participants stressing the importance of establishing shared frameworks for effective responses.

The dialogue also highlighted the importance of capacity building and training initiatives to equip cybersecurity professionals with the necessary skills to combat cyber threats. Both India and ASEAN committed to identifying specific areas for cooperation, focusing on enhancing technical expertise, policy development, and operational readiness to respond to cyber incidents. This collaboration aligns with India's broader goals of promoting digital literacy.

As a significant outcome, the dialogue supports the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which recognizes cybersecurity as a key pillar of collaboration. This partnership aims to advance secure digital trade and build resilient ICT infrastructure, fostering digital inclusivity throughout the region. The First ASEAN-India Track 1 Cyber Policy Dialogue signifies a new chapter in bilateral relations, emphasizing the need for knowledge sharing and joint action to address rising cyber threats. Both sides are poised to advance their partnership, ensuring a secure and prosperous digital future for the Indo-Pacific region.

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Europe

Germany adopts "Focus on India" strategy to strengthen cooperation and economic ties

India, as the world's fifth-largest economy, plays a crucial role in its efforts to control global climate change, biodiversity protection, and the SDGs. Its commitment to the UN Charter and international law makes it a stabilizing force in a region facing challenges to the rules-based international order. India is also a significant source of skilled labour for Germany. On 16 October 2024, Germany adopted "Focus on India," a key strategic document aimed at elevating the 25-year Indo-German strategic partnership. The document outlines the German Government's intention to strengthen bilateral ties, especially in foreign and security policy, development cooperation, climate protection, business, trade, and academia. "Focus on India" will guide the future of this partnership, emphasizing the recruitment of skilled labour and expanding collaborations. It reflects Europe's broader India policy and aims to increase awareness of India's growing significance across various sectors, including business, academia, and media.

Source : Federal Foreign Office, Germany

<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/focus-on-india/2680284>

The process for implementation will be discussed during the upcoming Indo-German intergovernmental consultations, the dates for which is to be decided mutually by both the countries. The initiative also seeks to ensure that cooperation between the two nations remains strong and increases economic ties and adaptive to evolving global challenges.

North America



Joint US-India Grants to Boost AI and Quantum Technology Research

The US and India have jointly announced over USD 2 million in grants for 17 research projects focused on artificial intelligence (AI) and quantum technologies, aimed at addressing societal challenges such as AI-assisted cancer detection and advancements in quantum computing. The announcement was made at an event with US Ambassador Eric Garcetti, Acting Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technologies Seth Center, and Indian Minister of State for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh.

Of the total projects, 11 will focus on AI and 6 on quantum technologies, with each project receiving approximately USD 120,000. Additionally, the two countries unveiled a new USD 1 million US-India Science & Technology Endowment Fund (USISTEF) grant for research on advanced materials and critical minerals, emphasizing collaboration between universities, national labs, and the private sector.

Ambassador Garcetti highlighted the significance of US-India tech cooperation, emphasizing shared values and visions for using technology for societal good. Seth Center praised the partnership as crucial to remaining at the forefront of innovation while ensuring the ethical development of emerging technologies.



Source: ANI

<https://aninews.in/news/world/us/us-india-announce-over-usd-2-million-grants-for-ai-and-quantum-technology-research-projects20241012052522/>

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South America

UNDP and CAF focuses on Latin America's Poverty Eradication

At the "Reimagining Solutions to Poverty" event marking the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, the UNDP and CAF, the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, called for a renewed focus on poverty reduction in the region. Despite past progress, 181 million people still live in acute poverty, and 38 million face multi-dimensional poverty, lacking access to education, health, and basic living standards. Crises like the pandemic, climate change, and migration have slowed efforts to reduce poverty in the region. Key speakers, including UNDP Regional Director Michelle Muschett and CAF Executive President Sergio Díaz-Granados, stressed the need for coordinated action among governments, the private sector, and civil society. They spoke of integrating poverty reduction into policies on climate change, economic development, and productivity, while navigating energy, digital, and environmental transitions.

Source: UNDP

<https://www.undp.org/latin-america/news/undp-and-caf-promote-new-strategies-eradicate-poverty-region>

The panel also called for innovative poverty solutions and more effective methods of data collection to design and guide policies. The event concluded with the announcement of the Annual Poverty Conference in October 2025, which will bring together experts to discuss sustainable, long-term strategies for eradicating poverty. The conference will aim to ensure that poverty solutions align with the global SDG, driving progress towards more inclusive and equal societies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Asia



Towards a Safer Digital Landscape: Inaugural ASEAN-India Cyber Policy Dialogue

The inaugural ASEAN-India Track 1 Cyber Policy Dialogue was held in Singapore on October 16, 2024, marking a significant milestone in enhancing collaboration on cybersecurity and digital governance. Co-chaired by India's Joint Secretary for Cyber Diplomacy, Amit A. Shukla, and the Philippines' Undersecretary for Cybersecurity, Jeffrey Ian Dy, the dialogue sought to address the growing prevalence of cyber incidents impacting both regions. Participants exchanged insights on national cyber policies and emphasized the need for a unified global approach to effectively counter evolving cyber threats.

A key focus of the dialogue was on capacity building and training initiatives aimed at equipping cybersecurity professionals with essential skills to combat cyber risks. Both India and ASEAN committed to pinpointing specific areas for cooperation, emphasizing the enhancement of technical expertise and policy development. This effort aligns with India's broader objective of promoting digital literacy and cybersecurity within its national transformation agenda.

Ultimately, the dialogue reinforces the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, recognizing cybersecurity as a vital aspect of collaboration. Participants expressed optimism about the groundwork established during this dialogue, paving the way for future cooperation and ensuring a secure and prosperous digital future for the Indo-Pacific region.



Source: India News Network

<https://www.indianewsnetwork.com/en/20241018/first-asean-india-track-1-cyber-policy-dialogue-held-in-singapore-a-step-towards-strengthening-digital-security-coo>

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Australia

India and Australia Accelerate Trade Talks Ahead of CECA Finalization

Trade negotiations between India and Australia are set to intensify as both countries aim to finalize the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) before Australia enters its election phase next year. Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce, Rajesh Agrawal, indicated that officials have been tasked with expediting the process over the next two months to address various sensitivities and work toward closure. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal recently visited Australia to discuss enhancing trade and economic ties.

Source : Financial Express

<https://www.financialexpress.com/business/industry-india-australia-speed-up-fta-negotiations-3641783/>

The CECA builds on the earlier Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), expanding from five subjects to 14 policy areas. India seeks to resolve tariff asymmetries within the Asean-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA), where it has eliminated tariffs on 74% of products for the 10 Asean members but faces different levels of zero-duty access across these nations. Agrawal emphasized the need for a balanced FTA, given the varying economic development levels of Asean countries.

Discussions are also ongoing regarding the India-European Union FTA, which has covered key trade issues across 23 policy areas. Concerns around new regulations and their potential impact on trade were raised during the latest negotiations, while talks with the UK are expected to resume after its upcoming budget announcement.

Africa



AfCFTA strengthens India-Africa Partnership under the vision of Agenda 2063

At the 2023 BRICS Meeting in Johannesburg, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized India's close partnership with Africa, particularly in achieving the continent's long-term vision under the Agenda 2063. Africa's 2021 launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the world's largest free trade area, aims to enhance intra-African trade and economic integration by removing trade barriers. While AfCFTA projects a significant boost in intra-African trade and GDP growth by 2050, challenges such as external economic shocks and climate change have slowed progress. India plays a vital role in supporting AfCFTA, being Africa's third-largest trading partner. In 2023, India-Africa trade reached \$103 billion, with both nations benefiting from diverse exports, including agricultural products and industrial goods. India has been active in Africa's agricultural sector, investing heavily in land leases and agro-industrial development, though some deals have faced criticism as "farmland grabs."

India's contributions to AfCFTA's success include promoting agricultural technology for smallholder farmers and advocating for more sophisticated tools like drones and AI to boost production. As Africa works toward its Agenda 2063 vision, PM Modi's push for stronger India-Africa ties, including Africa's recent inclusion in the G20, positions the partnership as critical for both regions' future prosperity and global influence.



Source: Modern Diplomacy EU

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2024/10/15/india-africa-and-the-afcfta/>