

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

October 2023 | Issue #26

Sri Lanka hosted the IORA Council of Ministers meeting in Colombo; Jaishankar also attended

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

Sri Lanka played a pivotal role on the international stage as it hosted the Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) on October 11. This significant gathering saw senior leaders from 16 countries converging in Colombo, the island nation's capital, marking a momentous occasion in regional diplomacy. IORA stands as the largest and most prominent organization in the Indian Ocean Region, boasting 23 member countries and 10 dialogue partners. As the highest decision-making body within IORA, the Council of Ministers Meeting is a platform for crucial discussions on regional cooperation, policy initiatives, and collective action.

Sri Lanka's role in IORA is set to expand as it assumes the chairmanship for the period 2023 to 2025. This leadership position signifies the country's commitment to fostering collaboration and driving meaningful change across the region. This meeting was a dynamic exchange of ideas and strategies. Among the 16 ministers in attendance was India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, highlighting the nation's dedication to strengthening regional ties. This event is a testament to the diversity of IORA's membership, with foreign ministers from Bangladesh, Iran, Mauritius, Malaysia, South Africa, and India coming together. It's not just member countries; dialogue partners, including China, the United States, and the United Kingdom, also engaged in constructive discussions. One of the primary objectives of this meeting is to explore avenues for cooperation in six priority areas: trade and investment, maritime safety and security, fisheries management, disaster risk management, and the blue economy. These discussions aim to foster economic growth, enhance regional security, and protect the fragile marine ecosystems of the Indian Ocean. In a world facing numerous challenges, the Council of Ministers Meeting of IORA demonstrates the power of diplomacy and cooperation. Sri Lanka's hosting of this event signifies its commitment to a brighter, more interconnected future for the Indian Ocean Region.



INSIDE

Stories in Focus



Policy

UN security council and AU peace and security meeting opens in Addis Ababa



Health

Dengue will 'take off' in southern Europe, US, Africa this decade, WHO says



Technology

Hyundai Electric Vehicles to Add North American Charging Standard

India In Talks With South American & African Nations To Introduce UPI



Strategic Partnerships

Sri Lanka hosted the IORA Council of Ministers meeting in Colombo

Australia-US Ink Multibillion-Dollar Defense Deal



Source: The Times of India

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/europe/eu-ministers-meet-in-kyiv-to-support-ukraine-amid-signs-of-strain-in-allies/articleshow/104116337.cms>



Europe

Dengue will 'take off' in southern Europe, US, Africa this decade, WHO says

Dengue fever is poised to emerge as a **significant threat** in the **southern United States, southern Europe, and new regions in Africa** during this decade, warns a **World Health Organization's (WHO) Chief Scientist**. This alarming projection is driven by rising global temperatures, creating **conducive conditions** for the **mosquitoes** that carry the dengue virus.

Dengue fever has long been a **health concern** in parts of **Asia and Latin America**, causing an estimated **20,000 deaths annually**. Global dengue cases have **surged eight-fold** since 2000, primarily due to **climate change**, increased **human mobility**, and **urbanization**. In 2022 alone, **4.2 million dengue** cases were reported worldwide, and **public health officials** anticipate near-record transmission **levels this year**, with Bangladesh **facing its worst-ever outbreak**, resulting in over **1,000 deaths**. **Jeremy Farrar**, an infectious **diseases specialist**, **emphasizes the urgent need for proactive discussions and preparation to manage** the growing dengue threat.

He highlights that dengue is likely to become **endemic in parts** of the **United States, Europe, and Africa**, where limited local transmission has already occurred. This situation will place immense pressure on healthcare systems in affected countries. **Farrar's extensive** experience in combating tropical diseases, including dengue, and his current role at the **WHO underscore the urgency of addressing this emerging global health challenge** exacerbated by **climate change**. Most people who get dengue **do not have symptoms**, meaning **case rates** are thought to be far **higher than the reported numbers**. Those who do can experience **fever, muscle spasms and joint pain so severe** it is known as "**break-bone fever**." In severe cases – **less than 1% - it can be fatal**. **There is no specific treatment for dengue**, although there is a **vaccine available**. Earlier this week, the WHO recommended **Takeda Pharmaceuticals' Qdenga vaccine** for children aged **6 to 16** in areas where the infection is a significant public health problem. **Qdenga** is also approved by the **EU regulator**, but Takeda **withdrew its application** in the **United States** earlier this year, **citing data collection issues**. Takeda said it was **still in talks** with the **US Food and Drug Administration** about the vaccine.



North America

Hyundai Electric Vehicles to Add North American Charging Standard

Hyundai Motor North America has announced its adoption of the **North American Charging Standard (NACS) ports for electric vehicles (EVs)** in the **United States and Canada**. Starting in **Q4 2024**, **all-new or refreshed Hyundai EVs** in the **United States** will exclusively feature **NACS ports**, with **Canada following suit** in the **first half of 2025**. This move will provide Hyundai EVs with access to more than 12,000 Tesla Superchargers across the **United States, Canada, and Mexico**, effectively doubling the **DC fast charging network available to Hyundai EV users**.

The collaboration with Tesla marks a **significant milestone** in **Hyundai's commitment** to delivering exceptional **EV experiences**. The partnership aims to **instill confidence** in Hyundai EV owners by **ensuring convenient charging access**. Additionally, it complements the **joint venture to establish a new high-powered charging network** with a target of at least **30,000 stations across North America**.

Owners of existing and future **Hyundai EVs equipped** with the current CCS (Combined Charging System) will gain access to the **Tesla Supercharging Network starting in Q1 2025**, facilitated by Hyundai-provided adapters. Moreover, Hyundai will make adapters available to enable NACS-equipped vehicles to charge at CCS chargers.

This expansion aligns with Hyundai's **broader strategy** to ensure that EV drivers have access to an extensive charging infrastructure. In partnership with six global automakers, Hyundai is working on **creating a high-powered North American charging network**, with the first U.S. stations expected to open in the **summer of 2024, followed by Canada at a later stage**.



Source: Hyundai

<https://www.hyundai.com/worldwide/en/company/newsroom/detail/0000000325>



South America

India In Talks With South American & African Nations To Introduce UPI



India is engaged in discussions with **several South American and African nations** to implement the **Unified Payment Interface (UPI)** and **RuPay cards** as payment platforms in these regions, according to a **senior government official**. These negotiations are at various stages, reflecting India's efforts to expand the use of **UPI internationally**. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** and the **National Payments Corp. of India (NPCI)** are collaborating with various countries, high commissions, and embassies in these endeavors.

Ritesh Shukla, the CEO of NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), has recently stated that the number of countries where UPI is operational will **double in the next 12-18 months**. The **government aims to popularize and globalize RuPay and UPI**, transforming them into **global products**. In **August**, UPI transactions in India surpassed **10 billion**. Additionally, the RBI is planning to introduce a **wholesale central bank digital currency (CBDC)** in the **interbank borrowing market**, particularly in the call money market. This market allows banks to borrow funds from each other for short-term liquidity needs. The **wholesale CBDCs are being tested to explore** various technologies, including their use as **tokens for call money settlement**.

Source: INC 42

<https://inc42.com/buzz/india-in-talks-with-south-american-african-nations-to-introduce-upi/>

The RBI initiated pilot testing of CBDCs in both wholesale and retail segments, with a goal of achieving **one million daily CBDC transactions by December 2023**. These pilots aim to assess the **benefits, risks, and impact on bank deposits and monetary policy**. Interbank call money market is a **short-term money market** allowing financial institutions like **banks, mutual funds, and corporations**, to lend and borrow money at interbank rates. "The purpose of wholesale CBDCs has been to **try out different technologies**. Going forward, we will try other technologies, like using **CBDCs as tokens for call money settlements**," he added. "**Experimenting with technology** is relatively **easier for wholesale CBDC pilots**," he said. The purposes of CBDC pilots are to understand the **benefits, risks, and impact** that we may have on bank deposits, monetary policy, among others," the official said.



Asia

Sri Lanka hosted the IORA Council of Ministers meeting in Colombo, Jaishankar also attended

Sri Lanka hosted the crucial **Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** on **October 11**, with participation from **senior leaders of 16 countries**, including **India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar**. The IORA's Council of Ministers is the **highest decision-making body** of the organization, which is the largest and most **prominent regional body** in the Indian Ocean Region, **comprising 23 member countries and 10 dialogue partners**.

During the meeting, **Sri Lanka will take over the chairmanship of IORA** for the period **2023 to 2025**. The event will see the presence of **16 ministers**, including foreign ministers from countries such as **Bangladesh, India, Iran, Mauritius, Malaysia, and South Africa**. Additionally, ministerial and senior-level representatives from **Australia, Comoros, France, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen (member countries)** attended along with representatives from **China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Turkey, the UK, and the United States of America (dialogue partners)**.

The discussions at the meeting focussed on cooperation in **six priority areas, including trade and investment, maritime safety and security, fisheries management, disaster risk management, and the blue economy**. **Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Ali Sabry** took over the chairmanship from **Bangladesh's Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momen** during the meeting.



Source: The Print

<https://theprint.in/world/sri-lanka-to-host-iora-council-of-ministers-meeting-in-colombo-jaishankar-set-to-attend/1795190/>



Australia

Australia-US Ink Multibillion-Dollar Defense Deal

An independent report reveals that the **Australian and US Defence Departments will invest over \$6 billion in the Northern Territory**, leading to **significant economic growth and job creation in the region**. The report, titled "**Billion Dollar Partnership**," was produced by ACIL Allen and commissioned by **Master Builders Northern Territory**. It outlines that this substantial investment will be made over the next five years, resulting in the creation of **7,500 additional jobs** and boosting the **economic growth of the Northern Territory** by nearly five percent. The investment will be **directed toward 25 defense projects** in the Territory, with data provided by the **Department of Defence**. The report also highlights the capacity of the construction sector in the **Northern Territory to deliver these projects**. This significant investment aligns with the **Defense Strategic Review's emphasis** on the strategic importance of **northern Australia and the need to strengthen and expand bases and facilities** in the Northern Territory. It represents a **major partnership between the Australian and US Defence Departments** and the construction sector, promising economic benefits for the entire region. The report highlights the progress that the Federal Government and the Department of Defense are making in response to the **Defense Strategic Review (DSR)**.

Source: The Mirage News

<https://www.miragenews.com/australia-us-ink-multibillion-dollar-defence-1099608/#:~:text=The%20Australian%20and%20US%20Defence,to%20a%20new%20independent%20report.>

"The **DSR amplified the vital strategic importance of northern Australia** and strengthening and **expanding bases and facilities in the Northern Territory**. It's great news that such substantial progress is being made toward the achievement of that objective," **Chief Executive of Master Builders Northern Territory Ben Carter** said.



Africa

UN security council and AU peace and security meeting opens in Addis Ababa

The annual meeting between **member countries of the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC)** is taking place in **Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**. The meeting aims to address **critical issues related to the funding of the AU's peacekeeping operations in Africa**. **AU Peace and Security Commissioner Bankole Adeoye** urged participants to focus on ensuring **predictable, adequate, flexible, and sustainable funding** for AU peacekeeping efforts in Africa. This has been a **long-standing issue, with African countries calling for financing through compulsory contributions from UN member states**. Negotiations on a draft resolution addressing this issue have been **ongoing since 2018**, but progress has been slow. The AU has struggled to **finance its peace operations**, relying heavily on external partners like the **European Union**.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres' representative to the **AU, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga**, expressed hope that the discussions would lead to a framework resolution that replaces the current ad hoc financing arrangement. **Guterres emphasized the need for African-led responses to threats to peace and security on the continent, funded by mandatory contributions**.

Some **UNSC members have raised concerns** about the **types of operations** to be financed (e.g., **peacekeeping or anti-terrorist missions**) and questions related to criminal liability in cases of abuse. The two councils will also discuss the security situation in various African regions, including **Sudan, the Sahel, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo**, highlighting the ongoing challenges and crises on the continent.



Source: Africa News

<https://www.africanews.com/2023/10/05/un-security-council-and-au-peace-and-security-meeting-opens-in-addis-ababa/>