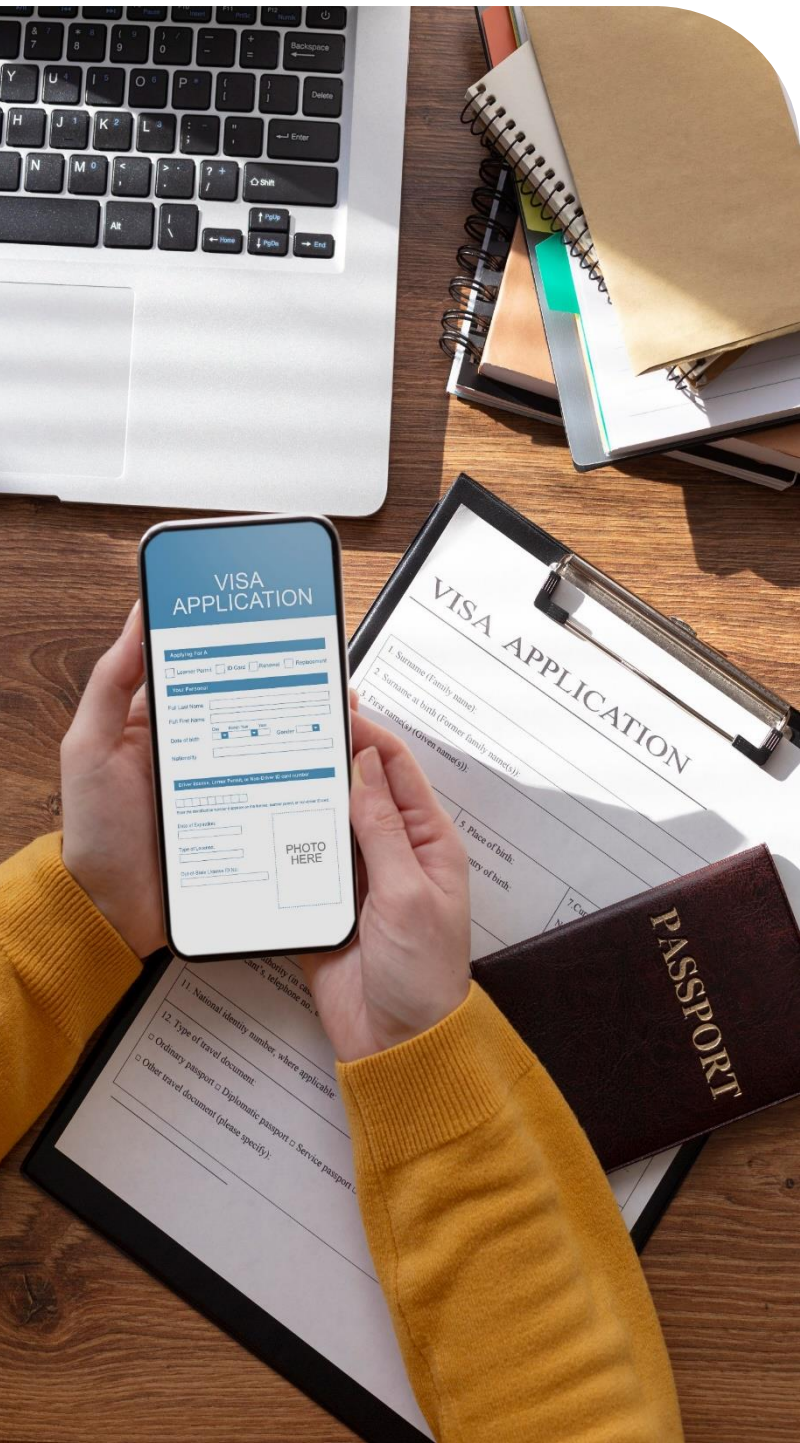


Far and Wide

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

February 2024 | Issue #38



Australia announced the discontinuation of a major visa programme – Golden Visa Scheme

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

The **Australian government** has decided to end a major visa programme that was targeted at attracting wealthy investors, known as the "golden visa" scheme. The government's decision to terminate the golden visa scheme was because the outcomes did not match the desired economic outcomes.

Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil, released a statement in January saying, "It has been obvious for years that this visa is not delivering what our country and economy needs." Australia's centre-left Labor government announced the plan in December that was designed to reduce the number of new arrivals in the country to pre-COVID levels, with a focus on creating more visas for the skilled migrants who were capable "of making outsized contributions to Australia" and could fill up the growing gaps in the world's sixth-largest country's economy.

Over the years, the scheme has faced backlash for the **exploitation by "corrupt officials"** as a means to "park illicit funds." Under the golden visa scheme of the Australian government, it was mandatory for the people seeking residency, **to invest a total of \$5 million in Australia**. The scheme standard does not require people to speak or learn the English language and does not have **any age limitations** as an eligibility criterion.

The critics have asserted that the visa scheme has facilitated a rapid pathway for **Chinese millionaires** to enter the country, constituting **over 85 per cent of successful applications**. The scheme was **initiated in 2012** and as per the Home Affairs Department, since then over **100,000 overseas migrants** have made use of the program to gain residency in the country.

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Europe

Alarming 45-fold rise in measles in Europe - WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that there has been an **alarming increase** in measles cases in Europe last year **almost by 45 folds**. This has caused concerns to rise among health chiefs who have **warned of the rising number** of cases and are pushing for urgent measures that can help **halt the spread**. Around **42,200 people were infected** in 2023, compared to **941 during the whole of 2022**. The WHO believes this is a result of fewer children being vaccinated against the disease during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the UK, health officials said last week that an **outbreak of highly contagious measles** in the West Midlands **could spread rapidly to other towns** and cities with low vaccination rates. More than **3.4 million children under the age of 16 are unprotected** and at risk of becoming ill from the disease, according to NHS England. The parents and carers have been instructed to check and fulfil the vaccination status of their children urgently against measles.

Source: BBC News

[Alarming 45-fold rise in measles in Europe - WHO - BBC News](#)

The WHO said measles had affected all age groups **last year - young and old alike**. Overall, two in five cases were in children aged 1-4, and one in five cases was in adults aged 20 and above. **The measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine** is very effective at protecting against measles, but only **85% of children starting primary school** in the UK have **had both jabs**. Measles can be a **serious illness** at any age which can **include complications** like pneumonia, meningitis, blindness and seizures. Between January and October 2023, **20,918 people across Europe** were admitted to hospital with measles. In two countries, five measles-related deaths were also reported



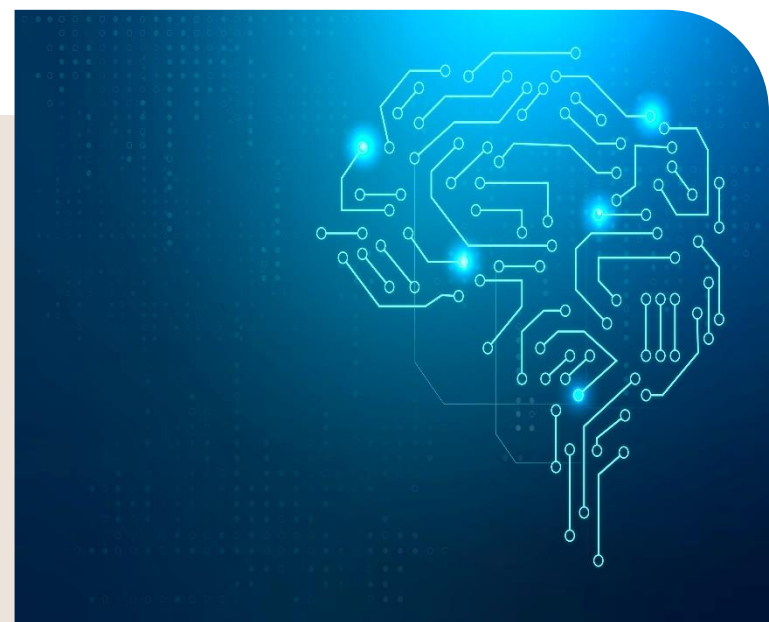
North America

Latin America joins global AI regulations race as threats grow

A senator leading Mexico's push to govern the technology's use stated, "As global powers are setting up **rules to regulate artificial intelligence (AI) tools**, Latin America has also stepped up in the race".

Sen. Alejandra Lagunes heads Mexico's National Artificial Intelligence Alliance, set up by Congress last April to help the country **reap economic benefits from AI's** development while also **limiting its potential harms**. **Mexico currently has no AI regulations**, and it is **crucial to strike a balance** between the positives and negatives of technology by **pursuing an AI strategy to transform from consumers to developers**. She warns against regulating out of fear, as it may hinder innovation and **equalize Mexico with other nations**. Lagunes sees **job opportunities for Mexican engineers** in developing AI tools for local needs, such as healthcare and public safety. Currently, **eight countries in Latin America** have introduced legislation to regulate AI, with Brazil moving forward on some of **the most comprehensive bills**. Mexico also looks to Chile, where **neurorights protect mental data** as a response to technologies that scan, analyse and sell mental data.

The speaker also expresses **concerns about AI's impact on democracy**, particularly in the upcoming June presidential election. In the **absence of regulations**, media literacy and fact-checking organizations become crucial. AI has already surfaced in Latin American election campaigns, but Lagunes notes **positive usage by political parties in Mexico**. The Alliance plans to provide the **election winner with an AI policy paper**, integrating it into the **National Development Plan** to guide regulations, budget allocation, and policies and believes AI can be a powerful equalizer globally.



Source: Context News

[Latin America joins global AI regulations race as threats grow | Context](#)



South America

IUCN Members and Commissions from Latin America and the Caribbean plan to collaborate to work on the environmental matters

IUCN (The International Union for Conservation of Nature) members and commissions from **Latin America and the Caribbean** consolidate their contributions to **the action plan** on human rights defenders in environmental matters. The contributions were compiled and systematized through a consultation process with IUCN Members and Commissions in the region, and **officially delivered to the Secretariat** of the Escazú Agreement. About 89 participants from **16 countries highlighted diverse perspectives** on environmental defenders, emphasizing the need for explicit gender and intergenerational considerations. The plan, seen as **a positive initial point**, aims to address challenges faced by those defending territories and nature.

The IUCN Regional Director, Úrsula Parrilla stated that the joint effort highlights the importance of the **articulated work between the three pillars of the Union** for the promotion of sustainable and equitable development while protecting human rights defenders in order to **achieve a balance** between nature conservation and respect for the fundamental rights of communities.

Source: IUCN

[IUCN Members and Commissions from Latin America and the Caribbean consolidate their contributions to the Action Plan on Human Rights Defenders in Environmental Matters - Story | IUCN](#)

This consultation process on the **Regional Action Plan on Human Rights Defenders in Environmental Matters in Latin America** and the Caribbean is part of the process of strengthening IUCN's collaborative ties **with ECLAC**, within the framework of the **Memorandum of Understanding signed** between the two organizations **during COP28**, to support joint actions and efforts for the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development in the region. The consultation was supported by the Voices Project, funded by the **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)**.



Asia

Switzerland and India reach a deal on FTA after 16 years of negotiations

After 16 years of negotiations, **Switzerland and India** have finalized a deal on a free trade agreement, as stated by **Swiss Economy Minister Guy Parmelin**.

According to **a post by the Swiss Minister on the platform X**, Parmelin travelled to India directly after the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, **to meet with counterpart Piyush Goyal**.

The post also stated that the **outline of the deal was agreed upon** and there are continuous **efforts to finalise the details**.

Parmelin also stated in an interview with **the Swiss Newspaper, Sonntagszeitung**, that **the agreement will create jobs** for the young population of India, and **secure employment in Switzerland**.



Source: Business Standard

https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/switzerland-and-india-reach-deal-on-fta-after-16-years-of-negotiations-124012100590_1.html



Australia

Australia terminates 'golden visa' in immigration overhaul over 'poor economic outcomes'

Australia announced its decision to end a major visa programme that was targeted at attracting wealthy investors, known as the **"golden visa" scheme**. The government's decision to terminate the golden visa scheme was because the outcomes did not match the **desired economic outcomes**. Over the years, the scheme has faced backlash for the **exploitation by "corrupt officials" as a means to "park illicit funds."**

Under the golden visa scheme of the Australian government, it was mandatory for the people seeking residency, **to invest a total of \$5 million in Australia**. The scheme standards did not require people to **speak or learn the English language** and did not **have any age limitations**.

Source: WION

<https://www.wionews.com/world/australia-terminates-golden-visa-in-immigration-overhaul-over-delivering-poor-economic-outcomes-682536>

The critics have asserted that the visa scheme has facilitated a **rapid pathway for Chinese millionaires to enter the country**, constituting **over 85 per cent of successful applications**. The scheme was initiated in 2012 and as per the Home Affairs Department, since then over **100,000 overseas migrants** have made use of the program to gain residency in the country.



Africa

"India Betting On Africa's Rise": S Jaishankar In Nigeria

While addressing the **Nigeria-India Business Council (NIBC)**, the Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar stated that **India is "betting on Africa's rise"** and the rebalancing and the multipolarity of the world will not be complete until the continent takes its due place. He also emphasised upon the growth of Africa and that India is speculating on the rise in Africa, the growth is happening all around Africa in terms of demography, resources, ambition and policy alignments. Which depicts a very different and increasingly **positive future in the coming years in Africa**.

He highlighted a few areas of development where **the partnership between India and Africa can grow**. Being the **first foreign minister from India to visit Nigeria** concluded his two-nation tour with an address to the NIBC. Noting that there is about USD 13 to 15 billion worth of trade annually between India and in investment in the country, **Nigeria and New Delhi have committed nearly USD 30 billion** S Jaishankar said Nigeria is India's premier economic partner in Africa.

He concluded by advising a road map further, stating "To build up the business relationship even more strongly, the governments of both the countries should **find constructive and practical solutions to challenges** related to banking, insurance, credit guarantees, flight connections, and trade settlements.



Source: NDTV World

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-betting-on-africas-rise-says-s-jaishankar-in-nigeria-4918810>