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Fostering Cross-Border AI Deployment – Singapore and US Launch AI Cooperation and Standards Equivalency Efforts

Introduction

While the adoption of artificial intelligence ("AI") technology by governments and businesses has been swift and widespread, there remain certain barriers to the implementation of AI solutions, particularly in the cross-border context. This is largely due to the regulation of technical standards of AI technology, which is still in its early stages. Further, the applicable standards may differ across jurisdictions, leading to difficulties in compliance in cross-border deployment.

In this regard, Singapore and US have taken an important step towards cooperation and technical standards equivalency on the AI front. The inaugural US-Singapore Dialogue on Critical and Emerging Technologies ("CET") was launched on 12 October 2023, and aims to upgrade the bilateral partnership between the countries on the frontiers of scientific and technological enterprise. Singapore and US intend to anchor the CET Dialogue and corollary lines of efforts in certain key areas, one of which is AI. This includes information sharing and consultation on AI standards and collaboration on responsible AI research and development.

On the US front, US President Joe Biden on 30 October 2023 issued an Executive Order that aims to establish new standards for AI safety and security while also promoting innovation and competition, monitor and regulate the risks of AI while also harnessing its potential ("**AI Executive Order**"). White House officials have stated this to be the most significant action on AI by any government.

The launch of these efforts signals a move towards the development of easier and faster bilateral cross-border deployment of AI technology between Singapore and US, highlighting Singapore's position as the preferred and natural entry point for US AI technology companies into Asia and the region. It also underscores the expansion opportunities for Singapore companies seeking entry into US markets.

In this Update, we look at the key features of the US-Singapore CET Dialogue in the area of AI, what it means for businesses in this field, and Rajah & Tann's role in facilitating the utilisation of relevant opportunities in terms of legal and compliance issues.

US-Singapore CET Dialogue

The inaugural US-Singapore CET Dialogue, held in Washington D.C., was chaired by US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Acting Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technology Seth Center



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(on behalf of Secretary of State Antony Blinken), Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, and Singapore Minister for Communications and Information and Minister-in-Charge of Smart Nation and Cybersecurity Josephine Teo. Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong delivered the opening remarks.

Through the US-Singapore CET Dialogue, US and Singapore discussed opportunities to bolster research, innovation, and commercial ties to expand the frontiers of scientific knowledge, promote prosperity, and deliver public goods to the Indo-Pacific region, especially ASEAN partners.

In the area of AI, US and Singapore resolved to deepen information-sharing and consultations on international AI security, safety, trust, and standards development, while continuing to race ahead at the leading edge of responsible innovation. The bilateral initiatives and enhanced cooperation in this area include the following:

- **AI Standards Equivalency** – A mapping exercise was completed between the US Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology **AI Risk Management Framework** and the Singapore Infocomm Media Development Authority's **AI Verify**.
- **AI Governance Working Group** – A bilateral AI Governance Working Group was established to focus on advancing shared principles for safe, trustworthy, and responsible AI innovation, to complement the US' Voluntary AI Commitments and a potential multilateral AI Code of Conduct.
- **Research & Education** – Collaboration between the US National Science Foundation and AI Singapore will be expanded through joint research and educational funding opportunities focused on trustworthy and safe AI systems.
- **Professional Certification** – Singapore and US will explore reciprocal certification programs for American and Singaporean AI professionals on the basis of shared standards, tests, and benchmarks.

The Future of Collaboration

The launch of the US-Singapore CET Dialogue marks the first of several significant steps to build enduring collaboration across business, scientific and national security communities. In particular, one of the goals of such collaboration is to bring the envisioned benefits not only to Singapore and US, but also to ASEAN partners. The advantages of any initiatives would thus be relevant to businesses in Singapore, US, and the ASEAN and Asia Pacific region.

One of the initiatives that has drawn attention is the mapping of US' AI Risk Management Framework and Singapore's AI Verify. Directly addressing the barrier of entry that is differing AI technical standards,

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the aligned approaches between the two countries means that businesses would have greater certainty about meeting the requirements in both jurisdictions, which leads to lower compliance costs for AI deployment and innovation.

Businesses seeking to capitalise on these developments, whether to enter the US market or to expand into the ASEAN region through Singapore, would be well minded to keep abreast of the initiatives that will continue to be launched under the US-Singapore CET Dialogue.

Businesses should also keep in mind that standards and regulations governing AI technology are likely to become of increasing significance. For example, under the US AI Executive Order, developers of the most powerful AI systems will be required to share their safety test results and other critical information with the US government. The US National Institute of Standards and Technology will also set rigorous standards for extensive red-team testing to ensure safety before public release, while the Department of Commerce will develop guidance for content authentication and watermarking to clearly label AI-generated content. As a close partner on this front, it remains to be seen if the Singapore Government may also follow suit with such regulatory measures.

Companies should thus ensure that they are adequately advised of the applicable standards before cross-border deployment efforts. Due to the transnational and cross-discipline nature of such operations, businesses should also ensure that they receive due advice across all relevant areas.

In this regard, parties are welcome to contact the Rajah & Tann Asia team for further queries. With a footprint across ASEAN and beyond, the team is able to advise on Data and Digital Economy matters, as well as issues of corporate structure, capital markets and finance.

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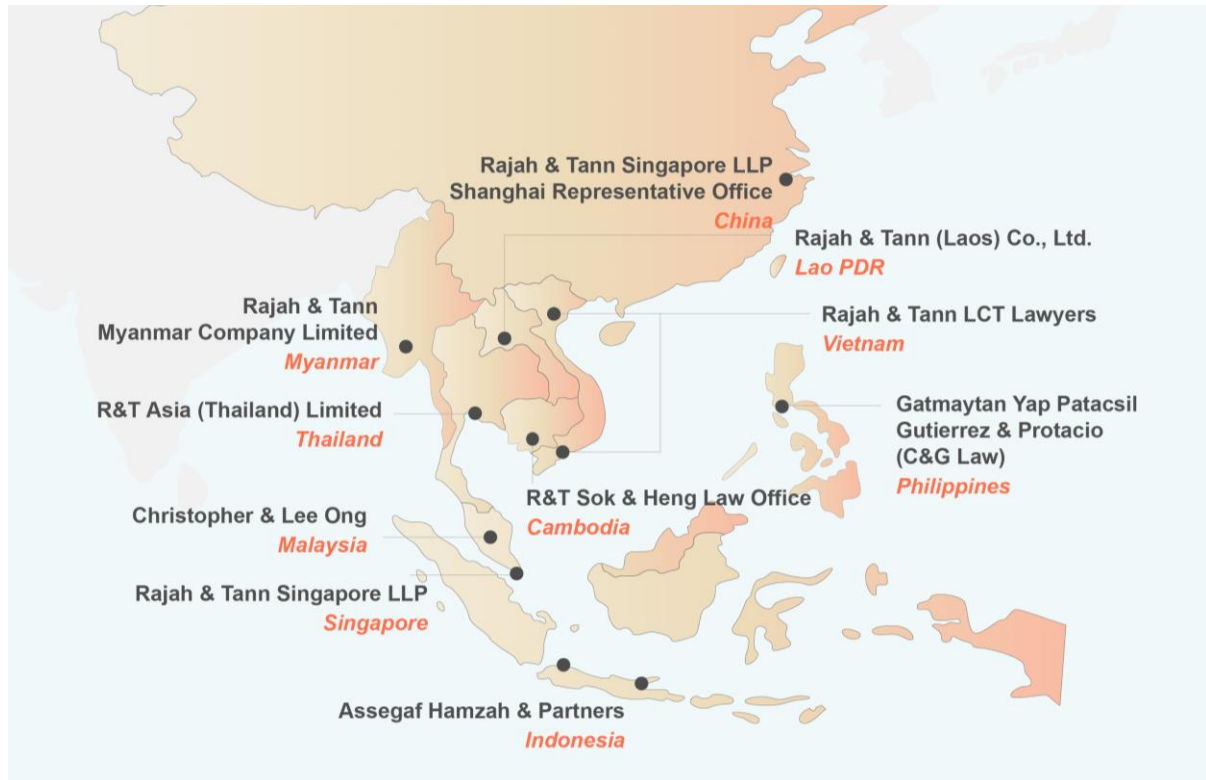
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