



Photo Credit: Canva.com

Beyond Pandemic Preparedness: Positioning Biosecurity in ASEAN's Community Vision 2045

Jeselyn

Health Resilience and the Recognition of Biological Risks

The [ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community \(ASCC\) Strategic Plan](#), adopted at the 46th ASEAN Summit in May 2025 as part of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, provides an important framework for advancing regional cooperation on health security and biosecurity. While the Plan is not designed specifically as a biosecurity strategy, it reflects ASEAN's broader commitment to build a resilient, inclusive, and people-centred community capable of responding to future crises and long-term transboundary challenges.

Strategic Goal 4 is particularly relevant, as it focuses on achieving a healthy ASEAN population through strengthened health systems, improved well-being, and protection against communicable and non-communicable diseases. It also emphasises prevention, preparedness and response capacities, including through the One Health approach, and the role of regional mechanisms such as the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED). In this regard, the Plan demonstrates that ASEAN has absorbed key lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the need for stronger regional coordination, surveillance, institutional preparedness and resilient healthcare architecture.

Strategic Goal 11 further reinforces this orientation by addressing the need for a more agile and resilient ASEAN Community in the face of emerging crises. Notably, it refers to strengthening health systems to prevent, prepare for, and respond to health-related hazards, while incorporating biosafety and biosecurity concerns. This marks a significant acknowledgement that biological risks are not limited to naturally occur-

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ring disease outbreaks, but also include broader concerns relating to safety, security, and preparedness in the management of biological hazards.

These provisions represent a positive development. They locate biosecurity within ASEAN's wider socio-cultural agenda and recognise that biological risks have implications beyond the health sector alone.

Remaining Gaps: A Pandemic-Preparedness-Heavy Approach

Despite these strengths, the ASCC Strategic Plan remains largely shaped by the experience of pandemic preparedness and public health emergency response. However, biosecurity extends beyond pandemic preparedness. A comprehensive biosecurity agenda should also address dual-use research of concern, laboratory biosafety and biosecurity, biological data governance, synthetic biology, and the potential misuse of biological materials, technologies or knowledge.

A further limitation is the lack of explicit reference to the ASEAN Biosafety and Biosecurity Network, which was mentioned in [the 2024 ASEAN Leaders' Declaration](#) on Strengthening Regional Biosafety and Biosecurity under Lao PDR's chairmanship. The Declaration called for the establishment of this Network to facilitate knowledge-sharing, coordination and cooperation among ASEAN Member States, partners and relevant stakeholders. It also highlighted the importance of national legal frameworks, minimum standards, responsible and ethical research involving high-risk pathogens and toxins, protocols for storage and transport, sustainable human resources, and laboratory infrastructure.

The absence of a clear reference to this Network in the ASCC Strategic Plan represents a missed opportunity to connect ASEAN's political commitments on biosafety and biosecurity with its long-term community-building agenda. This does not necessarily suggest that the Network has been deprioritised. However, it does indicate the need for stronger institutional continuity between ASEAN declarations, sectoral workplans and strategic community documents. Without such alignment, biosafety and biosecurity initiatives risk remaining fragmented, rather than being embedded within ASEAN's broader regional resilience architecture.

Moving Forward: From Preparedness to Comprehensive Biosecurity Governance

Moving forward, ASEAN should build on the ASCC Strategic Plan by broadening its treatment of biosecurity beyond pandemic preparedness. The Plan provides a useful foundation through its emphasis on One Health, resilient health systems, prevention, preparedness and response, and the recognition of chemical and biological hazards. However, its implementation should be linked more explicitly to existing ASEAN commitments, particularly the 2024 ASEAN Leaders'

Declaration on Strengthening Regional Biosafety and Biosecurity.

First, the ASEAN Biosafety and Biosecurity Network should be operationalised as a practical mechanism to support Strategic Goals 4 and 11. It could serve as a regional platform for technical exchange, capacity-building, training, legal and regulatory cooperation, laboratory standards, and the development of common guidance on the safe and secure handling of biological materials.

Second, ASEAN should adopt a more comprehensive understanding of biosecurity that includes both response and prevention. Pandemic preparedness will remain essential, but effective biosecurity also requires preventing laboratory accidents, reducing the risk of misuse, strengthening oversight of high-risk research, and ensuring that advances in biotechnology are accompanied by appropriate governance mechanisms.

Third, ASEAN should ensure that biosecurity remains people-centred. Public communication, ethical reflection, community trust, and equitable access to capacity-building should be incorporated into regional biosecurity efforts. This is particularly important in Southeast Asia, where governance capacities, scientific infrastructure and quality of public health systems vary across Member States.

Overall, the ASCC Strategic Plan gives ASEAN a valuable foundation, but its real test will be whether commitments translate into coordinated action. A stronger biosecurity agenda must therefore move beyond preparing for the next outbreak to preventing biological risks before they become regional crises. For ASEAN, this is not only a health priority, but a measure of its readiness for an increasingly complex biological future.

SUGGESTED READINGS

ASEAN. "ASEAN Community Vision 2045: Resilient, Innovative, Dynamic, and People-Centred ASEAN." Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2025.

ASEAN. "ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Strengthening Regional Biosafety and Biosecurity." ASEAN Secretariat, 2024.

Mely Caballero-Anthony, Julius Cesar Trajano, Jose Ma. Luis P. Montesclaros and Jeselyn. "Emerging Biosecurity Landscape in Southeast Asia." Policy Report, 12 March 2026.

Mely Caballero-Anthony, Julius Cesar Trajano, and Jeselyn. "Advancing BWC Confidence-Building Measures in Southeast Asia: Leveraging ASEAN's Platforms and Mechanisms." Policy Report, 12 December 2025.

CLIMATE CHANGE



Photo Credit: Freepik.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Declare climate crisis a global public health emergency, experts tell WHO

The independent pan-European commission on climate and health, convened by the World Health Organization (WHO), has concluded that the WHO should declare the climate crisis “a public health emergency of international concern”. An alert of this kind would help trigger coordinated international response that could help avoid millions dying.

Anna Bawden

The Guardian | 16 May 2026

Indonesia plans 575-km giant sea wall to protect economy: AHY

The Indonesian government has reiterated the need to accelerate its Giant Sea Wall project. The 575-kilometer sea wall is designed not only to protect the coastline but also to ensure food security, industrial areas and the safety of millions of coastal communities in Java.

M Razi Rahman

Antara News | 20 May 2026

Carbon markets, climate adaptation among green focus areas for S'pore as 2027 ASEAN chair: Ravi Menon

Singapore's Ambassador for Climate Action, Mr Ravi Menon, has said the country will focus on carbon markets, nature-based solutions as climate policies as Singapore takes on the ASEAN chairmanship in 2027. Facing numerous climate vulnerabilities, South-east Asia must develop solutions that support rather than oppose economic growth, he argued.

Chin Hui Shan and Ang Qing

Straits Times | 21 May 2026

UN warns of extreme heat risk from El Nino and urges preparedness

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), has forecast a moderate or possibly strong El Nino that could contribute to above-average temperatures in most parts of the world from June to August. These effects intersect with climate change and require states to prepare for risks including heat-related illness, diseases, and pressures on food and water systems.

Reuters

Straits Times | 2 June 2026

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Climate risks to peace and security in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia stands at the intersection of accelerating climate risks and complex peace and security challenges. Climate change is no longer viewed solely as an environmental or developmental concern but is increasingly recognised as a multidimensional security issue that affects stability, resilience, and peace.

Julius Cesar Trajano, Adam X. Hansen, Jeselyn and Mely Caballero-Anthony

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies | 2026

Third world ocean assessment

The sustainable use of marine resources and services underpins environmental integrity, with the ocean playing a central role in regulating climate. But the ocean is under mounting stress from overexploitation, pollution and the accelerating impacts of climate change, while global demand for biological, mineral and energy resources continues to grow.

United Nations

2026

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

RSIS Webinar on Energy Transition in an Era of Energy Insecurity

Organised by RSIS Energy Research Cluster, the webinar focused on three major Asian economies and large carbon emitters China, India, and Indonesia to draw comparative insights into how disruptions at the Strait of Hormuz produce varied policy responses affecting energy transition trajectories across diverse institutional and political-economic contexts.

Recorded Webinar

15 May 2026

ENERGY SECURITY



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

IAEA experts to start assessing in 2027 Singapore's nuclear infrastructure readiness: PM Wong

Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said the public will be kept informed throughout the process, and that the IAEA's independent findings will be shared when the first phase of the review is completed. This includes any risks and challenges highlighted, and the overall assessment of Singapore's readiness and progress.

Koh Wan Ting

Channel News Asia | 19 May 2026

How the Philippines is preparing its nuclear workforce for a revival

In the Philippines, no university currently offers a full undergraduate or graduate degree in nuclear engineering. At Mapúa, ranked by some as the country's top engineering school, nuclear engineering and related courses are folded into the broader energy engineering program. The University of the Philippines is also exploring a revival of its master's program in nuclear engineering.

G K Cabico

Eco-business | 22 May 2026

The 2026 nuclear non-proliferation treaty review conference: What it means for Southeast Asia

The failure of the 2026 NPT Review Conference to produce a consensus outcome document reflects deepening divisions within the global nuclear order. It also raises concerns among ASEAN member states committed to advancing nuclear disarmament, strengthening non-proliferation, and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Julius Cesar Trajano

RSIS Commentary | 3 June 2026

Deep underground nuclear waste storage could be feasible in Singapore, study shows

There are no major technical roadblocks for the Republic to store its nuclear waste – possibly deep underground – if the country decides to adopt nuclear energy, according to a study by the Singapore authorities and a Swedish company.

Shabana Begum

The Straits Times | 8 June 2026

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Communicating energy transition in the Global South: Local meanings, barriers, and strategies from local climate advocates

This study demonstrates how energy transition is continuously negotiated and reconstituted through concerns of survival, trust, and participation, thereby offering empirically grounded insights from the Global South to energy transition and energy communication research.

Chenchen Wang

Energy Research and Social Science, Vol. 136 | 2026

Safety assessment of nuclear installations against combinations of hazards induced by external events

This IAEA document offers a structured framework for identifying, grouping and analysing hazard combinations, assessing the performance of nuclear installations under their effects, and evaluating plant response, supported by practical examples from Member States.

International Atomic Energy Agency | 2026

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Key Questions on Energy and AI Webinar

The webinar organised by the International Energy Agency examined how the energy and AI nexus has evolved amid surging investment in data centres and rapid advances in model capabilities.

Recorded Webinar

1 June 2026

FOOD SECURITY



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Food security update: World Bank solutions to food insecurity

The World Bank's update warns of a 61 to 87 percent probability of El Niño emerging by mid-2026 and continuing into 2027. This could make the global food security situation worse by threatening crop production in South Asia, Southern Africa, and parts of East Asia, with rice output potentially falling by 20 to 50 percent.

The World Bank | 22 May 2026

Singapore to deepen cooperation with Vietnam in food security, governance

Singapore and Vietnam will deepen cooperation in areas such as supply chain resilience, agricultural trade and higher education, building on a partnership of more than five decades.

Tham Yuen-C

The Straits Times | 29 May 2026

Long-term 'structural shock': As Iran war drags on, how will Southeast Asia be impacted?

As the war on Iran marked its 100th day on Monday on 8th June, the geopolitical crisis is filtering into everyday life across the region. Fertiliser supply disruptions could push up staple food prices in various ways. Yet, not all governments have the needed fiscal buffers to provide adequate farmer support amidst the Middle East conflict.

Izzah Aqilah Norman

Channel News Asia | 7 June 2026

ASEAN bolsters cooperation, tackles food, energy and cyber threats

Amidst global uncertainties, the recent ASEAN Senior Officials agreed to deepen collaboration in improving regional preparedness in responding to challenges such as natural disasters, pandemics, financial instability, food shortages, and energy security concerns.

Vientiane Times

Asia News Network | 12 June 2026

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

On-farm adoption and impacts of climate-smart agricultural practices on food security of smallholder farmers in Mali

This study examines the adoption of five climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices among smallholder farmers in Mali and their effects on food security. Adoption rates vary across agroecological zones, with extension services and larger household sizes encouraging uptake. The study recommends expanding extension and technical support, particularly in vulnerable regions and sorghum-producing areas, to strengthen climate resilience and food security.

Abel-Gautier Kouakou, et al.

Food Security | May 2026

A compass identifying outcomes for sustainable food systems

This paper introduces the Food Co-Centre Sustainability Compass, a visual tool designed to support food system transformation by enabling policymakers to assess the wider impacts of interventions across the entire food system. The Compass highlights potential synergies and trade-offs among sustainability outcomes.

Alice Gilmour, et al.

Global Food Security | June 2026

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Global Affairs Expert Webinar: Food and Water Security

This webinar organised by the Council on Foreign Relations explored how food and water security are shaped by global crises, including conflict, energy shocks, and trade disruptions. Experts discussed how rising input costs, especially energy and fertilizers, affect food prices, agricultural production, and nutrition outcomes worldwide. The session highlighted policy responses, technological innovations, and the importance of international cooperation to strengthen resilience in interconnected global food systems.

Recorded Webinar

8 April 2026



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

World faces cancer workforce crisis with 100m staff shortfall, report warns

Experts warn of a cancer workforce crisis, projecting a 100 million staff shortfall by 2050 amid a 21% rise in cases. Urgent investment, technology adoption, and strategic planning are essential to prevent overwhelmed healthcare systems and avoidable deaths.

Andrew Gregory

The Guardian | 31 May 2026

As Singapore ramps up psychiatric nursing home capacity, focus shifts to social care

Singapore is expanding psychiatric care capacity with new nursing and rehabilitation homes, aiming for 1,800 beds by 2026. The shift emphasises person-centred recovery, community reintegration, and dignity to meet rising demand in its ageing society.

Joyce Teo

The Straits Times | 1 June 2026

Smart drug that strips cancer cells of ‘invisibility cloak’ can shrink tumours by 30%, trial shows

Early trial results show experimental drug GRWD5769, which removes cancer cells’ ‘invisibility cloak’ by inhibiting ERAPI, shrunk tumours by at least 30% in six common cancers when combined with immunotherapy, offering hope for treatment-resistant patients.

Andrew Gregory

The Guardian | 1 June 2026

WHO chief wraps up visit to Ebola-hit Congo, briefs president on response

World Health Organisation’s Director-General concluded a DR Congo visit amid an Ebola outbreak likely exceeding official figures. Conflict, poor contact tracing, and the Bundibugyo strain’s lack of approved vaccine are compounding factors that necessitate urgent global support and faster vaccine development.

Ange Adihe Kasongo

Reuters | 1 June 2026

SELECTED PUBLICATION

Global health security: The retreat of the liberal international order and the prospects for cooperation in a multi-order world

The paper argues that global health security, founded on liberal internationalist cooperation, now fragments as major powers prioritise national interests and geopolitical competition over collective disease control, undermining the multilateral framework essential for preventing and responding to transnational health threats.

Simon Rushton

Contemporary Security Policy | 26 May 2026

Learning from COVID-19, MERS and SARS to build sustainable coronavirus disease threat management

The World Health Organisation’s 2025-2030 Strategic Plan shifts coronavirus management from emergency response to sustainable, integrated routine health systems. It prioritises sustaining activities, integrating respiratory programmes, enhancing capabilities, and sharing evidence, requiring committed national action and global equity to succeed.

Donald J. Brooks et al.

Nature Health | 27 May 2026

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Global Health Security Conference 2026

The 4th Global Health Security Conference (GHS2026) in Kuala Lumpur was a hallmark event for health security. Global leaders, researchers, and policymakers gathered to engage in high-level discussions tackling climate-related emergencies, emerging infectious diseases, and cross-sectoral pandemic response solutions.

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, Malaysia

9-12 June 2026

BIOSECURITY



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

One person diagnosed with active tuberculosis as screening at Bedok concludes, pending some follow-ups

The Communicable Diseases Agency said that contact tracing is underway to identify and evaluate the close contacts of the patient. Overall, 3,525 people were screened for TB since 2nd May, with 85.6 per cent testing negative and not requiring follow-up action.

Channel News Asia (CNA) | 19 May 2026

Singapore steps up health measures after Ebola outbreak in DR Congo, Uganda

Health advisories are now in place at all points of entry to Singapore for arriving and departing travellers. CDA said that it is monitoring the situation closely and will adjust the public health measures should the risk assessment change.

Firdaus Hamzah

Channel News Asia (CNA) | 19 May 2026

New GB swine fever prevention plan unveiled

A new strategy, intended to combat the threat of African and classical swine fever (ASF) to the British pig industry, has been published. Although there has not been an ASF outbreak in the UK to date, fears about the virus have grown because of its spread in Europe and concerns over the strength of existing biosecurity procedures.

Allister Webb

Vet Times | 4 June 2026

A simple step to close a dangerous biosecurity gap

As biological design capabilities grow, the gap between policy and technology becomes more significant. Mandating DNA synthesis screening would build on what already works. It would close vulnerabilities and support responsible innovation—without slowing scientific progress.

Christine E. Wormuth

The Nuclear Threat Initiative | 4 June 2026

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Regulating synthetic biology and advanced genetic interventions: Biosecurity frameworks, gene therapy oversight, stem-cell manufacturing risks and future policy directions

Gene editing, viral-vector therapies, and engineered stem cell platforms have transformed disease treatment but also introduced profound biosafety risks, regulatory gaps and biosecurity threats.

Neeraja Suresh, et al.

Journal of Biosafety and Biosecurity, Vol. 8, No. 2 | 2026

Mirror-image biology: Perspectives and challenges

Mirror-image biology is an emerging frontier in synthetic biology that uses chirally inverted biomolecules to construct orthogonal biological systems. Due to their molecular-level chiral incompatibility with natural biological systems, mirror-image organisms could theoretically evade the biological interactions and ecological controls governing natural ecosystems. If released, such organisms could pose irreversible threats to public health and ecosystem stability.

Yahan Chen, et al.

Journal of Biosafety and Biosecurity, Vol. 8, No. 2 | 2026

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

XVIII International Symposium on Biosafety and Biosecurity (SIBB 2026)

The symposium brings together experts and professionals from across Latin America and beyond, including representatives from healthcare, pharmaceuticals, research, biotechnology, high-containment laboratories, and hospitals. The programme features pre-symposium courses, keynote conferences, and free paper presentations, with simultaneous English-Spanish translation.

University of Monterrey, Mexico

18-22 August 2026

MIGRATION



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Why are anti-migrant attacks increasing in South Africa?

Human Rights Watch has warned of a new wave of xenophobic attacks in South Africa as anti-immigration groups intensify protests and vigilante-style actions targeting foreign nationals, including Zimbabweans.

Enos Denhere

Al Jazeera | 23 May 2026

Bahrain: Migrant workers, harmed by conflict, get no aid

During the Iran conflict, Human Rights Watch found that migrant workers in Bahrain were excluded from an emergency wage support program. Migrant workers did not receive the emergency funds, and do not have access to other forms of comprehensive social security other than ad hoc support programs.

Human Rights Watch | 2 June 2026

Pope urges leaders to stop dividing as he meets migrants, homeless in Spain

Pope Leo has called upon global leaders to stop dividing electorates with sterile simplifications and met with migrants and young people during his tour of Spain. The pope continued to assert on the dignity of migrants and for integration of refugees who flee conflict, poverty and climate change.

Reuters

Channel News Asia | 7 June 2026

Marcos vows stronger protection, support for OFWs on Migrant Workers Day

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Sunday reaffirmed the government's commitment to protecting the rights and welfare of overseas Filipino workers and to expand opportunities for their reintegration upon returning home. Nearly one-third are employed in the Middle East, a region currently facing war and conflict.

Dexter Cabalza

Inquirer.net | 7 June 2026

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Enhancing anti-trafficking prevention through targeted participatory, and multilevel actions

The publication examines the approaches and policies of anti-trafficking responses. Twenty-five years after the adoption of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, trafficking in human beings remains a dynamic and evolving crime.

International Centre for Migration Policy Development | May 2026

Creating inclusive urban economies for migrants and refugees

This report highlights a range of local experiences in supporting urban economic inclusion, drawing in part on interviews with city officials, civil-society actors, and migrants and refugees from cities in around the world, with a particular focus on Asia, East Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

Kate Hooper et al.

Migration Policy Institute | May 2026

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

International Migration Review Forum 2026 – 1st Plenary meeting, Opening Segment and General debate

The second International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) was convened from 5 to 8 May 2026. The forum serves as the primary intergovernmental global platform for member states to discuss and share progress on the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Recorded Forum

May 2026