ASEAN-India ScaleHub 2026 Concludes, Strengthening Cross-Border Innovation and Enterprise Partnerships

Three-day summit brings together governments, industry leaders, startups, investors, and academia to accelerate innovation, digital transformation, and regional business collaboration

BALI, Indonesia — ASEAN-India ScaleHub 2026 concluded after three days of high-level dialogue, strategic business meetings, startup pitches, technology showcases, and industry discussions, reaffirming the growing partnership between India and Southeast Asia in advancing innovation, enterprise development, and digital transformation.

Held from July 15 to 17, the summit, organized by GATES APAC and Asean Economic Forum, brought together more than 80 Technology Vendors & Scaleups/ Independent Software Vendors (ISVs) from India & ASEAN alongside policymakers, multinational technology companies, distributors, research institutions, academia, and enterprises from across ASEAN.

What began as an initiative to connect Indian technology companies with Southeast Asian markets has steadily evolved into a regional platform where governments, academia, enterprises, investors, and startups collaborate to transform innovation into commercial opportunities and long-term partnerships.

"This year we had over 80 Technology Vendors & Scaleups/ ISVs who participated in the program, and we concluded with over 1,200 meetings," said Ashish Kapahi, Executive Director of GATES APAC, during the summit's closing ceremony.

The growing scale of participation reflects ASEAN's emergence as one of the world's fastest-growing digital economies and India's expanding role as a strategic technology partner for the region.

Governments Set the Tone for Regional Collaboration

The summit opened with leaders from ASEAN, India, and Indonesia calling for stronger cooperation to ensure emerging technologies deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth across the region.

Delivering the opening address, H.E. Satvinder Singh, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for the ASEAN Economic Community, emphasized that the region's digital future depends not only on technological advancement but also on responsible governance, trusted institutions, and cross-border collaboration.

Representing India, H.E. Srinivas Gotru, Ambassador of India to ASEAN, described innovation and entrepreneurship as increasingly important pillars of ASEAN-India relations, highlighting opportunities to deepen collaboration through digital public infrastructure, startups, research, and advanced technologies.

The ASEAN perspective was further reinforced by H.E. Evangeline T. Ong Jimenez-DuCrocq, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to ASEAN, who encouraged Southeast Asian countries to leverage their collective strengths as artificial intelligence and digital technologies reshape industries across the region.

Representing Indonesia's research ecosystem, Dr. Boediastoeti Ontowirjo, Deputy for Research and Innovation Policy at the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), stressed that innovation only creates lasting impact when scientific research is translated into practical solutions through collaboration between government, academia, and industry.

Together, the opening session established the central message that would define the summit over the following three days: technological innovation alone is not enough. Sustainable growth depends on building ecosystems where policymakers, researchers, entrepreneurs, investors, and enterprises work together.

Fireside Chat Highlights a Shared Innovation Agenda

Building on the opening addresses, a fireside chat moderated by Sachin Gopalan, Chairman of the ASEAN Economic Forum, brought together H.E. Satvinder Singh, H.E. Srinivas Gotru, and Dr. Boediastoeti Ontowirjo to explore how ASEAN and India can strengthen cooperation in building a resilient and innovation-driven regional economy.

The discussion centered on creating stronger connections between governments, research institutions, universities, and the private sector to accelerate technology adoption while ensuring innovation delivers tangible economic and social benefits.

The speakers also discussed the importance of harmonizing policies, encouraging cross-border research collaboration, supporting startup ecosystems, and developing digital infrastructure capable of enabling long-term regional competitiveness.

Rather than viewing innovation solely through the lens of technology, the conversation emphasized that sustainable economic growth will increasingly depend on trusted partnerships that connect public institutions with industry and academia.

Defence Technology Partnership Marks Summits Outcome

One of the summit's significant tangible outcomes came with the signing of a cross-border defence technology agreement between India and Indonesia.

Nitrodynamics Aerospace and Defence Private Limited (NDAD) of India and PT BTI Indo Tekno (BTI-Defence) of Indonesia signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during ASEAN-India ScaleHub 2026, establishing a framework for collaboration across defence and aerospace technologies.

The agreement was signed by Anupam Prasad, Chief Executive Officer of NDAD, and Peter Tjahjono, Director of BTI-Defence, during the second day of the summit after being dated July 15.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by H.E. Satvinder Singh, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for the ASEAN Economic Community; H.E. Ambassador Evangeline T. Ong Jimenez-DuCrocq, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to ASEAN and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN for 2026; H.E. Ambassador M.I. Derry Aman, Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ASEAN; H.E. Srinivas Gotru, Ambassador of India to ASEAN; and Ashish Kapahi, Executive Director of GATES APAC.

The partnership covers cooperation in defence technology development, local manufacturing and assembly, systems integration, maintenance, research and development, training, and participation in procurement programmes. Priority areas include electronic warfare, intelligence and surveillance systems, radar technologies, unmanned platforms, counter-drone systems, military artificial intelligence, command-and-control systems, and data fusion platforms.

Facilitated through the ASEAN-India ScaleHub platform, the agreement represented one of the summit's first concrete commercial outcomes, bringing together India's defence technology expertise with Indonesia's industrial capabilities and market access. The signing also demonstrated the event's growing role in enabling strategic cross-border partnerships that extend beyond the digital economy into advanced manufacturing and defence innovation.

AI Must Deliver Measurable Business Value

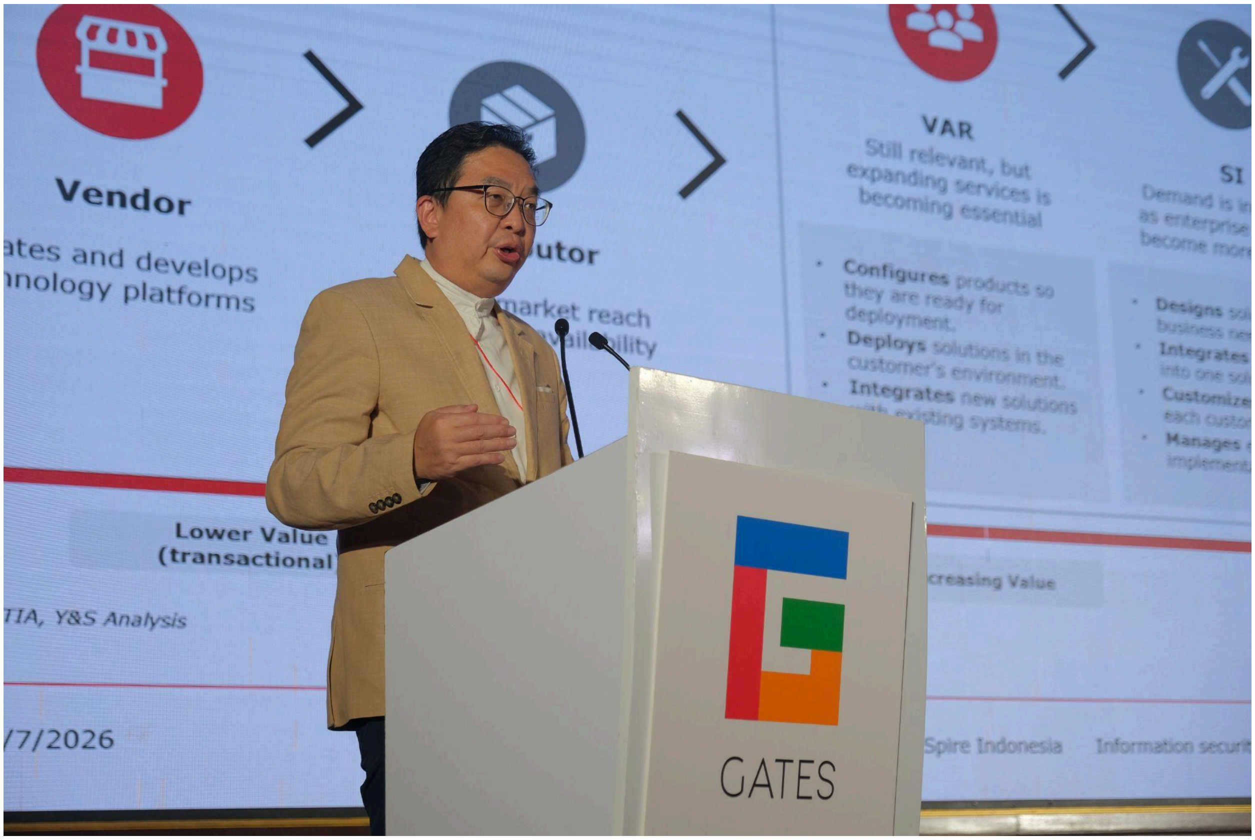
Following the policy discussions, the summit shifted its focus toward enterprise transformation and the practical challenges organizations face as artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integrated into business operations.

Thomas Meyer, Senior Vice President at IDC Germany, argued that enterprises are entering a new phase of AI adoption where success will no longer be measured by experimentation or proof-of-concept projects, but by the ability to generate measurable business outcomes.

As organizations continue investing in AI, he noted, the conversation is moving beyond deployment toward value creation, productivity improvements, and long-term competitiveness.

His presentation highlighted how business leaders should evaluate AI not simply as another technology investment, but as a strategic capability that requires organizational readiness, clear objectives, and measurable returns.

Customer Problems, Not Products, Should Drive Innovation



The commercial perspective was further explored by Jeffrey Bahar, Chief Operating Officer of Yamada Consulting & Spire Research, who encouraged founders and technology companies to rethink how they approach growth.

Rather than leading with products or technical specifications, Bahar argued that successful companies begin by understanding customer pain points and building solutions around real business challenges.

He emphasized that sustainable growth depends on creating value for customers, positioning technology as an enabler of business transformation rather than an end in itself.

His remarks reinforced one of the summit's recurring themes: innovation succeeds when technology addresses practical market needs.

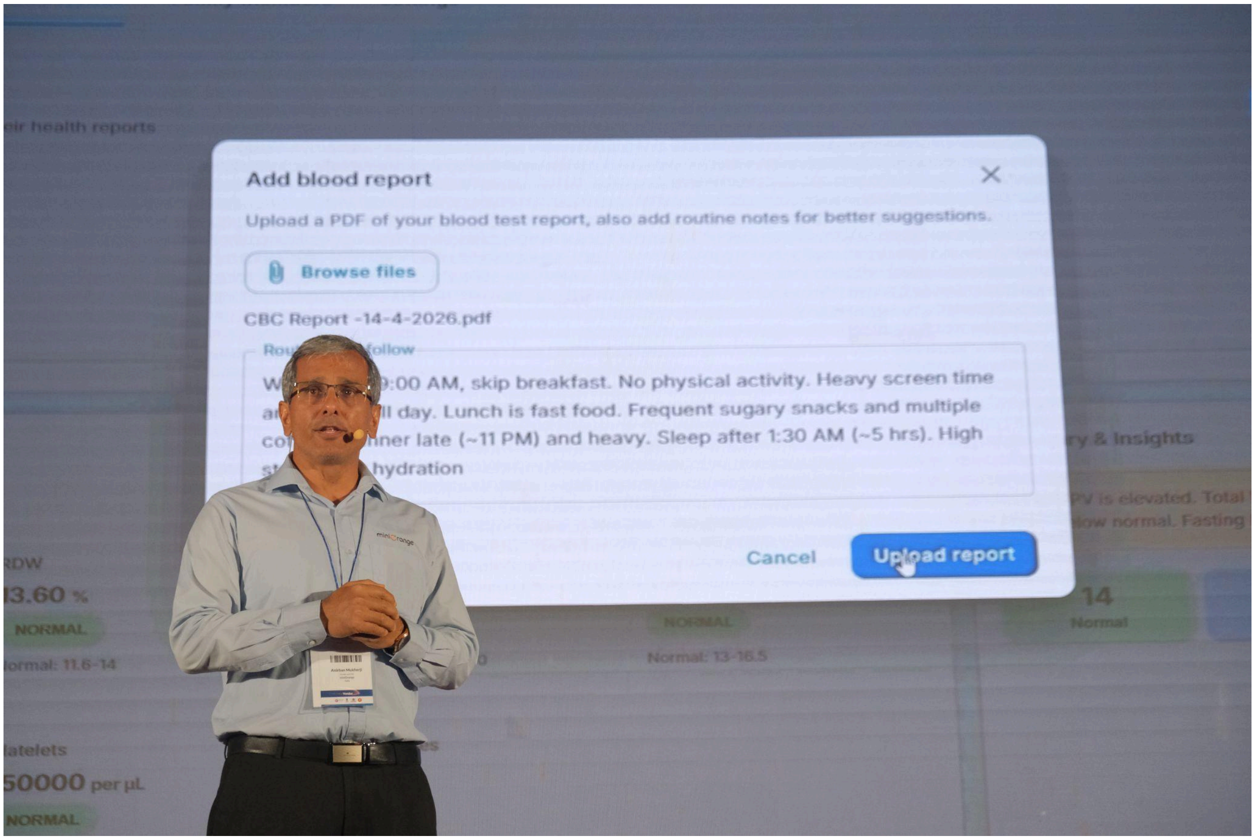
Digital Infrastructure Enables AI Adoption

Enterprise readiness was also examined by Arun Kumar, VP APAC at ManageEngine, who discussed the importance of resilient IT infrastructure as organizations accelerate AI adoption.

He explained that artificial intelligence cannot operate effectively without strong digital foundations, highlighting the growing need for integrated IT management, automation, and operational visibility across increasingly complex enterprise environments.

As organizations modernize their digital operations, Kumar argued, investments in infrastructure will become just as important as investments in AI itself.

Cybersecurity Must Evolve Alongside AI



The final keynote session turned attention to cybersecurity, where Anirban Mukherjee, Founder and CEO of miniOrange, examined how organizations must adapt to an increasingly complex threat landscape driven by digital transformation and artificial intelligence.

He highlighted the growing importance of identity and access management, emphasizing that cybersecurity should no longer be viewed as a reactive function but as a strategic component of enterprise resilience.

As AI systems become more deeply integrated into business operations, Mukherjee argued that organizations must strengthen authentication, identity protection, and access governance to ensure innovation can be adopted securely and at scale.

Secure Digital Workspaces Become a Business Imperative

Continuing the summit's focus on enterprise resilience, Vijender Yadav, Co-founder and CEO of Accops, discussed how organizations must rethink cybersecurity as digital workplaces become increasingly distributed and AI-enabled.

Yadav highlighted the growing importance of secure remote access, identity protection, and zero-trust security architectures as enterprises continue migrating critical workloads to cloud and hybrid environments. He noted that organizations can no longer rely solely on perimeter-based security, requiring integrated approaches that protect users, devices, and applications without compromising operational efficiency.

His presentation emphasized that cybersecurity should be viewed not merely as a defensive measure, but as a strategic business enabler that allows organizations to scale digital transformation securely while maintaining trust across increasingly interconnected enterprise ecosystems.

Local Strategy Emerges as the Foundation for Regional Growth

As the summit moved from keynote presentations to industry dialogue, discussions shifted toward one of the biggest challenges facing technology companies entering Southeast Asia: how to scale successfully across one of the world's most diverse markets.

Moderated by Ashish Kapahi, Executive Director of GATES APAC, the panel discussion "Beyond Replication: Why Scaling Across Southeast Asia Requires Local Strategy" brought together Madhav Narayan, CEO of IIT Madras Global Research Foundation (IITM Global); Mevira Munindra, Country Manager of IDC Research Indonesia; Cyrus Daruwala of 3i Ventures Singapore; Mudit Kumar, Co-Founder of Ideabaaz; and Herryanti Herman, Director of PT Mitra Integrasi Informatika (MII).

Rather than viewing ASEAN as a single market, panelists argued that successful regional expansion requires companies to recognize the unique economic, cultural, regulatory, and commercial characteristics of each country.

Madhav Narayan highlighted the importance of building innovation ecosystems that connect universities, startups, governments, and industry, emphasizing that sustainable growth depends on collaboration rather than isolated innovation.

Drawing from market research across Southeast Asia, Mevira Munindra discussed how customer expectations continue to evolve rapidly as organizations accelerate digital transformation, making local market intelligence increasingly important for companies entering the region.

Cyrus Daruwala emphasized that localization should be treated as a strategic investment rather than an operational adjustment, encouraging companies to develop long-term regional strategies instead of replicating successful domestic business models.

Meanwhile, entrepreneur Mudit Kumar shared the perspective of fast-growing startups, explaining that founders must remain agile while adapting products and business models to diverse market conditions without losing the core value proposition that differentiates their companies.

Representing Indonesia's enterprise technology sector, Herryanti Herman highlighted the importance of working closely with trusted local partners that understand customer requirements, procurement processes, and implementation challenges.

Throughout the discussion, panelists agreed that Southeast Asia's diversity should be viewed as a competitive opportunity rather than a barrier. Companies capable of balancing regional consistency with local flexibility are likely to achieve more sustainable long-term growth.

Building Quality Partnerships Instead of Bigger Networks

Enterprise collaboration remained a central theme during the second panel discussion, "Precision Over Proliferation: Why Southeast Asia's Tech Channel Is Rethinking Partnerships."

Moderated by Ben Tan, Vice President and Executive Partner (SEA) at Gartner Advisory APAC, the session brought together Ms. Thu Nguyen (Kate), CEO of IDC Group Vietnam; Michael Sunur, Sales Director of Commercial Division at PT Berca Hardayaperkasa Indonesia; Gibu Matthews, GM Zoho APAC Singapore; Somchai Sittichaisrichart, Managing Director of SIS Thailand; and Sandeep Bhargava, Head of AI and Alliances at Redington.

The discussion reflected a changing enterprise technology landscape in which companies are placing greater emphasis on strategic partnerships rather than rapidly expanding channel networks.

Panelists agreed that technology vendors increasingly need ecosystems built around trust, complementary capabilities, and shared customer success rather than large numbers of disconnected partners.

Drawing on experience from regional enterprise markets, Thu Nguyen explained that businesses are increasingly seeking technology partners capable of delivering end-to-end value instead of standalone products.

Michael Sunur highlighted the growing importance of solution providers that understand local enterprise requirements while maintaining strong relationships with global technology vendors.

Representing Zoho's regional operations, Gibu Matthews discussed how sustainable channel development depends on enabling partners to grow together rather than competing within fragmented ecosystems.

Somchai Sittichaisrichart emphasized the role of regional distributors in connecting innovative technologies with local markets, while Sandeep Bhargava explained how artificial intelligence is reshaping channel partnerships by creating new opportunities for collaboration between software vendors, cloud providers, and enterprise customers.

Concluding the discussion, panelists agreed that successful channel partnerships are increasingly defined by trust, specialization, and long-term collaboration rather than the size of partner networks alone. As enterprise technology becomes more complex, vendors and distributors alike must build ecosystems capable of delivering sustained customer value across Southeast Asia.

Practical Frameworks Help Startups Scale Sustainably

Beyond policy discussions and enterprise strategy, ASEAN-India ScaleHub 2026 also provided practical guidance for founders seeking to expand beyond their home markets.

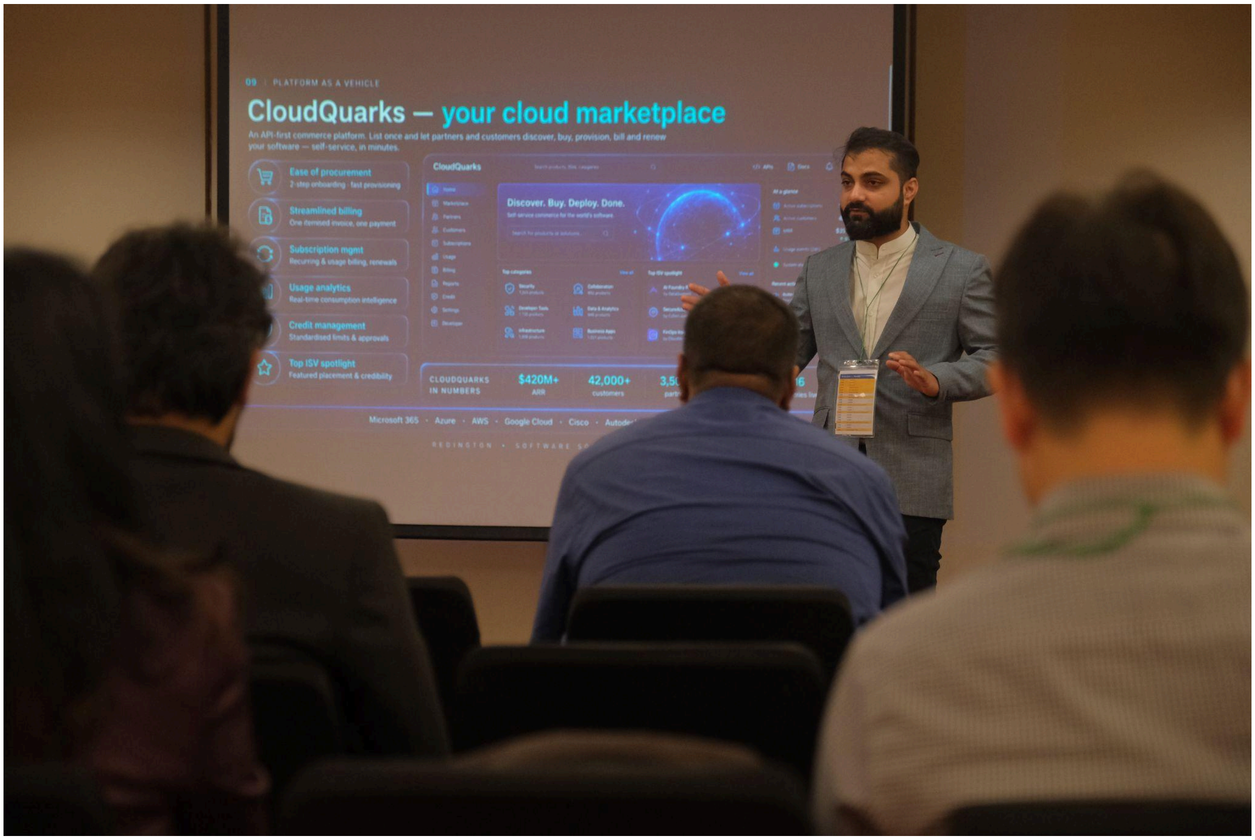
The summit's workshop series focused on commercialization, branding, intellectual property, cloud marketplaces, and research collaboration, giving participants actionable frameworks for regional expansion.

Leading the first workshop, Samir Dixit, Head of Acorn Consulting – Brand Growth & Transformation, challenged startups to rethink intellectual property as a commercial asset rather than simply legal protection.

He argued that many founders invest significant resources in developing technology but rarely understand how intellectual property contributes to enterprise value, investor confidence, licensing opportunities, and long-term competitive advantage.

Instead of protecting innovation without commercializing it, Dixit encouraged participants to develop branding and IP strategies that actively support business growth and international expansion.

The session reinforced that successful scaling requires not only strong products but also clear positioning, brand differentiation, and strategic management of intellectual property.



The second workshop focused on commercialization.

Juned Parvez Attar, Senior Marketing Manager for Redington Middle East and Africa, introduced Redington's ISV Motion, a structured framework designed to help software and artificial intelligence companies move from product readiness to market scale.

Built around the principle of "You build the software, we help build the market," the framework combines programs, business processes, experienced teams, technology platforms, and partner ecosystems to accelerate commercialization.

Attar explained that startups often possess innovative technologies but struggle to build distribution capabilities across multiple countries.

To address this challenge, Redington developed CloudQuarks, a cloud marketplace that connects independent software vendors with global technology providers, distributors, system integrators, and enterprise customers.

Through its established commercial ecosystem, CloudQuarks provides access to more than 2,000 channel partners across India, ASEAN, the Middle East, and Africa, enabling software companies to expand into more than 40 global markets while reducing the complexity of market entry.

According to Attar, the structured ecosystem enables some companies to reach commercial readiness in as little as 90 days, demonstrating how collaboration can significantly accelerate business growth.

The workshop reinforced a broader theme emerging throughout the summit: startups rarely scale through products alone. Sustainable expansion requires ecosystems capable of connecting innovation with customers, partners, and markets.

The final workshop shifted attention toward research commercialization and the growing role of universities in regional innovation.

Madhav Narayan, representing IIT Madras Global Research Foundation (IITM Global), argued that higher education institutions should evolve beyond traditional teaching and research by becoming active participants in entrepreneurship, technology transfer, and international collaboration.

Rather than functioning solely as academic campuses, universities should create integrated innovation ecosystems where researchers, startups, governments, investors, and industry collaborate to solve real-world challenges.

Madhav explained that this vision has shaped the evolution of IIT Madras Global Research Foundation, which aims to expand research collaboration beyond India while strengthening partnerships with governments, businesses, and innovation ecosystems across the region.

The workshop reflected growing momentum for deeper research cooperation between India and Southeast Asia, particularly as universities become increasingly involved in commercialization and startup development.

Throughout the workshop series, participants were presented with practical strategies for transforming innovation into sustainable businesses, reinforcing the summit's broader objective of connecting ideas with market opportunities rather than limiting discussions to technological advancement alone.

Smart Pitch Gives Startups Direct Access to Regional Decision Makers

Beyond keynote sessions, panel discussions, and workshops, ASEAN-India ScaleHub 2026 also featured a series of Smart Pitch sessions, providing participating startups and technology companies with an opportunity to present their innovations directly to enterprise leaders, distributors, investors, government representatives, and prospective regional partners.

Unlike conventional startup competitions, Smart Pitch was designed as a business development platform where companies could demonstrate how their technologies address real-world challenges across industries while receiving immediate feedback from decision-makers responsible for technology adoption and strategic partnerships.

Participating companies showcased solutions spanning artificial intelligence, enterprise software, cybersecurity, healthcare, sustainability, cloud computing, industrial technologies, drone systems, and digital infrastructure, reflecting the diversity of innovation emerging from India and ASEAN technology ecosystems.

The sessions also enabled startups to validate market demand while exploring opportunities for investment, channel partnerships, enterprise deployment, and regional expansion.

By connecting innovators directly with potential customers and business partners, Smart Pitch complemented the summit's broader objective of accelerating commercialization rather than simply showcasing technology.

Business Matchmaking Translates Conversations into Commercial Opportunities

The summit's strongest differentiator remained its structured business matching program.

Over the course of three days, participating companies completed more than 1,200 curated business meetings, connecting Indian technology companies with enterprises, government agencies, distributors, investors, system integrators, and channel partners from across Southeast Asia.

Rather than relying on informal networking, the meetings were pre-arranged based on business interests and market opportunities, enabling participants to engage in focused discussions around partnerships, procurement, technology deployment, investment, and regional market expansion.

For many participating startups, the meetings represented opportunities that would otherwise require months of separate engagements across multiple countries.

The scale of business activity demonstrated ASEAN-India ScaleHub's evolution from a conference into a platform capable of generating measurable commercial outcomes.

Recognizing Innovation Across Multiple Technology Sectors

The summit concluded with the GATES ICT Industry Excellence Awards 2026, recognizing organizations whose technologies and business contributions are helping accelerate digital transformation across Southeast Asia.

Zoho received the SaaS Vendor of the Year award for its comprehensive suite of enterprise software solutions that enable businesses to improve productivity, collaboration, customer management, and digital operations. The company also shared the GATES Gold Vendor Award with ManageEngine, recognizing both organizations for their long-standing commitment to enterprise technology innovation and continued partnership within the GATES ecosystem.

In the sustainability category, ReClimate and AquaAirX were jointly named Sustainability Vendors of the Year for developing technologies that support climate resilience, environmental sustainability, and more efficient resource management, demonstrating how innovation can contribute to long-term environmental goals.

Artificial intelligence continued to emerge as one of the summit's defining themes, with IndieRise receiving the AI Vendor of the Year award for applying AI to improve enterprise operations and deliver practical business solutions across industries.

Healthcare innovation was recognized through The Smarter Solution Edge, which received the HealthTech Vendor of the Year award for developing digital healthcare technologies that improve access, efficiency, and service delivery within the healthcare sector.

In cybersecurity, Accops was named Security Solutions Vendor of the Year for its enterprise security technologies that strengthen secure access, digital identity, and zero-trust environments amid growing cybersecurity challenges.

Meanwhile, AMX UAV received the Emergent Vendor of the Year award in recognition of its innovations in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology, showcasing the growing role of advanced aerial systems across commercial and industrial applications.

Collectively, the awards reflected the breadth of innovation showcased throughout the summit, spanning enterprise software, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, sustainability, healthcare, cloud technologies, and advanced industrial solutions.

ScaleHub's Impact Extends Beyond the Event

The closing ceremony underscored that ASEAN-India ScaleHub is producing outcomes that extend beyond conference halls and business meetings.

Reflecting on the summit's progress, Ashish Kapahi, Executive Director of GATES APAC, noted that the platform has continued to expand both in participation and in the quality of business engagement, creating stronger connections between Indian technology companies and Southeast Asian markets.

He emphasized that ASEAN-India ScaleHub was created not merely to organize an annual event, but to build an ecosystem where startups, enterprises, governments, universities, investors, and technology partners can continue collaborating long after the summit concludes.

That long-term vision was echoed by H.E. Sandeep Chakravorty, Ambassador of India to Indonesia, who highlighted one of the platform's most tangible achievements.

"One of the outcomes of Prime Minister Modi's visit is discussions already on for bringing IIT Madras to Indonesia. So I think ScaleHub can take credit for that," he said during the closing ceremony.

The remarks reflected how relationships established through ASEAN-India ScaleHub are beginning to translate into broader institutional cooperation encompassing higher education, research, technology development, and innovation partnerships between India and Indonesia.

Building the Next Chapter of ASEAN-India Innovation

As ASEAN continues its digital transformation and India expands its role as a global technology powerhouse, ASEAN-India ScaleHub is increasingly establishing itself as more than an annual conference.

Over three days, policymakers outlined a shared vision for regional innovation. Business leaders explored how artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and enterprise software are reshaping industries. Researchers and universities demonstrated how academic collaboration can accelerate commercialization. Startups presented technologies capable of addressing real-world challenges, while enterprises, distributors, investors, and governments forged new partnerships through structured business engagements.

Together, these discussions illustrated a common understanding that innovation no longer depends solely on breakthrough technologies. Success increasingly depends on the ecosystems that connect research with industry, startups with customers, investors with entrepreneurs, and governments with the private sector.

With more than 80 participating technology companies, over 1,200 curated business meetings, dozens of strategic discussions, practical workshops, Smart Pitch sessions, and tangible institutional outcomes already emerging, ASEAN-India ScaleHub 2026 demonstrated that regional cooperation is entering a more mature phase.

Rather than simply strengthening bilateral ties between India and Southeast Asia, the platform is helping shape a broader innovation ecosystem where ideas move more quickly from laboratories to markets, from startups to enterprises, and from dialogue to long-term collaboration.

As the summit concluded in Bali, one message resonated throughout the three-day gathering. The future of ASEAN-India cooperation will be defined not only by technological innovation, but by the partnerships, trust, and shared commitment that enable innovation to scale across borders.