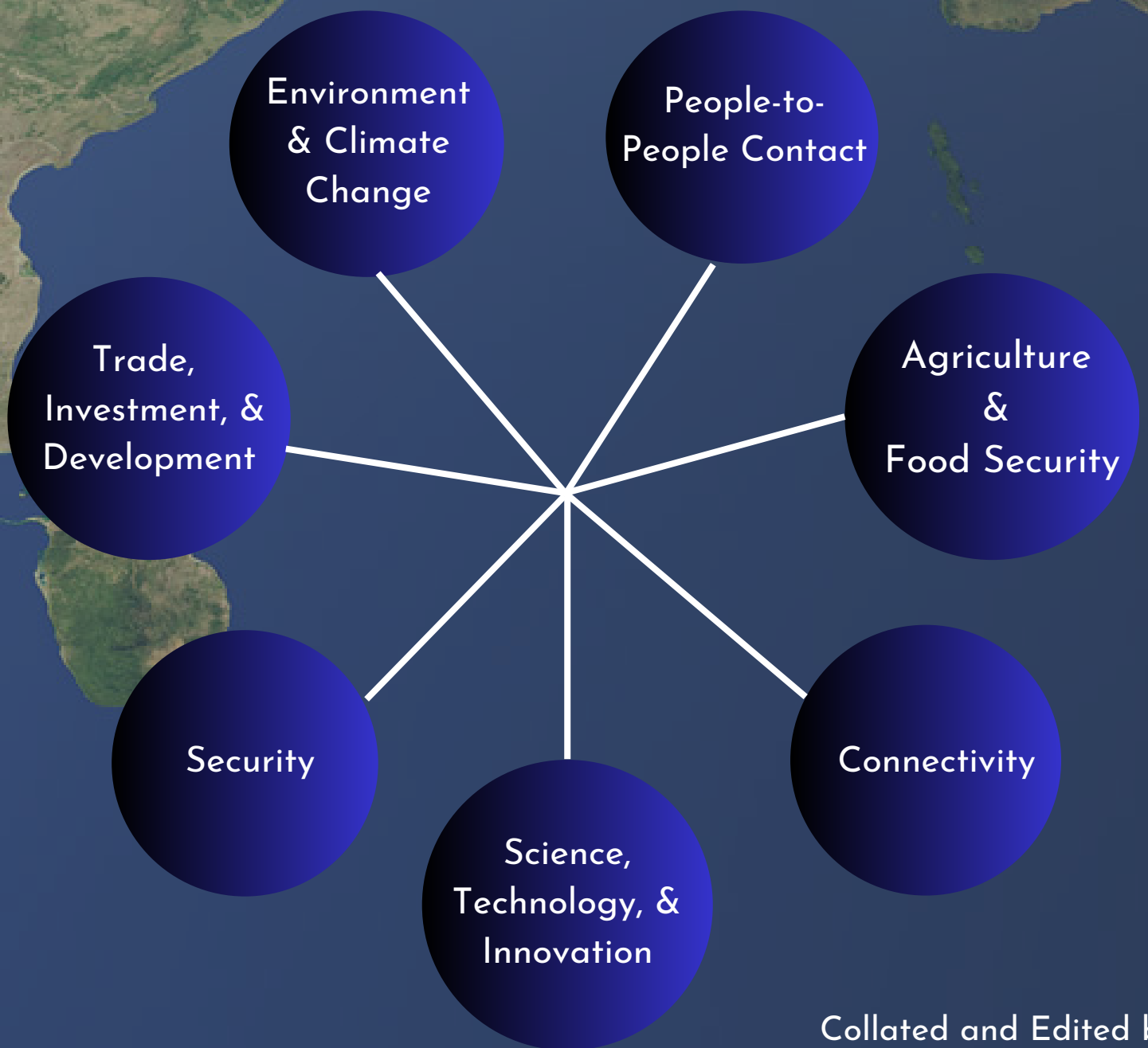


THE BIMSTEC BULLETIN

MARITIME ASPECTS OF BIMSTEC



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TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

TRADE, CONNECTIVITY, AND ENERGY DOMINATE DISCUSSION BETWEEN INDIA AND BHUTAN



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk focused on bilateral economic cooperation, facilitating trade, and boosting connectivity, according to Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra. India has been a prominent backer of Bhutan's efforts to push economic development. The discussion between the two leaders touched on the landlocked country's 13th Five-Year Plan, financial support for Bhutan's domestic reform process, and institutional capacity building. Mr Kwatra revealed that India and Bhutan would work to finalise a slew of bilateral economic projects. Among these would be the creation of a new stand-by credit facility provided by India, in addition to the two existing facilities. The Indian side also agreed to work with Bhutan on new "long-term, sustainable" arrangements for the export of agricultural products from Bhutan. Furthermore, both sides are also setting up a mechanism to supply critical materials like petroleum products, fertilisers, and coal to Bhutan...

Source: [Here](#)
04 Apr 2023

TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

CENTRE FOR MARITIME ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY TO BE SET UP IN INDIA

The Indian Ports Association (IPA) and the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) recently signed an agreement in New Delhi to set up a Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity. Sarbananda Sonowal, the Indian minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, who witnessed the signing ceremony, tweeted that the institute will pave the way for seamless, cost-effective trade and commerce with the neighbours. Sanjeev Ranjan, the Chairman of the National Shipping Board said the proposed transshipment port at Galathea Bay at Greater Nicobar in Andaman and Nicobar Islands will be advantageous for the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) member nations. India's Gati Shakti initiative will go beyond India's shores, and the ports of the neighbouring countries can also benefit, he was quoted as saying by a news agency...

**Source: [Here](#)
23 Mar 2023**

HEALTH IS AS CRITICAL AGENDA AS TRADE, FOR US, TRANSPORT IS ALSO IMPORTANT, POST COVID-19: BIMSTEC SECRETARY-GENERAL

Tenzin Lekphell, the BIMSTEC Secretary-General stated that dealing with pandemic-related woes and other public health issues has become a critical agenda for the member states of BIMSTEC over the last two years since the COVID-19 outbreak. He added that Sri Lanka has been identified as the lead country for coordinating and planning on public health matters. "COVID-19 made us realise that pandemics and health *per se* is an important agenda, and as a region, we have to come together. Before COVID-19, we were focusing more on trade, connectivity, energy, electricity, and such sectors, but not much on health. However, now we have realised that health is also a very important component"...

**Source: [Here](#)
25 Mar 2023**

TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

PRIME MINISTER GENERAL PRAYUT CHAN- O-CHA OF THAILAND INVITED INDIA'S PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI TO VISIT THAILAND

To strengthen diplomatic and commercial ties between the two nations, Thailand's Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha extended an invitation to India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Thailand in January 2023. Nagesh Singh, India's new ambassador to Thailand, was informed of the invitation and he later paid Gen Prayut a visit to the Government House at that time. Gen Prayut expressed his hope that the Indian PM's visit to the kingdom will strengthen bilateral connections in the areas of politics, security, commerce and investment, tourism, and multilateral cooperation...

Source: [Here](#)
09 Mar 2023

INDIA HAS HUGE A ROLE IN REGIONAL COOPERATION, BIMSTEC CHIEF TELLS NDTV

The Minister of State for External Affairs, Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, during his speech at the 2nd ISCS BIMSTEC Conference in Kolkata said, "Kolkata is strategically one of the most prominent cities of India and for promotion of Act East Policy, Kolkata should be the prime area and the regional head to lead the Act East policy." Tenzin Lekphell, the BIMSTEC Secretary General told an Indian News channel, "Right from the time BIMSTEC was conceptualised, connectivity was identified as one of the core areas where all the member states thought it was critical. Only if the region is connected, whether it is by land, air, or water, I think other sectors like trade, health, and agriculture as sectors of cooperation can be realised. That's why the member states have given a lot of importance to connectivity, and the master plan took three long years to formulate. It was supported by Asian Development Bank and finally, in the fifth BIMSTEC summit, the masterplan was adopted. The master plan has identified 267 projects comprising ongoing and some new projects..."

Source: [Here](#)
26 Mar 2023

TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

INDIA CONTINUES TO SUPPORT ITS NEIGHBOURS

India's continued and proactive support for Sri Lanka's economic recovery, which was recently seen at the International Monetary Fund, provided a glimpse into the role of New Delhi's visions in the region. The possibility of using Indian power infrastructure for electricity trade between Nepal and Bangladesh is another facet of India's neighbourhood engagement. These bonds of support, trade, and economic opportunities should bind the countries, with India as a critical player...

Source: [Here](#)
10 Mar 2023

TRADE WITH ASIA IS A PATHWAY FOR CRISIS-HIT SRI LANKA

The trade between South Asia and East Asia is growing amid global uncertainty. Alongside an IMF program, Sri Lanka could adopt pro-trade reforms to tap into this source of dynamism to tackle its terrible economic crisis. On 4th February, Sri Lanka celebrated its 75th anniversary of independence from British rule. Amidst a crippling economic crisis and a fall in per capita income, Sri Lankans have mixed views on Sri Lanka's plans to celebrate. However, they agreed to re-double policy efforts to tackle the economic crisis and build a prosperous and inclusive economy for future generations...

Source: [Here](#)
13 February 2023

TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

RECALIBRATING THE BIMSTEC

Indian voices have long called for the strengthening of agricultural cooperation between the countries of South and Southeast Asia in the BIMSTEC — founded in 1997. Trade and investment are major instruments to attain food security across the BIMSTEC member-states, particularly in a climate-affected, post-pandemic world. However, this is an area where the performance of the BIMSTEC countries has not been encouraging. The share of all the BIMSTEC countries — including two ASEAN member-states, namely, Thailand and Myanmar — in world trade is less than 4 per cent. The BIMSTEC intra-regional trade was at \$70 billion in 2021 which is only 10% of ASEAN's \$600 billion intra-regional trade. Home to 1.8 billion people (22 per cent of the global population, with a combined GDP of \$3.6 trillion), the agri-food trade level among the BIMSTEC countries has failed to live up to its potential...

Source: [Here](#)

15 March 2023

BANGLADESH CALLS FOR THE EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIMSTEC FTA

Bangladesh called for the early implementation of the BIMSTEC FTA by finalising its legal instruments. Foreign Minister, Dr A K Abdul Momen, reiterated Bangladesh's commitment to the BIMSTEC process and emphasised that the BIMSTEC member states need to work together to realise the huge untapped potential of the region when he addressed the Ministerial Meeting of the grouping in Bangkok, virtually on 9th March 2023. As the Lead Country for cooperation in the Trade, Investment, and Development sector, he outlined Bangladesh's effort to enhance investment and trade relations across the platform. The meeting approved the 'Rules of Procedure' for all the BIMSTEC mechanisms, including several administrative and financial matters of the BIMSTEC Secretariat for adoption at the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit...

Source: [Here](#)

10 March 2023

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

THAILAND HOSTS THE 19TH BIMSTEC MINISTERIAL MEETING

On 9th March 2023, Thailand — as Chair of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) — hosted the 19th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting virtually at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, HE Mr Don Pramudwinai chaired the Meeting, while the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, HE Mr Vijavat Isarabhakdi, represented the Thai delegation at the Ministerial Meeting. The DPM/FM Don highlighted the need for the BIMSTEC countries to work more closely together to become effective regional players with a shared strategic vision, and a leading role in promoting a safe, stable, and secure Bay of Bengal. At the same time, the DPM/FM also highlighted a need for the BIMSTEC to be able to contribute to global progress decisively and substantially in human development, green development, food and energy security, and climate change. The meeting approved the draft text of the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030, a leader-level document proposed by Thailand to guide the BIMSTEC towards a prosperous, resilient, and open region by 2030. The document aims to further promote the BIMSTEC as an instrument to maintain a region of peace, stability, and economic sustainability. The goals found in the Vision are also in line with the UN SDGs, and Thailand's Bio-Circular-Green Economic Model...

Source: [Here](#)

13 March 2023

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

THE BIMSTEC REGION CAN PROVIDE GREEN, AFFORDABLE ENERGY ACCESS TO ALL IN THE REGION

The seven member-states of BIMSTEC face several challenges in the energy sector. India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Nepal, and Sri Lanka are members of the regional organisation BIMSTEC. Even though it is home to 1.8 billion people with a combined GDP of \$ 3.6 trillion, the progress for BIMSTEC has been gradual. India hosted the first meeting of Governing Board of BIMSTEC Energy Centre in Bengaluru on 27th February 2023. Considering the current energy scenario in the region, the meeting recommended adding the additional following areas under the specialised wings of BIMSTEC Energy Centre; (a) Cyber Security, (b) Green Hydrogen and (c) Energy Transition. The region encompasses vast energy resources, including 331 billion tonnes of coal, 718 MMT of oil, 76 TCF of natural gas, 386 GW of large hydropower and renewable energy of 1,359 GW potential...

Source: [Here](#)

03 March 2023

India hosted the first meeting of the Governing Board of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC) on 27th February 2023 at Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru. Shri Ajay Tewari, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Power, and the chairperson of the Governing Board of the BEC welcomed the delegates from the BIMSTEC countries and gave a brief background about the ongoing cooperation amongst the BIMSTEC countries. There was active participation from all the BIMSTEC countries viz. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand along with the BIMSTEC Secretariat. All member states appreciated the opportunity to convene after a long hiatus. India's "Neighbourhood First" and "Act East" Policies were referenced during the meeting. Areas where the BIMSTEC countries could learn from each other were also highlighted. As the host of the Governing Board of BEC meeting, India presented the idea of establishing the BEC in India...

Source: [Here](#)

01 March 2023

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT

THE BIMSTEC PROPOSES ESTABLISHING MEGA-SPORTS EVENTS, UNIVERSITIES TO BETTER CONNECT PEOPLE

The BIMSTEC Conference on 26th March 2023, proposed the formation of a BIMSTEC Mega-sports event on the lines of the Commonwealth Games, and a BIMSTEC University wherein students from the member-states could attain higher education. Jigme Nidup, Assistant Professor at Norbuling Rigter College, Royal University of Bhutan said, "Cooperation and connectivity among neighbouring member states is very important. Bhutan is a country that is more import-driven than export. We must also look into the fact that connectivity of education, through BIMSTEC, will ensure success along neighbouring regions"...

Source: [Here](#)
26 March 2023

THE BIMSTEC SILVER JUBILEE QUIZ WAS HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY IN BHUTAN

The first BIMSTEC Quiz was held in Bhutan's Thimphu on 14th February 2023, marking the BIMSTEC's 25th anniversary. Mr Tandi Dorji, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Bhutan was the chief guest of the event. Seven teams composed of two secondary school students representing all the BIMSTEC members – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, competed in the quiz. The contest was organised by the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Bhutan, and with the support of the foreign ministries of the BIMSTEC members.

Source: [Here](#)
10 February 2023

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT

NEPAL CONCURS TO INCLUDE POVERTY ALLEVIATION AS A SUB-SECTOR UNDER THE BIMSTEC

Foreign Secretary Poudyal shared the progress made by Nepal and highlighted the plans of action prepared by Nepal on the Culture and Tourism Sub-Sectors during his speech at the 23rd Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand on 8th March 2023. It is noteworthy that the fields of cooperation were reorganised into seven sectors, each of which was headed by a member-state at the BIMSTEC 5th Summit, held last year in Sri Lanka. Nepal is the lead country in the People-to-People Contact Sector, and Culture, Tourism, and People-to-People Contact sub-sectors. He also underlined the need for the early operationalisation of the BIMSTEC Tourism Fund and Tourism Information Centre. He also conveyed Nepal's concurrence for the inclusion of 'Poverty Alleviation' as a sub-sector under the People-to-People Contact Sector.

Source: [Here](#)
08 March 2023

CONNECTIVITY

INDIA'S NORTHEAST: GATEWAY TO CONNECTIVITY WITH EASTERN NEIGHBOURS

India's Northeast Region (NER) could serve as a pivotal connecting space between India and its neighbours in East and Southeast Asia and beyond. This would enhance the country's diplomatic, infrastructural, and commercial engagements. The growing strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific calls for India to play a bigger role in exploring all dimensions of collaboration with the countries of the region. At the heart of these engagements is the creation of multi-dimensional and strong infrastructural, commercial, digital, and sociocultural networks. Connectivity matters the most in the immediate neighbourhood. India's NER, which shares international borders in the east has massive potential to become a vibrant link to the country's neighbours in the East and Southeast Asia. The BIMSTEC could play an important role in facilitating these connections, particularly in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, and Bhutan – countries that share borders with India's NER. India's foreign policy priorities are reflected in its 'Act East' and 'Neighbourhood First' policies; they also draw the northeast into focus as a connectivity gateway to the wider Indo-Pacific.

Source: [Here](#)
17 April 2023

MARITIME MASTER PLAN FOCUSES TO ESTABLISH KOLKATA AS A CONNECTIVITY HUB: BIMSTEC

26th March 2023 saw the first technical session of the BIMSTEC; it hailed the member-states for having a master plan to develop maritime communication amongst each other and marked Kolkata as a centrepiece for connectivity. The session titled 'BIMSTEC: Strengthening Regional Solidarity through Transport Connectivity' was chaired by Sanjeev Ranjan, the Chairman of the National Shipping Board. He said, "The BIMSTEC need to strengthen regional solidarity and transport connectivity has been active and thanks to that we have a master plan in place which has been accepted and gives the detail."

Source: [Here](#)
27 March 2023

CONNECTIVITY

BIMSTEC EXPERT GROUP TO BE SET UP TO WORK OUT MODALITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE BIMSTEC MASTER PLAN FOR TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

The 4th meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group (BTCWG) convened virtually in Bangkok on 20th March 2023, with the participation of representatives from all the BIMSTEC member-states. The 3rd Meeting of the Working Group had taken place in New Delhi on 8th December 2020. The meeting discussed the implementation of the BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity which was adopted by the 5th BIMSTEC Summit held on 30th March 2022. They decided to set up an Expert Group which would update and modify the list of identified projects to keep the Master Plan a live document, while also working out the modalities for implementation of the Master Plan. Decisions taken at the meeting included the convening of the 2nd Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group to negotiate the draft text of the Motor Vehicles Agreement during the second quarter of this year.

**Source: [Here](#)
20 March 2023**

THAILAND TO HOST THE BIMSTEC RETREAT IN JULY

Thailand is scheduled to host a retreat of the BIMSTEC foreign ministers in July to reinvigorate the 25-year-old intergovernmental organisation. As the current chair of the BIMSTEC, Thailand has scheduled a retreat in Bangkok on the 17th of July to exchange views on regional issues as well as ways to move the organisation forward. The source said that foreign ministers from all members have agreed to attend. They added that at the last summit which was conducted virtually with Sri Lanka as the previous chair, the status of the BIMSTEC had been elevated to an intergovernmental organisation, which enhanced its visibility and credibility at the international level. One of the priorities under the Thai chairmanship is to implement the BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity which was proposed by Thailand back in 2018. Now, as the new lead country in connectivity, Thailand can play an ever-more prominent role in enhancing inter-regional connectivity. Furthermore, it will underpin Thailand's role as a bridge-builder, transport hub, and business link between Southeast and South Asia and between the Indian and Pacific oceans.

**Source: [Here](#)
08 March 2023**

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION

THE GOOD FOOD INSTITUTE INDIA LAUNCHED THE 3RD EDITION OF 'THE INDIA SMART PROTEIN INNOVATION CHALLENGE (ISPIC) 2023

The Good Food Institute (GFI India), the central expert organisation, thought leader, and convening-body of the smart protein sector in India launched the 3rd edition of its flagship initiative - The India Smart Protein Innovation Challenge (ISPIC). It invited applications, particularly from startups, entrepreneurs, and students who are geared towards problem-solving related to transforming food systems for enhanced food security by promoting the global and Indian protein transition to alternative proteins. ISPIC was first launched in 2020 as a first-of-its-kind alternative protein challenge that has since gone on to inspire similar competitions worldwide. The aim of ISPIC is capacity-building for researchers and early-stage entrepreneurs to fill the talent and innovation gaps in the sector. ISPIC 2023 is being conducted in partnership with Spectrum Impact, a 'family office' committed to solving large-scale societal problems with novel solutions. This year's challenge is on fermentation-derived proteins...

Source: [Here](#)
28 April 2023

BUDGET 2023 PUSHES A TECH-DRIVEN ECONOMY, AND MUST ACCELERATE INNOVATION FOR RAPID GROWTH

India was ranked 40th in the Global Innovation Index 2022. While we have leapfrogged by 41 counts in seven years, we must aspire to be in the top 25 in the near term, and the top five by India @100.

The Prime Minister has provided a huge impetus to innovation by adding Jai Anusandhan to the country's evergreen slogan of Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan. On the other hand, the world continues to be disrupted on many fronts: global value chains, process of energy transition, health, etc...

Source: [Here](#)
10 February 2023

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION

INDIAN STARTUP GARUDA AEROSPACE DISCUSSES ON DISRUPTING AGRICULTURE WITH DRONES

India is one of the leading drone startups; Garuda Aerospace participated in the World Economic Forum 2023 to present the first-ever carbon-neutral drone at the Indian Sustainability Lounge, Davos. The CEO of Garuda Aerospace, Mr Agnishwar discussed ESG (Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance), and carbon neutrality and how it owed responsibility to the world's greater good with drones along with technology and innovation. Garuda Aerospace is planning to manufacture over 25,000 drones in the next fifteen months which will revolutionise the agricultural sector. The Prime Minister flagged off 100 Kisan Drones in 100 villages across India which led to the creation of job opportunities for youth across India. During his speech, Agnishwar said, "It's such a privilege to present Garuda Aerospace DGCA approved 'Made in India' carbon neutral drones and the ESG goal of impacting one billion Indians positively through drone technology at Davos 2023 hosted by World Economic Forum. Representing Tamil Nadu, it is an immense honour to share my experience with industry stalwarts, global political leaders, and policymakers. I spoke at an impactful panel discussion and highlighted the progressive government policies and how the startup community is transforming India into a Global Drone Hub by 2030"...

Source: [Here](#)

19 January 2023

SECURITY

TENDENCY OF CATEGORISATION OF TERRORISM BASED ON MOTIVATIONS BEHIND TERRORIST ACTS IS ‘DANGEROUS’: INDIA

India said that the tendency to categorise terrorism based on motivations behind terrorist acts is “dangerous” and asserted that all kinds of terror attacks, whether they are motivated by Islamophobia, anti-Sikh, anti-Buddhist, or anti-Hindu prejudices, are condemnable. On 9th March 2023, India’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, said that the international community needs to guard against new terminologies and false priorities that can dilute its focus on combating the scourge of terrorism...

Source: [Here](#)

10 March 2023

INDIA AND OTHER BIMSTEC COUNTRIES DELIBERATE ON COUNTER-TERROR MEASURES

On 12th January 2023, India and other member-states of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crimes explored ways to cooperate in dealing with various security challenges, including the threat of terrorism. Besides India, the BIMSTEC comprises Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan. The MEA said the meeting held in New Delhi discussed traditional and emerging non-traditional security threats in the BIMSTEC region. In the statement, it was noted that “the participants deliberated and made recommendations on wide-ranging issues to enhance cooperation and collaboration in countering terrorism and transnational crimes in the region.” The MEA said the delegates also deliberated on different aspects of the implementation of the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organised Crime, and Illicit Drug Trafficking, which entered into force on March 16th, 2021. India is the lead country for the security pillar under the BIMSTEC framework...

Source: [Here](#)

12 January 2023