



BIMSTEC Security Challenges: Building a Cooperative Framework

2nd BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on
Regional Security

Conference Proceedings

27-28 November 2019



**Vivekananda
International
Foundation**

BIMSTEC Security Challenges: Building a Cooperative Framework

2nd BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security

Conference Proceedings

27-28 November 2019



**Vivekananda International
Foundation**



© Vivekananda International Foundation 2020

Published in January 2020 by
Vivekananda International Foundation
3, San Martin Marg | Chanakyapuri | New Delhi - 110021
Tel: 011-24121764 | Fax: 011-66173415
E-mail: info@vifindia.org
Website: www.vifindia.org

Follow us on

Twitter | [@vifindia](https://twitter.com/vifindia)
Facebook | [/vifindia](https://www.facebook.com/vifindia)

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

Table of Contents

Outcome Document (2019)	5
Concept Note	15
Message from NSA	17
Message from BIMSTEC Secretariat	19
Message from Director, VIF	21
Welcome Address : Director, VIF	23
Keynote Address: Secretary General, BIMSTEC	25
Inaugural Address: Chairman, NSAB	29
Conference Sessions	33
Session Reports	39
Participants List	47
Outcome Document of the First Meeting of BIMSTEC (2018)	49
BIMSTEC	
• Indicators – Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)	54
• Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index 2019	72



Outcome Document (2019)

2nd BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security (27-28 November 2019)

The Second Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security was held at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi on 27-28 November 2019. Delegates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Sri Lanka and the BIMSTEC Secretariat participated in the meeting.

Pursuant to the successful first meeting, the Second BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security aimed to continue the robust interaction and deliberations by regional Think Tanks and strategic communities towards formalizing security cooperation including in non-traditional security, in the BIMSTEC region.

Summary: The deliberation pointed out the need to finalize the pending BIMSTEC Convention on combating international terrorism and ratify it at the earliest to provide the legal framework for cooperation amongst BIMSTEC Member. Further, there is a need to harmonize the legal provisions of the Member States to deal with use of internet, social media and for countering radicalization. For creating greater maritime domain awareness and increasing maritime cooperation, the narrative needs to change to operational and functional perspectives, and the BIMSTEC Convention on Blue Economy may be drafted duly taking into account specific considerations of each of the Member States. Land locked member states need greater access to maritime zone. Similarly for developing greater cooperation on environment and climate change, BIMSTEC Member States need to collaborate on their research, data management, information sharing, best practices sharing in this domain with focus on mountain regions. Mechanism for dealing with trans boundary nature of diseases, pest control and hazard control have to be developed too. At the think tank level, the BIMSTEC Member States may focus on exchange programmes and developing institutional capacities. Given the different economies present in BIMSTEC, the think tanks could consider *Leave no one behind* as a slogan of BIMSTEC. The formation of a BIMSTEC community of scholars would not only enable a repository of the BIMSTEC processes and developments but help contribute to its momentum and outreach.

Inaugural Session

Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF in his Welcome Address said that the world is becoming multipolar and thus regional initiatives are becoming more relevant and important. He also referred to and highlighted some pertinent aspects of the outcome document of the First BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security held at VIF in 2018. He also emphasised the need to build institutional capacity in BIMSTEC countries to deal with emerging security issues like cyber security.

Secretary General of BIMSTEC, Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam in his Keynote Address highlighted the existing Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) mechanism of BIMSTEC and the role of Think Tanks in promoting cooperation among the Member States. He gave an account of the present status of various BIMSTEC CTTC Conventions. On the respective thematic areas, he brought out the initiatives taken so far by the Member State. He emphasized on developing common perspectives on various CTTC areas.

Mr. P.S. Raghavan, Chairman, National Security Advisory Board in his Inaugural Address stated that BIMSTEC is a very strategic enclave in the wider Indo-Pacific. He advocated for further expansion of BIMSTEC and expected the BIMSTEC Think Tanks to deliberate on this. He also spoke about need for a huge number of cyber security experts and hence trainers for the BIMSTEC Member States.

Dr. Virander Paul, Joint Secretary (BIMSTEC, SAARC & Nalanda), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, in his Special Address stated that there is a need for a shared platform to deal with shared challenges by the BIMSTEC Member States. He referred to India's Act East Policy, doctrine of Security and Growth for All (SAGAR) and the importance of the Indo-Pacific region. He stated that BIMSTEC Member States have shared vulnerabilities and opportunities. He particularly emphasized on maritime security and various aspects of counter terrorism cooperation in the BIMSTEC Framework.

Deliberations and recommendations

Theme: Internet and Social Media as a tool for Radicalization- The BIMSTEC Experience and Way Forward

The Dialogue deliberated on the role of the state and civil society in addressing the spread of radicalization and means to check radicalization through the internet and social media. The Dialogue explored the avenues for cooperation in addressing de-radicalization on social media.

Considering the likely growth of internet users in BIMSTEC in the coming years, countering radicalization using social media has become very important.

Recommendations:

- There is need to have the pending BIMSTEC Conventions finalized and ratified at the earliest to provide the legal framework for cooperation amongst BIMSTEC Member States on CTTC matters. Further, there is a need to harmonize the legal provisions of the Member States to deal with use of internet, social media and for countering radicalization.
- Coordinate counter and de-radicalization efforts through multiple stakeholders involving the governments, think tanks, academia, media and religious institutions by framing narratives which weaken the discourse of violence in the region.
- Gender based study on radicalization is needed. Promoting practical engagement with civil society partners, especially women who can help consolidate and champion the inclusive narrative of tolerance.
- Encourage and sensitize the media to play a pragmatic role in reducing the polarizing effects of strategic violence on communities, both online and offline.
- Best practices of the BIMSTEC Member States on countering radicalization may be compiled which may be circulated among the BIMSTEC Member States.
- Videos on countering radicalization may be produced and circulated by using the same platforms (eg. Facebook, WhatsApp etc) which are used for propagating radical ideas.
- BIMSTEC Member States may explore what could be the common standard which they can uphold while talking to social media companies.
- BIMSTEC Member States may consider developing theological glossary for countering radicalization.
- BIMSTEC Member States may do research to generate data on radicalization as adequate data is needed to formulate good policies.
- Transparent IT enabled system for information sharing on radicalization may be adopted by the BIMSTEC Member States.

Theme: Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) in BIMSTEC

The delegates of the Think Tanks deliberated on how the maritime situational awareness in BIMSTEC region be improved to benefit all the Member States. The Dialogue noted that operationalisation of BIMSTEC MDA, so far, has been a slow process. Maritime security is critical for promoting overall security in the Bay of Bengal region. The Maritime security challenges in the Bay of Bengal are varied. They include illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, armed robbery at sea, piracy, human trafficking, arms smuggling, drug trafficking and terrorism.

Recommendations:

- Promote and operationalize region-wide White Shipping Agreements.
- Support early conclusion of BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement.
- Sharing of actionable information among BIMSTEC Member States is necessary.
- BIMSTEC may work as complementary to other organizations in the Indian Ocean region especially to IORA and IONS.
- Developing mutual understanding among the regional organizations like BIMSTEC, ASEAN, IORA etc is needed.
- BIMSTEC may consider having more observers and Dialogue Partners.
- One study group may be constituted to study the underwater cables passing through the Bay of Bengal.
- A Troika of chairs i.e. past chair, present chair and future chair of BIMSTEC Member States may be formed for ensuring continuity of policies.
- Sustainable Blue Economy may be promoted by the BIMSTEC Member States.
- BIMSTEC may be the catalyst organization for promoting MDA in the Bay of Bengal region. BIMSTEC managed MDA organization in the Bay of Bengal may be established.
- There may be a need to change the narrative of MDA from operational and functional perspective. BIMSTEC Member States may consider promoting MDA.
- BIMSTEC Member States may consider constituting an Adhoc working group on Marine Ecology.
- Regular visits by BIMSTEC Think Tanks to IFC-IOR, Gurgaon to be undertaken.

- While emphasis has been given on Maritime security, underwater domain too needs special focus.
- Technological impact/challenges due to Fourth Industrial Revolution need due consideration by the BIMSTEC Member States.
- Enhancement of cooperation and coordination between Regional Navies and Maritime Law enforcement agencies of BIMSTEC Member States may be resorted to.
- BIMSTEC Convention on Blue Economy may be drafted duly taking into account specific considerations of each of the Member States. One 1.5 Track meeting may be convened with specific agenda of developing the Convention.
- Land locked economies, like Nepal and Bhutan would need access to Bay of Bengal and the maritime economy too.
- The existing Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research & Development (BIMRAD) to be nominated as permanent Nodal Centre/Centre of Excellence for MDA in BIMSTEC.

Theme: Environment and Climate Change: Preserving Mountains and Oceans Ecosystems

The Dialogue deliberated on the possibility of BIMSTEC Member States formulating a roadmap to address the challenges of climate change in the region. The Dialogue noted the growing vulnerability of the BIMSTEC region because of climate change evident in the melting of Himalayan glaciers, increasing occurrence of floods and landslides in the hills and plains and the rise in sea level of BIMSTEC region. Climate change has the potential to hamper progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as poverty eradication, zero hunger, health, water, clean energy, infrastructure, economic growth, sustainable cities and the overall well-being of human society. Climate change is also likely to increase the cost of implementing SDGs, may give rise to climate refugees.

Recommendations:

- To combat the impact of climate change and achieve the SDGs, all countries must formulate far-reaching and action-oriented policies.
- There is need to strengthen collaboration among the BIMSTEC Member States especially on research, data management, information sharing, best practices sharing in the domain of climate change with due focus on mountain regions.

- Need to develop mechanisms for dealing with trans boundary nature of diseases, pest control and hazard control.
- For capacity development BIMSTEC Member States may focus on exchange programmes and developing institutional capacities.
- Need for establishing a BIMSTEC funding mechanism for tackling climate change issues. Green bonds may be one of the options. Member States may encourage public private partnerships in climate financing.
- Climate change has high impact on the marine lives. For promoting long term sustainability of the marine ecosystem BIMSTEC Member States may identify the marine protected areas for conservation of fishes, turtles etc.
- River basin management in BIMSTEC region is very important for the protection of the environment. BIMSTEC Member States may consider having appropriate BIMSTEC River Basin Management mechanism.
- BIMSTEC Member States may take slow, incremental policies without substantial financial burden towards mitigating climate change impact. Resources to be used optimally.
- Implementation of the directions given in the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit at the earliest.
- BIMSTEC Secretariat to host a comprehensive information centre which will not only provide satellite data but other data as well related to climate change and environment.
- Member States may consider building up BIMSTEC institutions which link up all BIMSTEC institutions related to climate change, environment etc.
- Himalayan Science Council may be the platform to strengthen research on the impact of climate change in the Bay of Bengal.
- More publicity may be given towards impact of climate change through formal education as part of curriculum, media, society which may make addressing climate change issues a people's movement.
- Investment on integrated transportation system in the BIMSTEC Member States may be promoted.
- Database of most threatened, endangered species due to climate change and other environment related issues may be created for the BIMSTEC Member States.

- Promotion of foresight analysis, research on climate related areas by the BIMSTEC Member States.
- BIMSTEC Conference on climate change may be held every year.

Theme: Cyber Security: Need for Cooperation between BIMSTEC States to counter Cyber Security Threats

The Dialogue deliberated on action being taken by the BIMSTEC Member States in strengthening cyber security measures, practical measures that can be taken to build BIMSTEC cooperation in cyber security and the role that Think Tanks can play in promoting cyber security cooperation in BIMSTEC. The importance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) as an instrument of social and economic development and as a key enabler for sustainable development was noted. Concerns were expressed over the growing cyber threats, including threats to critical information infrastructure as well as increasing malicious use of ICTs. The initiatives taken on cyber security measures in their respective countries were also highlighted.

Recommendations:

- BIMSTEC Cyber Security Forum of experts and policy makers may be considered.
- Shared group of technical experts from the BIMSTEC Member States may be constituted to develop tools to address cyber security issues of BIMSTEC.
- Capacity building in regional perspective may be considered by the BIMSTEC Member States. Skill building with public private partnerships may also be considered.
- Enable effective public-private partnerships to empower innovation and strengthen investment cooperation in cyber area.
- Develop mechanisms for sharing of information on cyber threats, malware and cyber incidents.
- Encourage cooperation among stakeholders including government, private sector, civil society and academia for exchange of expertise, joint research, workshops and seminars.
- Human error is the biggest factor in cyber security. BIMSTEC Member States may initiate awareness programme on basic cyber habits, cyber hygiene especially for the senior citizens and students. Civil societies and NGOs may be associated in the awareness campaign.

- School curriculum may be developed with topics on cyber security and risks associated with use of IT gadgets incorporated therein under 'safe school initiative'.
- Harmonization of the legal frameworks of the BIMSTEC Member States is necessary to deal with cyber security related issues having transboundary nature.
- Harmonization of the IT institutional mechanism of the BIMSTEC Member States may also be considered.
- Sharing of information on threats and vulnerabilities among the BIMSTEC Member States through respective CERT and through other agencies may be considered. Association of private sectors may be considered as well.
- Establish a BIMSTEC CERT-to-CERT cooperation mechanism. Separate CERT for BIMSTEC may be considered in future.
- Sharing of experiences and best practices for the protection of critical information infrastructure.
- Strengthening law enforcement cooperation to address cybercrime, cyber terrorism and cyber security.
- BIMSTEC Member States could establish specific points of contact in the law enforcement agencies for sharing of information during emergency or crisis situation.
- Develop Horizon scanning technique to assess and examine potential threats and opportunities, with emphasis on new technologies .

Theme: Restructuring Institutions: Cooperation and Capacity Building within BIMSTEC States (Role of Think Tanks)

The Dialogue deliberated on the role that think tanks can play in strengthening BIMSTEC. For greater stability, prosperity and growth in the Bay of Bengal region, security challenges must be addressed cohesively and therefore, there is need for continuous dialogue among the think tanks and strategic communities in the region. Think tanks have a crucial role to play through deliberations on complex issues and by offering independent advice to governments.

Recommendations:

- Think tanks should work to provide data evidences and analyses on various areas of BIMSTEC cooperation including on security cooperation

- Synergies must be sought between the BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security and BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks.
- The capacity of BIMSTEC Secretariat should be strengthened to facilitate research and conducts net assessments on security issues.
- Explore the possibilities of establishing a Journal of BIMSTEC Affairs.
- Think Tanks may be encouraged to take initiatives to create citizen awareness on security and legal frameworks for cooperation.
- Establishing a network of Think Tanks may be considered. This will help developing common grounds of cooperation at a much wider level.
- For institutional memory, database of delegates participating in various dialogues/ meetings etc. may created.
- Mobilization of financial resources of the think tanks may be initiated for sustaining the dialogue process.
- The think tanks may provide inputs to appropriate BIMSTEC fora so that recommendations are considered by the competent authorities while making policy decisions.
- *Leave no one behind* could be considered as a slogan of BIMSTEC. Thinks Tanks may deliberate on this.
- Creating and encouraging BIMSTEC wide sectoral social media networks e.g. BIMSTEC Youth Network.
- Formation of a BIMSTEC community of scholars would not only become a repository of the BIMSTEC processes and developments but also contribute to its momentum and making it an effective organisation.
- More autonomy to the Secretariat.

Valedictory Session

The Meeting underscored the importance of continuity in the annual convening of Meeting of BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security. Delegates welcomed the initiative taken by the VIF to hold the second Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security. They expressed their appreciation of the support provided by the government of India towards holding of the BIMSTEC Think Tanks Regional Security Dialogue. Delegates also appreciated the efforts of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in coordinating the Meeting.



Concept Note

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional multilateral organization founded in 1997 and comprises the seven littorals of the world's largest bay viz. the Bay of Bengal. The littorals i.e. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand have around 1.5 billion people, approximately 22% of the world population and a combined GDP of \$ 2.7 trillion with a growth rate of approximately 6.5 %.

Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) held the BIMSTEC Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security in 2018, with selected think tanks from BIMSTEC nations to deliberate upon security challenges faced by the region. The scope of VIF's Second BIMSTEC Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security has been expanded to include issues of immediate concern to these nations, namely climate change, maritime awareness and institutional reform. The Dialogue aims to provide a forum for stakeholders to brainstorm on these challenges and develop policy solutions on the following topics:

- Internet and social media as a tool for radicalisation: The BIMSTEC experience and the way forward.
- Maritime Domain Awareness in BIMSTEC.
- Environment and Climate Change: Preserving mountains and ocean ecosystems.
- Restructuring Institutions: Cooperation and capacity building within BIMSTEC states.
- Cyber Security: Need for Cooperation between BIMSTEC states to counter cyber-security threats
- The conference will be in the form of discussions. Each speaker would make a presentation of 10 minutes, which would be followed by discussions.

अजीत डोभाल, कीर्ति चक्र
राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा सलाहकार
Ajit Doval, KC
National Security Adviser
Tel : 23019227



प्रधान मंत्री कार्यालय
नई दिल्ली-110 011
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
NEW DELHI - 110 011

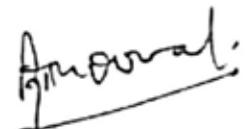
MESSAGE

Following the directions of the Leaders given after the Leaders Retreat, October 2016, the BIMSTEC Framework has substantially enhanced regional cooperation amongst the Member States. Given the contemporary regional geopolitical developments corresponding with the spurt in transport and connectivity projects in the member countries along with growing trade linkages, people to people contact within BIMSTEC nations is finding greater resonance.

BIMSTEC has emerged as a viable platform for developing a cooperative framework on security as well as other issues of mutual concern. It has to now graduate to becoming the preferred platform for regional cooperation. While cooperation amongst the BIMSTEC nations have been initiated these new institutional mechanisms will enable a larger scope for regional cooperation.

Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) hosted the First BIMSTEC Think Tanks Conference on regional security exactly a year ago in November 2018 which was very well represented by all member countries. The outcome document drawn from the discussions and presentations by the experts has been a valuable addition to strengthening the security paradigm among the member states. The Second BIMSTEC Think Tanks Conference at VIF from 27-29 November has broader goals including institution building and environment issues and will provide deeper insights and make it possible to formalise cooperative mechanisms within BIMSTEC.

I wish VIF and the Second BIMSTEC Think Tanks Conference all the best in their endeavour to enrich the BIMSTEC Framework.


(Ajit Doval)



Secretary General

Secretariat
Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral
Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

MESSAGE

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) is one of the most vibrant sectors of cooperation of BIMSTEC. It has been recognized by BIMSTEC Leaders that combating terrorism and transnational organized crime is an important prerequisite for establishing a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region. Since the incorporation of CTTC sector as one of the priority areas of cooperation in BIMSTEC in 2005, the sector has evolved primarily due to emergence of new security threats and the need to develop common narrative towards these threats.

Trans-boundary nature of emerging security challenges and experiences in the previous years have demonstrated that the only way BIMSTEC Member States can mitigate these challenges is by developing collaborative measures. The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held on 30-31 August 2018 at Kathmandu, Nepal stressed that combating terrorism and transnational organized crimes require sustained efforts and cooperation and comprehensive approach involving active participation and collaboration of the Member States.

Think Tanks have important role to play in CTTC cooperation as they work as interface between common people and the Governments. First Dialogue of BIMSTEC Think Tanks on Regional Security held in India on 13-14 November 2018 discussed and made recommendations on five thematic areas of CTTC cooperation. The recommendations have been welcomed by BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs in their Third Meeting held in Bangkok on 21 March 2019.

The BIMSTEC Secretariat appreciates the contribution of India, the Lead country of CTTC Sector, in fostering cooperation under the CTTC Sector and also for organizing this Dialogue. I am hopeful that the Second Dialogue of the BIMSTEC Think Tanks on Regional Security will again come out with some practical recommendations and common perspectives on the five identified themes relevant to the present day security situations prevailing in the region. I wish the Dialogue a success.



M. Shahidul Islam



VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

3, San Martin Marg,
Chanakyapuri, New Delhi - 110021
Ph : 011 24107780, 24121764
E-mail : director@vifindia.org
www.vifindia.org

Dr Arvind Gupta, IFS (Retd)
Director

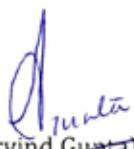
Former Dy NSA & Secretary, National Security Council Secretariat
Former Director General, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

Message

The fourth BIMSTEC summit held in Kathmandu, Nepal has given a fillip to strengthening multi-facet cooperation amongst the member countries in several domains. The regular meetings of the National Security Chiefs have helped focus the member countries to discuss the common security issues including the non-traditional security challenges. In their first meeting in Delhi, the National Security Chiefs had underscored the importance of recognizing the Bay of Bengal as "common security space" and agreed to work out "collective strategies for common responses".

The Vivekananda International Foundation, in collaboration with the BIMSTEC secretariat, organized the 1st BIMSTEC Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security on 13-14 Nov 2018. An outcome document was arrived at and circulated amongst BIMSTEC member countries.

It is a matter of great privilege for the VIF to have the opportunity to organize the 2nd edition of BIMSTEC Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security in which experts from member countries are participating. While the first dialogue focused on terrorism and radicalization, maritime security, disaster management, and transnational crime, this year the focus will be on internet and social media as a tool of radicalization, maritime domain awareness, environment and climate change, capacity building within BIMSTEC countries and countering cybersecurity threats. Discussions amongst experts on this theme will undoubtedly deepen the ongoing security dialogue amongst BIMSTEC countries. I am confident that the conference will generate useful ideas and suggestions, which will help policymakers. I wish the conference success.


(Arvind Gupta)
Director, VIF

Welcome Remarks: Director, VIF

On behalf of the Vivekananda International Foundation, I would like to heartily welcome you all to the 2nd edition of the BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security.

I am particularly thankful to Amb PS Raghavan, Chairman of the NSAB; Secy General BIMSTEC Mr M Shahidul Islam; Sh Virander Paul, Joint Secretary (BIMSTEC, SAARC & Nalanda), MEA, for their participation in the conference. I also would like to thank the Dy NSA Amb Pankaj Saran and his team at the National Security Council Secretariat for constantly encouraging and supporting the think tank dialogue on regional security.

I am grateful to the BIMSTEC Secretariat and the Indian Missions for their cooperation in organizing this conference.

I am grateful for the messages of support and encouragement received from Sh Ajit Doval, National Security Adviser, GoI and Secretary-General of BIMSTEC.

The Bay of Bengal is a distinctive region situated between the Himalaya and the waters of the Bay of Bengal itself. The destiny of this vast region accounting for 1.6 bn people (22 % of the world's population) has been linked by shared geography, history and culture. At one point of time, it was a flourishing region which served as maritime highway between India and China. The rise and decline of the Bay of Bengal is a story by itself which has been admirably recounted by the author Sunil Amrit in his wonderful book on the Bay. It is time that the regional connectivity which have been lost are restored now.

One year ago, we had met at the same venue to initiate discussion on regional security issues faced by member countries. Intensive discussion was held on that occasion and an exhaustive outcome document was produced.

The VIF is privileged to have the opportunity to host this year's dialogue which builds on last year's discussion. Response this year has been even more enthusiastic.

In today's conference, we are focusing on the impact on the internet and social media on terrorism and radicalization; maritime domain awareness, environment and climate change,

capacity building within BIMSTEC countries and countering cybersecurity threats. The importance of Artificial Intelligence and Big Data Analysis in analyzing data to deal with modern security challenges cannot be overstated. This is particularly true in the field of cybersecurity and maritime domain awareness. BIMSTEC countries need to develop capacity in these areas urgently.

Following the fourth summit of BIMSTEC leaders in Kathmandu, Nepal last year, a number of important meetings and dialogues have been held. The third meeting of the security chiefs was held in Bangkok in Mar 2019. The second meeting Track 1.5 security dialogue was held in Bangladesh in Jul. Last year, a workshop on cybersecurity had developed a roadmap for cooperation amongst BIMSTEC countries on cybersecurity. The first-ever BIMSTEC conclave of ports was held at Visakhapatnam earlier this month. A coastal security workshop for BIMSTEC countries was held in Delhi a few days ago. These initiatives show that the BIMSTEC countries attach a great deal of importance to develop cooperation in connectivity and security issues. The present conference which involves experts from different countries at the Track II level involves supplements the ongoing efforts to strengthen BIMSTEC security dialogue.

A number of important recommendations were made in the outcome document of the first meeting of BIMSTEC Think Tanks on Regional Security. The importance of intelligence and information sharing in real-time, the need for a rule-based maritime order in the Bay of Bengal, the incorporation of the concept of SAGAR- security, and growth for all in the region suggested by PM Modi in maritime security initiatives in the Bay of Bengal region were emphasized. The urgency to build institutional capacity amongst BIMSTEC countries to deal with the threat of transnational crime was highlighted. Taking note of the threats to the region from climate change, the meeting reviewed BIMSTEC preparedness and resilience towards disaster management and suggested that BIMSTEC weather and climate center at NOIDA, India should be renamed as BIMSTEC disaster management and climate change center to focus on research and development on climate change, disaster management, and resilience. The participants strongly suggested that the capacity of BIMSTEC secretariat should be enhanced to facilitate research on security issues.

I am confident that this conference will contribute towards improving our understanding of common security challenges faced by our country and generate momentum for the continuation and deepening of security dialogue amongst member countries. I have no doubt that the conference will generate useful ideas and suggestions for policymakers.

Keynote Address: Secretary General, BIMSTEC

1. At the outset let me express my sincere thanks to the Vivekananda International Foundation and Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, for inviting me to this Dialogue of BIMSTEC Think tanks on Regional Security.
2. Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) is one of the most vibrant sectors of BIMSTEC's cooperation. The rapid expansion of activities of this sector is due to the emergence of new security threats and the need to develop common approach towards these threats. With the establishment of mechanisms like the Annual Meeting of the National Security Chiefs, Home Ministers Meeting, Joint Working Group on CTTC and its six Sub Groups, Working Groups and Expert Groups, a robust mechanism has been put in place to deal with the CTTC cooperation among the Member States. These forums are holding regular meetings to develop common approach to wide range of emerging security threats facing the region and lay down legal framework for cooperation. The BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking was signed on 11 December 2009. The Convention is awaiting ratification. The text of the BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters has been finalized and all the Member States have conveyed that they have completed their internal formalities to sign it. JWG-CTTC is currently negotiating the draft texts of three more Conventions, namely, BIMSTEC Convention on Extradition; BIMSTEC Convention on Transfer of Sentenced Persons (TSP); and BIMSTEC Convention against Trafficking in Persons.
3. Think Tanks have important role to play in CTTC cooperation as they work as interface between common people and the Governments. The First Meeting of the National Security Chiefs held in New Delhi, India on 21 March 2017 decided to establish a Track 1.5 BIMSTEC Security Dialogue Forum to promote and encourage security dialogue among BIMSTEC strategic community. The First 1.5 BIMSTEC Security Dialogue Forum was hosted by Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis (DSA), India on 22 September 2017. The Second Track 1.5 BIMSTEC Security Dialogue Forum was hosted by Bangladesh Institute for International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), Bangladesh on 30-31 July 2019. The Track

1.5 BIMSTEC Security Dialogue has come up with a number of recommendations which were subsequently used in the work of core mechanisms of CTTC sector.

4. At the Second Meeting of the National Security Chiefs held in Dhaka on 28 March 2018 India proposed to have a workshop of Think Tanks for deliberation on various research works, studies and scholarships that can be undertaken in security and strategic matters. Following that proposal, the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), India hosted the First Dialogue of BIMSTEC Think Tanks on Regional Security on 13-14 November 2018, which deliberated on four thematic areas of CTTC cooperation, namely i) Threat of Terrorism, Radicalisation and Response by BIMSTEC countries; ii) Maritime Security; iii) Transnational crime; and iv) Disaster management. The Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs held in Bangkok, Thailand on 21 March 2019 welcomed the recommendations of the First Dialogue of BIMSTEC Think Tanks on Regional Security and agreed to make it an annual event. It is heartening to see that the Vivekananda International Foundation has once again come forward to organize the Second Dialogue of BIMSTEC Think Tanks on Regional Security within a short time.
5. The topics selected for the Second Dialogue are relevant to contemporary security threats facing the region. I will very briefly review what BIMSTEC is doing and planning to do in the near future on these issues.

Internet and social media as a tool for radicalization-the BIMSTEC experience and way forward

6. The first meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub Group on Countering Radicalization and Terrorism held in India on 11 June 2019 emphasized community-based approaches involving family members, religious scholars and adopting Multi-agency approach to deal with countering radicalization and terrorism. While the meeting emphasized the need for keeping sharp watch on social media use, it also emphasized the use of internet for counter-radicalization measures among the Member States especially through real time sharing of information using digital platform, sharing counter terrorism best practices among the Member States and liberal sharing of Counterterrorism Meta data. Relevant recommendations from this Dialogue may feed into the future deliberations of the Sub-Group on Countering Radicalization and Terrorism.

Maritime Domain awareness in BIMSTEC

7. The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs held in Delhi on 21 March 2017 emphasized the importance of maritime security in view of the overwhelming significance of the Bay of Bengal for the well-being, prosperity, security and socio-economic development in the BIMSTEC Member States. The Meeting decided to prepare a comprehensive Plan of Action to enhance maritime security cooperation among Member States. An ad-hoc working Group on Maritime Security has been constituted by the BIMSTEC Member States to discuss maritime security cooperation. The first BIMSTEC workshop on coastal security which was held in Delhi on 20-22 November 2019 also discussed ideas on developing common maritime security architecture for BIMSTEC. I am hopeful the ideas emanating from the coastal security workshop and from this Dialogue will facilitate the deliberations of the Ad-hoc working group on Maritime Security.

Environment and Climate Change: preserving mountains and oceans ecosystem

8. During the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit the Leaders expressed serious concerns over environmental degradation, adverse impact of climate change and global warming on the fragile Himalayan and mountain eco-systems and their inter-linkages with the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean and resolved to strengthen cooperation to protect and preserve the environment to address, *inter alia*, the adverse impact of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of our peoples. The Leaders also underscored the necessity of making concrete efforts to ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their bio-diversity in order to support sustainable development. Various Inter-Governmental Expert Groups which have been formed on these subject matters by the Fourth Summit will soon deliberate on developing action plan on respective domain. Member States will also be deliberating on the necessity and various other aspects of establishing a Himalayan Science Council.

Cyber security: need for cooperation between BIMSTEC States to counter security threats

9. First Meeting of the BIMSTEC national Security Chiefs held in Delhi in March 2017 noted with concern the emerging trends in cyber space which encourage online radicalisation, cybercrime and threat to the critical information sectors of the economy. The Meeting decided to deepen cooperation among the respective cyber institutions to strengthen

cyber security. The Meeting agreed to a Joint Forum to strengthen cyber security among the BIMSTEC Member States. The First BIMSTEC Workshop on Regional Cyber Security Cooperation held in New Delhi, India on 05-07 December 2018 made a number of recommendations on developing collaboration among the BIMSTEC Member States on the area of cyber security. The Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs held in Bangkok on 21 March 2019 while considering the recommendations of the workshop agreed to constitute an Expert Group to formulate an action plan to deal with Cyber Security in the BIMSTEC region. The recommendations of the workshop and those from this Dialogue could feed into the first meeting of the Expert Group to be held soon.

Restructuring Institutions: cooperation and capacity building within BIMSTEC States

10. I am happy to see that institutional restructuring of BIMSTEC has been chosen as a topic of the Dialogue. Earlier, the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) had made several useful recommendations to strengthen the institutional capacity of BIMSTEC, some of which came in handy for the preparation of meeting documents for consideration of BIMSTEC Member States. The 4th BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu in August 2018 took a number of important decisions to rationalize and consolidate BIMSTEC's operational modalities and institutional structure, including drafting of BIMSTEC Charter, establishment of BIMSTEC Development Fund, and review and rationalize the 14 sectors of cooperation to bring focus in BIMSTEC's work. BIMSTEC Member States and BIMSTEC Secretariat have initiated measures towards fulfillment of these directives with a view to get the endorsement of the Leaders during the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit to be held in Sri Lanka.
11. Before I conclude, let me express my appreciation for the contribution of India, the Lead country of CTTC Sector, in fostering cooperation under the CTTC Sector and also for organizing this Dialogue. I am hopeful the Dialogue will again come out with some practical recommendations and common perspectives on the themes relevant with the present day security situations prevailing in the region. I wish the Dialogue a success.

Inaugural Address: Chairman, NSAB

It is a great pleasure to join you at this Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security. The Think Tanks Conference is a valuable addition to the BIMSTEC Dialogue since it provides the intellectual inputs required by policy makers for new cooperation ideas. We have heard today how BIMSTEC has reinvigorated itself remarkably in recent years through multiple dialogue mechanisms at track-1, 1.5 and 2 levels and already an impressive list of agreement/documents and a range of subjects covered in the various dialogues. We have had a summit in Kathmandu last year, the National Security Chiefs Dialogue in Bangkok earlier this year, and among other important recent meetings have been a Conclave of Ports in Visakhapatnam tourism/industrial cooperation and a Coastal Security Workshop less than a week ago in Delhi. Earlier speakers have given some impressive statistics about BIMSTEC. It brings together 1.67 billion people with a combined GDP of US\$ 3.71 trillion. But its challenge is to make the collective impact of the organization much more than the sum of its individual parts. The Kathmandu Declaration of BIMSTEC leaders recognizes this potential. The decision to strengthen the institutional mechanisms of BIMSTEC reflects this recognition. I agree with Amb Shahidul Islam that it is very appropriate that you have a session on this subject in order to make recommendations for strengthening the institutional mechanisms.

Dr. Arvind Gupta; Dr. Paul have mentioned how BIMSTEC fits into India's foreign policy priorities of "Neighbourhood First", "Act East" and "SAGAR". It is also a vehicle for integrating the economy of our North-Eastern states with the economy of the rest of our country, through the neighbouring countries. We therefore, give importance to the economic potential of BIMSTEC and to the security challenges in achieving peaceful cooperation.

All our countries are engaged in discussions on an Indo Pacific security architecture, which would ensure respect for sovereignty and independence of all nations, large and small; peaceful resolution of disputes; free trade and investment, and freedom of navigation and overflight. Countries of the Indo Pacific Region need to pursue these ideals in a collaborative, non-confrontationist manner, as our Prime Minister stressed at the Shangri La dialogue in Singapore in June last year. This approach is also incorporated in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo Pacific, which was issued in June this year. BIMSTEC can show the way for this approach.

A cooperative approach in the Indo Pacific requires reconciliation of multiple interests and aspirations. This process can be helped by confidence building measures through cooperation in areas that are recognized by all as important. This was the spirit of Prime Minister Modi's Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative, which he unveiled at the recent East Asia Summit. He identified the possibility of collaborative work in a number of areas to safeguard the oceans: enhance maritime security; preserve marine resources; share resources fairly; reduce disaster risk; enhance cooperation; and promote mutually beneficial trade and maritime transport. He suggested that one or two countries could take the lead in coordinating cooperation in each of these verticals. India has undertaken to take the lead of maritime security and disaster risk reduction.

India will host a Maritime Security Workshop with Australia and Indonesia in February 2020. While this was a suggestion made in the East Asia Summit for the entire Indo Pacific region, I believe it would be relevant for BIMSTEC to take up some of these areas of cooperation to create models, which can be replicated in the larger Indo Pacific region. I say this, because BIMSTEC is a strategically and economically important enclave of the Indo Pacific and therefore, can be the laboratory for incubating projects. Your conference could consider this suggestion.

Another idea which I think a think tank forum could consider, particularly one devoted to strategic issues, is whether BIMSTEC's larger interests can be further progressed by its expansion to include Indonesia geographically, it is very much part of BIMSTEC. With its size and economic weight, it could contribute meaningfully to the cooperation in BIMSTEC. It is an idea worthy of serious consideration in a track 2 format, before governments engage with it.

Amb Shahidul Islam has mentioned that one of the subjects of focus at this conference is cyber security. In this context, I would like to draw your attention to two major issues. One is a shortage of skilled personnel in cyber security across our region. As our societies get deeper into ICT technologies, the need for specialized cyber skills in different sectors cannot be overemphasized.

We in India see the immediate need to train at least one million cyber professionals in different sectors of the economy by 2020. We need trainers, training modules and national accreditation procedures, all on a massive scale; this work is underway. It is worth considering how countries of BIMSTEC can collaborate in this common objective for all of us.

The other related issue is the stand-off between the US and China on the roll out of 5G technologies. It is important for all of us not to get caught in this technology war and to take informed decisions that meet our economic, technology and security interests. Most of the 5G is

software in which we have considerable capability in our region. Perhaps security related think tanks in BIMSTEC countries should pay some attention to this as a potential area of fruitful cooperation.

A final point, which I would like to make is the importance of follow-up on decisions taken at such conferences, so that some of the really good ideas generated can get acceptance and implementation. Your conference may like to develop some mechanism for this. I see that there was a suggestion in the conference last year for BIMSTEC to develop cooperation with organizations like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The link up with IORA may help to imbibe some of the experiences of IORA in taking forward ideas of cooperation initiatives.

I wish your conference fruitful deliberation on all these and other areas that you have identified. I am sure it will feed into the already vigorous momentum in BIMSTEC.

Conference Sessions

Day 1 (27 November 2019, Wednesday)

Inaugural Session

- Welcome Address by Dr Arvind Gupta, Director, Vivekananda International Foundation
- Keynote Address by Amb. M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General, BIMSTEC
- Special Address by Mr. Virander Paul, Joint Secretary (BIMSTEC, SAARC & Nalanda), MEA
- Inaugural Address by Amb. P.S. Raghavan, Chairman, National Security Advisory Board
- Book Release of “SEA OF COLLECTIVE DESTINY – BAY OF BENGAL AND BIMSTEC”
(A VIF Publication)

Session 1 : Internet and Social Media as a Tool for Radicalization – BIMSTEC Experience and The Way Forward

Fundamentalist organisations are extensively using the internet and social media as a tool for radicalization and spreading propaganda. Certain BIMSTEC nations have experienced cases of citizens getting radicalized online and actually joining the ISIS. The Third Meeting of National Security Chiefs of BIMSTEC member states was hosted by Thailand on 21 March 2019. The Meeting agreed that member countries would pool their collective resources to upgrade capacities in training, equipment, R&D and sharing of experiences to better deal with emerging threats. Strong anti-terror policies, tough responses and robust intelligence mechanisms will have to be supplemented by means to counter hate-speeches, radical propaganda including those disseminated through social media. A sound de-radicalization strategy and implement able structure is an inescapable requirement to follow-up radicalized individuals. This session aims to discuss:

- Role of State and civil society in addressing the spread of radicalization.
- Means to check radicalization through the internet and social media.

- Avenues for cooperation in addressing de-radicalization on social media.

Chair : Soe Myint, MD-Mizzima, Myanmar

Distinguished Panelists:

- **Bangladesh :** Shahab Enam Khan, BEI
- **India :** Shruti Pandalai, IDSA/Nitin A. Gokhale, Editor-in-Chief, SNI
- **Myanmar :** Dr. Min Zaw Oo, ED, MIPS
- **Nepal :** Umakant Adhikari, MoHA
- **Sri Lanka :** Dr. Sandunika Hasangani, LKI
- **Thailand :** Arthit Thongin, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University

Session 2 : Maritime Domain Awareness in BIMSTEC Region

The security challenges in Bay of Bengal are varied. They include illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, armed robbery at sea, piracy, human trafficking, arms-smuggling, drug-trafficking and terrorism. The first BIMSTEC Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security held at New Delhi in November 2018, stressed on the need to identify key targets and recommendations for improving the maritime security situation. To safeguard the waters, the maritime enforcement agencies need to coordinate to ensure there is swift dissemination of information among all parties. This session aims to discuss:

- How can the maritime situational awareness in BIMSTEC region be improved to benefit all member countries?

Chair : Vice Admiral Satish Soni, India

Distinguished Panelists:

- **Thailand :** Capt. Wachiraporn Wongnakornsawang, Dep. Chief of Staff Naval Education Department
- **Sri Lanka :** Malinda Meegoda, LKI
- **Bangladesh :** KM Tanjib Alam, Head of Chamber, Tanjib Alam & Associate
- **India :** Dr. Vijay Sakhuja, VIF

- **Myanmar** : Dr. Naing Swe Oo, TISS
- **Nepal** : Prof. (Dr.) Indrajit Rai

Session 3 : Addressing Environment and Climate Change in BIMSTEC Region

The impact of global warming such as melting of ice-caps, glaciers and rising sea levels increases the vulnerability of the BIMSTEC countries. The adverse consequence of environment and climate change will have to be borne by all. The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration resolved to develop a plan of action for collective response to climate change in the region. Preservation of mountains and oceans is therefore an urgent priority mandating all countries to work towards formulating a framework document and enhance cooperation towards this challenge. This session aims to discuss:

- Can BIMSTEC countries formulate a framework document to address climate change in the region?

Chair : Mr. Ganesh Shah, **Nepal**

Distinguished Panelists:

- **Bhutan** : Langa Dorji, Royal Govt. Of Bhutan
- **India** : Dr. Bivash Pandav, WII
- **Bangladesh** : Waseqa Ayesha Khan, MP, Chattogram
- **Nepal** : Laxman Bahadur Basnet, AIDIA
- **Sri Lanka** : Ruwanthi Jayasekara, INSSSL
- **Thailand** : Wannapa Leerasiri, Chiangmai University

DAY 2 (28 November 2019, Thursday)

Session 4: Cyber Security: Need for Cooperation between BIMSTEC States to Counter Cyber-Security Threats

The BIMSTEC region has 2.63 billion unique mobile phone users making it the largest region with mobile phone users in the world. This region also has one fourth of global internet users. This rapid rate of connectivity also increases the security threat. The operational dependence of the Critical Information Infrastructures (cyber forensic laboratories, data centres, data networks, redundancies, internet hubs and CERTs) and technical dependence of the economy underlines the importance of Cyber Security Framework. Cooperation on this issue is essential to reduce the costs of capacity building for cyber-security. This session aims to discuss:

- What is the cyber-security infrastructure available amongst BIMSTEC member states?
- What is the scope for CERT to CERT cooperation to ensure long-term and cost effective cyber-security in the region?
- Is there a case for establishing a dedicated Sub-Group on Cyber Security under the Technology head?

Chair : Dr. Kamlesh Bajaj, India

Distinguished Panelists:

- **Bangladesh :** Abu Salah Md. Yousuf, BISS
- **Bhutan :** Radhika Orari, Royal Govt. of Bhutan
- **India :** Mr. Subimal Bhattacharya, MD & CEO, CODOTTE Advisory
- **Myanmar :** Dr. Yin Myo Thu, MISIS
- **Nepal :** Nabinda Aryal, Nepal Police

Session 5: Cooperation and Capacity Building within BIMSTEC Think Tanks

In the last summit held in Kathmandu, the issue of institutional reform was discussed and, in the declaration, it was decided to work towards strengthening of Secretariat and its affiliated programs. Apropos, the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 17-18 January 2019 brought out the Draft BIMSTEC Charter and

the Draft Terms of Reference for the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) amongst other things. In order to fructify these, it is necessary to institutionalize BIMSTEC interaction across the member states. This session aims to discuss:

- What role can think tanks play in strengthening BIMSTEC?

Chair : Dr. Sreeradha Datta, VIF, India

Distinguished Panelists:

- Nepal : Dr. Deepak Prakash Bhatt, Founder, NCSG
- Nepal : Maj. Gen. Binoj Basnyat
- Bhutan : Tshering Penjor, RIGSS
- Bangladesh : Zillur Rahman, ED, CGS
- India : Pankaj Hazarika, Director, BIMSTEC

Valedictory Session

Summing Up

Chair: Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF

- Pankaj Hazarika, Director, BIMSTEC
- Ganesh Shah, Nepal
- Dr. Kamlesh Bajaj, India
- Dr. Sreeradha Datta, India

Vote of Thanks by Director, VIF

Session Reports



(From L to R) Amb. M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General, BIMSTEC; Amb. P.S. Raghavan, Chairman, National Security Advisory Board, India; Dr Arvind Gupta, Director, Vivekananda International Foundation, India; and Mr. Virander K. Paul, Joint Secretary (BIMSTEC, SAARC & Nalanda), Ministry of External Affairs, India.

On 27-28 November 2019, the VIF hosted the Second Edition of the BIMSTEC Think-Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security in New Delhi. The BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) is a regional multilateral organisation founded in 1997 and comprises the seven littorals of the world's largest bay viz. the Bay of Bengal. The littorals i.e. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand have around 1.5 billion people, approximately 22% of the world population and a combined GDP of \$ 2.7 trillion with a growth rate of approximately 6.5 %. The two-day conference had total 28 participants from BIMSTEC nations (excluding India) which includes three representatives of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, and participants from different think-tanks, academia, Armed forces.

In his welcome address, the Director of the VIF, Dr Arvind Gupta emphasised on the need to develop the Maritime and Cyber laws among the BIMSTEC countries. As per recommendations of the First BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security held at VIF, New Delhi on 13-14 November 2018, has helped to initiate more Track 2.0 Dialogues among the BIMSTEC countries. In his Keynote Address, the BIMSTEC Secretary General Amb. Shahidul Islam

stated that Terrorism and Transnational crime are threats to BIMSTEC member States. Many initiatives of working and expert groups have helped to identify areas for further containing security threats emerging in the Bay of Bengal region. Amb. Islam said that the way ahead for countering radicalisation is for the BIMSTEC member States to use shared platforms and intelligence. The BIMSTEC nations must also emphasise on Maritime security in light of socio-economic development and have constituted a working group for this. The BIMSTEC leaders must understand about preservation of biodiversity to avoid environmental degradation and to promote sustainable development. Amb. Islam emphasised that cybersecurity is another major area to work upon, especially radicalisation and cybercrime that also impact economies of the member States. There is a need for us to work on the action plan, and recommendations from this conference shall be considered.

In his Inaugural Address, the Chairman of the India's National Security Advisory Board— Amb. P S Raghavan has stated that the economic prospects of BIMSTEC are closely related to North-East India's economy, and a robust approach is needed for integrating the North-Eastern parts of the region with other BIMSTEC member States. Referring to India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's various initiatives to ensure security in Indo-Pacific region, Amb Raghavan emphasised that India is willing to lead the way in the Maritime security and disaster management. Amb Raghavan has also suggested that the BIMESTEC should discuss Indo-Pacific and the initiative should be taken by the strategic community to discuss the prospects of it. He supported the idea of including Indonesia in BIMSTEC which should be seriously considered due to its position connecting the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean. On countering the 5G technology import from China, Amb Raghavan mentioned that the skill trainings are much needed the personnel to contain cyber security threats. In this area, India is leading the way with that as various sectors are looking to its Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector. Also, the BIMSTEC States shall cooperate on software building and support, to support 5G technology rather than being bogged down by the US-China technology conflict. The BIMSTEC created software would have immense potential to meet our technological needs.

Over two days i.e. 27-28 November 2019, the conference deliberated over five sessions: (i) *'Internet and social media as a tool for radicalisation- the BIMSTEC experience and way forward'*, (ii) *'Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) in BIMSTEC'*, (iii) *'Environment and Climate Change: Preserving Mountains and Oceans Ecosystem'*, (iv) *'Restructuring Institutions: Cooperation and Capacity Building within BIMSTEC States'*, and (v) *'Cyber Security: Need for Cooperation Between the BIMSTEC States to Counter-Cyber Security Threats'*.



(From L to R) Shahab Enam Khan, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, Bangladesh; Shruti Pandalai, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, India; Dr. Min Zaw Oo, Executive Director, Myanmar Institute for Peace & Security, Myanmar; Soe Myint, Managing Director, Mizzima, Myanmar; Nitin A. Gokhale, Editor-in-Chief, Strategic News International, India; Mr Umakant Adhikari, Undersecretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Nepal; Dr. Sandunika Hasangani, Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka; and Arthit Thongin, Lecturer, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Thailand.

Session I : Internet and Social Media as a Tool for Radicalisation - The BIMSTEC Experience and Way Forward

The panel agreed upon the immediate need to address the growing problem of online radicalisation globally, mainly among BIMSTEC nations. To address the online radical narratives, violent extremism, and grass-root propaganda of extremism, it is essential to establish a body under the BIMSTEC flag. The key tool to address radicalisation is technology, in terms of spreading, innovation, and creating a pool of experts who would be able to use the technology to counter-extreme narratives. On mutual agreement over the women empowerment, the BIMSTEC nations must address the importance of women in counter-radicalisation. For instance, in India, mothers and other female family members, sisters/wives, came out first to report their missing kids/brothers/husband and suspicion of them joining transnational terrorist groups, including Islamic State (IS). The role of civil society was also discussed in the session where the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) could play a vital role in countering radicalisation by working together with the State to build counter-narrative.

The panellist emphasised that to build effective counter-radicalisation policies, it is necessary to have good and valid data for research. There is a need fill the gap of data on social media and radicalisation, among the BIMSTEC States. The BIMSTEC States must define what radicalisation is and what we are measuring on the scale of psychology.



(From L to R) Capt. Wachiraporn Wongnakornsawang, Deputy Chief of Staff Naval Education Department, Thailand; Malinda Meegoda, Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka; KM Tanjib Alam, Head of Chamber, Tanjib Alam & Associate, Bangladesh; Vice Admiral (Retd.) Satish Soni, Indian Navy; Dr. Vijay Sakhuja, Vivekananda International Foundation, India; Dr. Naing Swe Oo, ThayNinGa Institute for Strategic Studies, Thailand; and Professor Indrajit Rai, Nepal.

Session II : Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) in BIMSTEC

The panel discussed that the Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is not easy to bring about. Information sharing sounds easy in principle but there are challenges in terms of trust, technical and technological capacity. Effective understanding of all activities and movements on the sea are necessary in the BIMSTEC region. This would require inter-agency coherence- both domestically and internationally.

When it comes to connectivity in BIMSTEC, the issue of under-sea cables, fibre-optics becomes important. The BIMSTEC meetings, henceforth, should take up this issue specifically. The BIMSTEC member States need to examine if they are adopting best practices of each other when it comes to MDA and tackling maritime security challenges. The BIMSTEC can make a cohesive approach on this.



(From L to R) Langa Dorji, Royal Govt. Of Bhutan; Dr. Bivash Pandav, Wildlife Institute of India; Waseqa Ayesha Khan, Member of Parliament, Chattogram, Bangladesh; Mr. Ganesh Shah, Former Minister, Nepal; Laxman Bahadur Basnet, Asian Institute of Diplomacy & International Affairs, Nepal; Ruwanthi Jayasekara, Research Assistant, Institute of National Security Studies, Sri Lanka; and Wannapa Leerassiri, Chiangmai University, Thailand.

Session III : Environment and Climate Change: Preserving Mountains and Oceans Ecosystem

Environment change is a common and 21st century agenda globally. With its commitment to stay carbon neutral, Bhutan has been playing a crucial role in environment protection. For the BIMSTEC, there is a need to strengthen the collaboration of research to further understand the impact of environment degradation and climate change. There is a need to identify the marine protected areas and a will to manage them well. With a focus on environment protection, Bangladesh has declared the Climate Emergency.

A panellist from Nepal has stated that temperature rise due to carbon emission, has a similar issue with the oceans but the impact could be different. The collective destiny for BIMSTEC countries due to this is interlinked. The rivers originate in a country, flow through another country, and the carbon emissions are done by some other country whereas the impact is felt by the entire region collectively.

The panel has agreed that all the recommendations emerging from this platform cannot work without research and development in science and technology. There is a need of sharing and interlinking of knowledge and data. For countries like Bhutan there is a big financial commitment. The contributions should therefore be made proportional. Also, there is need for human resources. The BIMSTEC can initiate its own ‘Conference of the Parties’ (COP) wherein common agendas could be discussed.



(From L to R) Dr. Deepak Prakash Bhatt, Founder, Nepal Centre for Security Governance; Maj. Gen. Binoj Basnyat, Independent Strategic Analyst, Nepal; Pankaj Hazarika, Director, BIMSTEC Secretariat; Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Centre Head & Senior Fellow, Neighbourhood Studies, Vivekananda International Foundation India; Zillur Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Governance Studies, Bangladesh; and Tshering Penjor, Royal Institute of Governance and Strategic Studies, Bhutan.

Session IV : Restructuring Institutions: Cooperation and Capacity Building within BIMSTEC States

The Chair of the session, Dr Sreeradha Datta from the VIF, stated that all these years, there has been an intense interaction between policy makers and think tanks of the BIMSTEC States. This has been a top-down approach and the engagement has been mainly restricted to elite intelligentsia. There has been very little awareness of the BIMSTEC in popular domain and there should be a conscious effort to organise more activities and initiatives for others to be engaged in this process. The change in this approach would help in making this organisation more effective accruing greater benefit to the member states. The BIMSTEC Secretariat can take forward more outreach programs for it to capture the imagination of the people. A panellist from Nepal emphasised that while working on security discourse, it is important to link the dialogues with the history of dialogues and the participants. This is the institutional memory that needs to be nurtured.

In the second decade of the 21st century, the world is seeing a shift in geopolitics and the Indo-Pacific has become a critical area of conflict and cooperation, and here BIMSTEC can play a linking role. Painting the geostrategic picture, with rising China, Russia and India, the panellists agreed that along other BIMSTEC States, the situation have an important impact on the geopolitics of the region.



(From L to R) Abu Salah Md. Yousuf, Bangladesh Institute for International and Strategic Studies; Radhika Orari, Royal Govt. of Bhutan; Dr. Kamlesh Bajaj, Founder Director, CERT-India; Mr. Subimal Bhattacharya, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, CODOTTE Advisory, India; Dr. Yin Myo Thu, Myanmar Institute of Strategic & International Studies; and Nabinda Aryal, Nepal Police.

Session V : Cyber Security: Need for Cooperation Between the BIMSTEC States to Counter-Cyber Security Threats

The Chair of the session, Dr Kamlesh Bajaj drew attention to the ever-evolving threat of cyber security. Dr Bajaj has pointed that the high speed connectivity and movement of data is going to be a threat for all the governments alike. Moreover, these highly sophisticated cyber-tools which are easily available to criminals, aggravates our problem. As we, the BIMSTEC States, move from “People-to-People” to “Machine-to-Machine” connectivity, our productivity is expected to rise but at the cost of cyber threats. The nature of the cyber-attacks is such that they cannot be prevented despite laws and regulations available in the nation.

The panellist from Bhutan, Ms Radhika Orari narrated the nature of cyber security from the perspective of a small nation yet to catch up with digitally advanced countries in real sense. Ms Orari emphasised on human error as the most important catch in cyber related threats and attacks. To address this, Bhutan has taken some significant steps like setting up a “Cy-City” for educating its digital users and training youngsters. Ms Orari insisted that the BIMSTEC nations must think of collaboration like the hacker community does to build a state of art technical solution for the whole region. The representative from Bangladesh, Abu Shah Mohammad Yusuf noted the wide penetration of cyber technologies in South Asia which renders the cyber space increasingly borderless. Mr Yusuf also stated that the new opportunities have come along with more challenges for people of the region. The region is emerging as a hub for creation, innovation and development in technology sector as countries take up the digital path forward. Bangladesh, among others is a major data driven economy in the region. Simultaneously, the nature of cyber threats has widened under the national security ambit.

The panel has agreed that there is a need for a BIMSTEC cyber security forum which should have meetings and discuss issues in a continuous way. Along with, a need of determined focus on capacity building, which is to include training teams, designing curriculums etc. and the focal points to be established between law enforcement agencies of the BIMSTEC member States.



(From L to R) Dr. Kamlesh Bajaj, Founder Director, CERT-India; Pankaj Hazarika, Director, BIMSTEC; Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, Vivekananda International Foundation, India; Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Centre Head & Senior Fellow, Neighbourhood Studies, Vivekananda International Foundation India; and Ganesh Shah, Former Minister, Nepal.

Summary: The deliberation pointed out the need to finalize the pending BIMSTEC Convention on combating international terrorism and ratify it at the earliest to provide the legal framework for cooperation amongst BIMSTEC Member. Further, there is a need to harmonize the legal provisions of the Member States to deal with use of internet, social media and for countering radicalization. For creating greater maritime domain awareness and increasing maritime cooperation, the narrative needs to change to operational and functional perspectives, and the BIMSTEC Convention on Blue Economy may be drafted duly taking into account specific considerations of each of the Member States. Land locked member states need greater access to maritime zone. Similarly for developing greater cooperation on environment and climate change, BIMSTEC Member States need to collaborate on their research, data management, information sharing, best practices sharing in this domain with focus on mountain regions. Mechanism for dealing with trans boundary nature of diseases, pest control and hazard control have to be developed too. At the think tank level, the BIMSTEC Member States may focus on exchange programmes and developing institutional capacities. Given the different economies present in BIMSTEC, the think tanks could consider *Leave no one behind* as a slogan of BIMSTEC. The formation of a BIMSTEC community of scholars would not only enable a repository of the BIMSTEC processes and developments but help contribute to its momentum and outreach.

Participants List

India
Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF
Ambassador PS Raghavan, NSAB Chairman
Shri Virander K Paul, Joint Secretary (BSN), MEA
Dr. Bivash Pandav, Scientist, Wildlife Institute of India
Dr. Kamlesh Bajaj, Former Director, CERT-In
Mr. Nitin A. Gokhale, Editor-in-Chief, Strategic News International, India
Mr. Pankaj Hazarika, Director, Connectivity & Security, BIMSTEC
Ms. Shruti Pandalai, Associate Fellow, IDSA
Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Centre Head, Neighbourhood Studies
Subimal Bhattacharjee, MD & CEO, CODOTTE Advisory Pvt Ltd.
Bangladesh
Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General, BIMSTEC
Mr. Abu Salah Md. Yousuf, Senior Research Fellow, BISS
Mr. KM Tanjib Ul Alam- Lawyer
Mr. Shahab Enam Khan, Professor, Jahangirnagar University
Ms. Waseqa Ayesha Khan, Member of Parliament
Mr. Zillur Rahman- Executive Director, Centre for Governance Studies
Bhutan
Mr. Langa Dorji- District Environment Officer, National Environment Commission, Bhutan
Ms. Radhika Orari, ICT Officer, Government of Bhutan
Mr. Tshering Penjor- Member, Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies (RIGSS)

Myanmar
Mr. Han Thein Kyaw- Director Development-BIMSTEC
Dr. Min Zaw Oo, Executive Director, Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security
Dr. Naing Swe Oo, Executive Director, Tha NinGa Institute for Strategic Studies
Mr. Soe Myint- Founder & Managing Director, Mizzima Group
Dr. Yin Myo Thu, Professor, Pro Rector, Yangon University. Member, Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies
Nepal
Maj. Gen. Binoj Basnyat, Retd Army General, Nepalese Army
Dr. Deepak Prakash Bhatt, Founding Chairman, Nepal Center for Security Governance
Mr. Ganesh Shah, Former Minister, Environment Science and Technology
Prof. (Dr.) Indrajit Rai-Professor, Conflict Studies
Mr. Laxman Basnet, Member, AIDIA
Mr. Nabinda Aryal, Officer, Nepal Police
Mr. Umakant Adhikari, Under Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs
Sri Lanka
Mr. Malinda Meegoda , Research Associate, Lankan Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies, LKI
Ms. Ruwanthi Jayasekara- Research Assistant, Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka (INSSL)
Dr. Sandunika Hasangani, Research Fellow, Lankan Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies (LKI)
Thailand
Mr. Arthit Thongin, Lecturer, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Thailand.
Capt. Wachiraporn Wongnakornsawang, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Naval Education Department, Royal Thai Navy
Ms. Wannapa Leerasiri, Lecturer, Chiangmai University

Outcome Document

First Meeting of BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security (13-14 November 2018)

First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security was held at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) , New Delhi on 13-14 November 2018. Delegates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Sri Lanka and BIMSTEC Secretariat participated in the meeting.

The meeting was held in pursuance of the decision taken in the First and Second Meetings of the National Security Advisers and Security Chiefs of BIMSTEC Member States held on 21 March 2017 at New Delhi and 21 March 2018 at Dhaka respectively wherein dialogue of Think Tanks and strategic communities towards formalizing security cooperation in the BIMSTEC region was emphasized.

Mr. Pankaj Saran, Deputy National Security Adviser, Government India in his inaugural address underlined the need for cooperation amongst the security institutions of BIMSTEC Member States to deal with the common challenges of terrorism, radicalization, trans-national crimes, cyber security, climate change, and maritime security. Emphasizing the importance of connectivity in regional integration, he stated that besides physical connectivity there should be connectivity between people, organizations and security agencies.

Deliberations and recommendations

Theme: Threat of Terrorism, Radicalisation and Response by BIMSTEC

Countries

The Meeting deliberated on various aspects of terrorism, radicalisation and necessity of cooperation among the BIMSTEC Member States to deal with these threats. The Meeting reviewed the existing BIMSTEC mechanism to deal with both traditional and non-traditional security matters. The Meeting appreciated the work undertaken by Joint Working Group (JWG) on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) and its Sub-Groups. The Meeting

emphasised the importance of recognising the Bay of Bengal as a common security space which was initially mooted by the First Meeting of the National Security Chiefs held on 21 March 2017. The Meeting recognised the Outcome Document of the First National Security Chiefs Meeting as guiding norms for security cooperation. The Meeting agreed that BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat 2016 has given a new dimension to BIMSTEC cooperation including in the security cooperation.

The Meeting also took note of the directives given by BIMSTEC Leaders in the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held at Kathmandu, Nepal on 30-31 August 2018. The delegates shared their perceptions about security challenges in the region and put forward the following recommendations to strengthen the security cooperation within BIMSTEC to deal with threats of terrorism and radicalization:

- i. New collaborative approaches will be required to meet the growing contemporary security challenges of terrorism and radicalisation. BIMSTEC Member States must express necessary political will and determination, and pool their resources to meet these challenges.
- ii. There is need to have consensus on regional level to deal with terrorism and radicalisation. Pending BIMSTEC Conventions should be finalized and ratified at the earliest to provide the legal framework for cooperation amongst BIMSTEC Member States. Effective implementation of legal frameworks/laws too is equally important.
- iii. To deal with the threat of terrorism, radicalization, violent extremism, the security agencies should cooperate with each other at different levels including real time intelligence/information sharing. Trust amongst the security agencies of the BIMSTEC Member States should be enhanced.
- iv. Future cooperation should be established on common heritage, culture, and understanding shared by BIMSTEC Member States.
- v. Terrorism must not be used as a tool of State policy. It is important that States that help and provide safe haven to terrorists are held accountable for their deeds.

Theme: Maritime Security (Maritime Order, Capacity Building, Maritime Connectivity, Piracy)

The Meeting emphasized that maritime security is critical for promoting overall security in the Bay of Bengal region. The region has emerged as the centre of world's economic activities and

strategic hub. The Meeting also emphasized the role of Blue Economy in the Bay of Bengal. The Meeting made the following recommendations towards promoting Maritime security in the Bay of Bengal:

- i. Rule based maritime order must be established in the Bay of Bengal. There should also be common maritime strategy. There is need to find regional solutions to regional problems.
- ii. There is a need to improve maritime infrastructure by the BIMSTEC Member States, while sharing the burden of infrastructure development for common prosperity through better connectivity and accessibility.
- iii. Concept of *Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)* promoted by India may be considered for implementation by all the BIMSTEC Member States.
- iv. BIMSTEC should also develop links with like-minded organizations such as IORA and IONS.
- v. Maritime Domain Awareness, maritime connectivity, and cooperation amongst Coast Guards should be promoted. BIMSETC Member States should promote search and rescue operations and coordinated patrol.

Theme: Transnational Crime (Arms smuggling, Narcotics, Human Trafficking)

Delegates have expressed concern on the proliferation transnational crimes such as human trafficking, drugs abuse, cyber threats, climate change, arms smuggling, terror financing and money laundering in the Bay of Bengal region. The Meeting took note that developments in communication and information technology, especially social media has given a new dimension to the transnational crimes. The Meeting made the following recommendations:

- i. While there is reasonably good cooperation at the bilateral level, there was an urgent need to build mechanisms amongst BIMSTEC Member States to step up efforts to deal with Transnational Crimes.
- ii. Different Member States have different levels of capabilities to deal with Transnational Crimes. There is urgency to build capabilities in all the BIMSTEC Member States.

- iii. Cyber security is becoming a major challenge which will require cooperation amongst technical agencies, law enforcement agencies of BIMSTEC Member States and there is need that Member States coordinate their positions closely on the issues pertaining to cyber norms in cyberspace.

Theme: Disaster Management (HADR)

The Meeting agreed that BIMSTEC Member States are most vulnerable to climate change than any other region in the world. The Meeting deliberated on BIMSTEC's preparedness and resilience towards disaster management. The Meeting also emphasized the importance of disaster risk reduction. The Meeting made the following recommendations:

- i. All Member States are subject to natural disasters. They are vulnerable to the ill-effects of climate change. BIMSTEC Member States should pool in their resources and capabilities to deal with natural disasters.
- ii. BIMSTEC Weather & Climate Centre (BCWC) at Noida, India should be renamed as BIMSTEC Disaster Management & Climate Change Centre. It should be converted into a research & development Centre on Disaster Management.
- iii. The Disaster Management Training Centre at Nagpur, India should provide training on disaster management to the BIMSTEC Member States.
- iv. BIMSTEC Member States may adopt the AHA (ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management) model for disaster management.
- v. Member States must take collaborative efforts towards Early Warning Systems including use of Remote Sensing Satellites.

Theme: BIMSTEC Security Dialogue-Way Forward

The Meeting emphasized that for stability, prosperity and growth in the Bay of Bengal region, security challenges must be addressed cohesively and therefore, there is need for continuous dialogue among the security agencies as well as among the Think Tanks in the region. The Meeting made the following recommendations.

- i. Future course of action on security cooperation should be based on sound evidence-based research undertaken by Think Tanks individually and collectively.

- ii. The capacity of BIMSTEC Secretariat should be strengthened to facilitate research on security issues.
- iii. Think Tanks have a crucial role to play through deliberations on complex issues and by offering independent advice to governments. Such dialogues, which involve diverse actors, should be held on a regular basis to promote interaction between Think-Tanks, academia, civil society and experts to build greater awareness about regional security issues and develop concrete suggestions and actions plans.
- iv. To enhance regional cooperation in the field of security, BIMSTEC Member States need to engage with each other in more meaningful and innovative ways. The destiny of the people of the region is closely linked with the well being of the Bay of Bengal.

The Meeting underscored the importance of annual convening of Meeting of BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security. The BIMSTEC Secretariat will hold consultations with the Member States to decide the timing and venue of the Second Meeting.

Delegates welcomed the initiative taken by the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) to hold the first Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security. They were optimistic that the Dialogue will grow into a robust platform for generating ideas for common action against common security risks, threats, and challenges in the BIMSTEC security space. They expressed their appreciation of the support provided by the government of India towards holding of the BIMSTEC Think Tanks Regional Security Dialogue. Delegates also appreciated the efforts of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in coordinating the Meeting.

BIMSTEC – Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index 2019

Internet and Social Media as a Tool for Radicalisation

The poison of radicalization and extremism is now able to travel very fast through Internet and social media is playing a major role. Last year, Ambassador Pankaj Saran, Deputy National Security Adviser stated during the BIMSTEC think tank dialogue on regional security organized by the Vivekananda International Foundation that “Threat from social media and internet are from lethal than we think”. BIMSTEC region is witnessing an exponential growth in internet usage and social media especially Facebook having its larger user base from the region. The BIMSTEC countries have the largest share of social media users in the world. Nearly 23% of active social media users (735 Million) are from the region.

India has the second highest growth rate of social media users (31%) with the highest number of Facebook users (250,000,000). Multiple intelligence reports across the country have pinpointed the role of the Internet as a facilitator of violent radicalization. Social media propaganda has spread across the country and encrypted private messaging applications such as



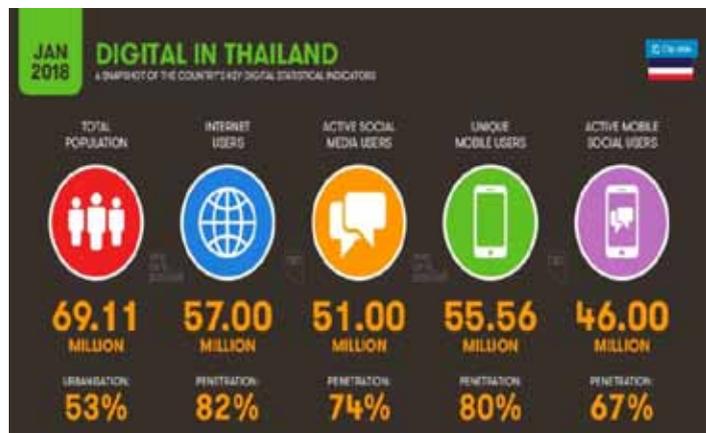
WhatsApp and Telegram have enabled prospective members to chat with ideologues without fear of detection or restriction. Hizbul Mujahedeen (*HM*) fighters from Pakistan have utilized social media and video tutorials in an effort to recruit and train Kashmiri youth in recent years. Ministry of Home Affairs has hired social media advisor to curb radicalization and recruitment of Indian youth by terrorist outfits like the Islamic state.

Bangladesh has also seen high growth in the usage of social media with 30 million active social media users. In Bangladesh, terrorist organizations used social media to spread their ideologies and solicit followers from Bangladesh. Bangladeshi militants have been featured in multiple publications, videos, and websites associated with ISIS and AQIS. Bangladesh has

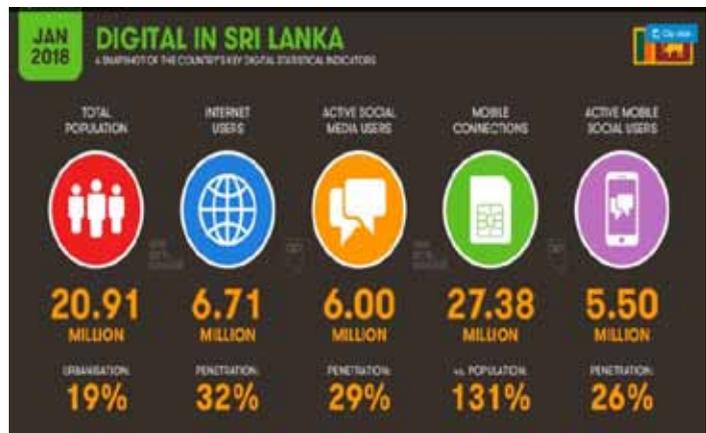
taken steps to monitor Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. Efforts are underway to develop the technological capacity of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC) to enhance the detection of Extremist websites. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) is also working in this regard with Muslim clerics in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC) monitors suspicious online and cell phone related activities to help intelligence and law enforcement agencies.



Thailand had 57 Mn Internet users, (Internet penetration stands at 82%), of those 55.56 Mn connect to the internet using their smartphones as of 2018. In Thailand, more than 100,000 Facebook users had frequented IS-affiliated online communities. In November 2016, the social media accounts that are affiliated with Thai insurgent groups have started to feature IS flags and symbols.



Sri Lanka had 6.71 Mn Internet users (Internet penetration stands at 32%), of those 5.50 Mn (almost 80%) connect to the internet using their smartphones as of 2018. Almost 87% of Sri Lankans who are online have social media accounts, with 85% of them having Facebook Accounts. The negative impact of social media was felt after the Easter attack in Sri Lanka as false information was spreading through social media. Subsequently Sri Lanka banned Facebook and Instagram temporarily. Sri Lanka has said that it will implement the United Nations Security Council's



resolution to curb terrorism and violent extremism in the country.

Nepal had 9.30 million active social media users in year 2018. In January 2019, there were 9,827,000 Facebook users in Nepal, which accounted for 32.5% of its entire population. On February 20, 2019, Nepal's government tabled the Information Technology Bill in the parliament, which would impose harsh sanctions for "improper" social media posts



Myanmar has seen an intensification of social media usage. The number of active social media users has risen over the past year by 29 percent, or four million people, up to 18 million, 16 million of whom principally use mobile phones. Viber is the most common platform with a population penetration rate of 35 percent, followed by Facebook with 27 percent. The government has established the "Social Media Monitoring Team," to target pro-Rohingya activists, international civil society organizations, and foreign media.



Bhutan's Internet activities were limited to messaging on platforms like Hi-5 and Yahoo mails till early 2000; however, with the arrival of mobile cellular networks since 2004, the number of Internet users has increased from 500 in 2000 to 37000 in 2018. Common social media applications used in Bhutan includes Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and WeChat.



Maritime Domain Awareness

BIMSTEC is a regional organization which derives its name from the largest Bay of the world - Bay of Bengal. Maritime security and blue economy play a major role in this region. The security challenges have emerged in this region especially the non-traditional security challenges. All these security threats are connected and interrelated with each other. The major non-traditional security challenges which have emerged are: Piracy and Armed Robbery; Smuggling; Trafficking (Drug, Human and Arms); Illegal, Unregulated & Unreported (IUU) Fishing; Terrorism

Piracy and Armed Robbery

- According to the annual report 2018 of Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) on piracy and armed robbery, a total of 76 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships (comprising 62 actual incidents and 14 attempted incidents) were reported in Asia in 2018 compared to 102 incidents (comprising 90 actual incidents and 12 attempted incidents) in 2017.
- This accounts for a 25% decrease in the total number of incidents reported in 2018 compared to 2017.
- According to the report out of the total reported incidents in 2018 among the incidents reported at ports and anchorages the highest number of attacks happened at Chittagong, Bangladesh.
- A total 11 incidents of piracy and armed robbery were reported at Chittagong. India was second at total four incidents (3 while board ships at anchor and 1while underway).

Human Trafficking

- **India:** The NCRB reported the government's identification of 22,955 victims in 2016, compared with 8,281 in 2015. Of the victims, 22,932 were Indian, 38 Sri Lankan, 38 Nepali, 36 Bangladeshi, and 73 were various other nationalities, including Thai and Uzbek.
- **Nepal:** According to a study done in early 2018, the number of victims brought illegally into India from Nepal went up by 500 percent between 2013 and 2017. An average of 12,000 girls and women are trafficked from Nepal into India every year, according to Maiti Nepal, an NGO fighting trafficking from Nepal.

- The UN and local NGOs estimate 10,000 to 15,000 women and children a year are trafficked from Nepal. The majority end up in Indian brothels but some are taken overseas, to South Korea and as far as South Africa. The Gulf has long been a destination for women trafficked from south Asia.
- Authorities did not systematically track the total number of victims identified, but did identify 368 victims connected to the 235 investigations initiated during the Nepali fiscal year, compared with 419 victims identified the previous year.(Trafficking in Persons Report 2018)
- **Bangladesh:** The trafficking in women and children is a national as well as global issue. The Congressional Research and the State Department of United State of America estimate that between 1 to 2 million people are trafficked each year worldwide with majority in Asia (Huntington, 2001: 1).
- Thousands of women and children are being victims of trafficking from Bangladesh to India, Pakistan and Middle East in search of work and they become vulnerable to exploitation and unprotected law due to their illegal status.
- Available data suggests that that about 2 million women and children have been trafficked to the Middle East in the last two decades and about 2 million women have been trafficked to Pakistan over the last ten years (Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs (MWCA), 1997).
- Moreover, 4,700 children have been trafficked in the year of 1993–98 and 3,500 girls have been trafficked out of Cox’s Bazar⁶ during 1988–98 (Centre for Women and Children’s Studies, 1998). Consequently, about 200–400 hundred young women and children are being victim of trafficking every month in Bangladesh.
- **Thailand:** An estimated one third of all women and children trafficked worldwide are from Southeast Asia, with 60% of these individuals residing in the ASEAN region”.
- According to Nodwarang Niamvanichkul (2013), who stated that Thailand is a source, transit and destination country for sex trafficking, 80% of sex workers in country originate from neighbouring Burma, while Thai citizens are transported to Australia, United States and Japan.
- The main destinations for Thai victims of trafficking are Japan, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia, etc. The most frequent destination of

Thai victims is Japan. Each year, approximately 25,000 Thais overstay their tourist visas in Japan, and approximately 90% of them are females.

- **Myanmar:** A Guardian news report estimated that at least 12,000 Rohingya migrants, an ethnic minority from the Rakhine state in Myanmar, were sold to fishing industries each month as of 2014 and were exploited as slave labourers and sex slaves (Stoakes et al., 2015).
- The United States Department of State report (2013) since the dissolution of a ceasefire with the Kachine army, conflicts with minority populations have displaced approximately 75,000 Kachine and 115,000 Rakhine residents, which left these groups highly vulnerable to forced labour and sex trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2015).
- **Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka is primarily a source and, to a much lesser extent, a destination for men and women trafficking for the purposes of forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. Sri Lankan men and women migrate willingly to Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, and Singapore to work as construction workers, domestic servants, or garment factory workers
- The US Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons notes that Sri Lanka is a primary source country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking.

Drug Trafficking

It is rampant in the BIMSTEC region and according to the UNODC data the annual drug seizure has increased in all countries of BIMSTEC. In the seizures, Cannabis herbal makes up for the highest seized drug.

Annual Drug Seizures (Kg Equivalent)			
Country/Year	2015	2016	2017
Bangladesh	48842	48128	74389
Bhutan	0	0	228
India	102988	375069	367625
Myanmar	29488	204093	11786
Sri Lanka	6629	6109	5562
Thailand	67648	18909	188118

Terrorism

- India has been attacked twice using the sea routes.
- The 1993 Mumbai blasts when explosives were transported through the sea routes and the 26/11 attacks when the terrorists enter the Indian Territory.
- India Today report suggests that Pakistan based terrorist group has been training people to carry out the attacks.
- The threat of terrorism is an emerging non-security threat in the maritime domain and will require information sharing and joint efforts to avert this threat.

Environment and Climate Change

INDIA - FACTS	
Income Group (World Bank)	Lower middle income
Annual loss from natural disasters (average percent of GDP)	0.311%
GHG Emissions (MtCO ₂ e, including LULUCF), 2013	3031.34
Rank as emitter	Top 5
Paris Agreement ratification status:	Ratified (02/10/2016)

India is a non-Annex I country under the Kyoto Protocol and thus has no binding target for emissions reduction. It is an active participant in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) established by the Protocol. It had more than 1,748 registered CDM projects as of July 2019. India has pledged to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20-25% below 2005 by 2025. Efforts include improved energy efficiency, increased use of renewable and nuclear power, expanded public transportation and energy pricing reform. It adopted a “National Action Plan on Climate Change” (NAPCC) in 2008 outlining existing and future policies and programmes directed at climate change mitigation, adaptation and knowledge management. The focus of the NAPCC is on promoting understanding of climate change, and action on adaptation, mitigation, energy efficiency, and natural resource conservation while pursuing overall economic growth. In 2010, the Ministry of Environment and Forests at the Government of India released India: Taking on Climate Change – Post Copenhagen Domestic Actions, which evaluates the progress of the policies announced in the 2008 NAPCC.

BANGLADESH - FACTS	
Income Group (World Bank)	Lower middle income
Annual loss from natural disasters (average percent of GDP)	2.568%
GHG Emissions (MtCO ₂ e, including LULUCF), 2013	192.71
Rank as emitter	21-50
Paris Agreement ratification status:	Ratified (21/09/2016)

Bangladesh is a poster child for the potential impact of climate change. It is a Least Developed Country, recognised by the UNFCCC as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change impacts. Among other things, cyclones, floods and saltwater inundation already threaten the livelihoods of some of the world's poorest people: some 50 million Bangladeshis live in poverty. Moreover, 79% of Bangladeshis live in rural areas, yet the country has one of the world's highest population densities. Following the Population and Housing Census 2011, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics reckons there are now 1,015 people/km² in Bangladesh. This intensifies threats even at a local level. Climate-related hazards occur on a wide scale – for instance flash floods affect some 80% of the land area during the monsoon season. The increased intensity and frequency of these hazards under future climate change scenarios is a major challenge for development, and a significant barrier to its vision of eliminating poverty and becoming a middle income country by 2021.

NEPAL	
Income Group (World Bank)	Low income
Annual loss from natural disasters (average percent of GDP)	0.905%
GHG Emissions (MtCO ₂ e, including LULUCF), 2013	42.3
Rank as emitter	Below Top 50
Main groups	LDC; G77
Paris Agreement ratification status:	Ratified (06/10/2016)

Nepal considers climate change as one of the top challenges. The country has a large dependency on rain-fed agriculture. Approximately 86% of the population are dependent on

agriculture for their livelihoods and the sector contributes about 33% of GDP. This means there is a high sensitivity to changes in precipitation, while the mountainous topography makes the land prone to flash floods. The severity of these is predicted to increase under climate change scenarios with more intense precipitation. Of particular concern are hazards associated with Glacier Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) events. These relatively rare events have massive impacts. Temperature rises in mountain regions increase the amount of meltwater from the retreating glaciers, which accumulates behind natural dams of rock and soil (moraine). The moraine dams eventually break and release huge quantities of water with catastrophic consequences for people living in the valleys below. Moreover, changes in Himalayan glaciers present a huge challenge to populations downstream who are dependent on steady supplies of meltwater feeding streams and rivers. These concerns are all the more pressing given that temperatures appear to be rising.

MYANMAR	
Income Group (World Bank)	Lower middle income
Annual loss from natural disasters (average percent of GDP)	0%
GHG Emissions (MtCO ₂ e, including LULUCF), 2013	201.45
Rank as emitter	21-50
Main groups	LDC; G77
Paris Agreement ratification status:	Ratified (19/09/2017)

Myanmar ratified the UNFCCC in 1994 and the Kyoto Protocol (as a non-Annex I country) in 2003. It submitted its first initial national communication to the UNFCCC in December 2012. No specific climate change legislation has been passed; however, a variety of national strategies and plans either solely or in part refer to climate change mitigation or adaptation measures. Myanmar is one of the world’s most vulnerable countries to climate change and Yangon, its largest city, is one of the world’s five most vulnerable cities to climate change. A large proportion of the population lives in low lying areas prone to flood risks. As well as the impacts of flooding (including rising sea levels and heavier rains), the effects of drought, heat waves and seasonal change on agriculture, water resources, public health, forestry and biodiversity are key climate change-related concerns. Incursion of sea water into freshwater supplies on land is already damaging agricultural production and freshwater fisheries. Climate change is also expected to exacerbate existing development issues, particularly food and water insecurity.

THAILAND	
Income Group (World Bank)	Upper middle income
Annual loss from natural disasters (average percent of GDP)	0.691%
GHG Emissions (MtCO ₂ e, including LULUCF), 2013	384.37
Rank as emitter	21-50
Main groups	G77
Paris Agreement ratification status:	Ratified (21/09/2016)

Thailand has experienced extreme weather phenomena and natural disasters on an unprecedented scale. In 2004, a tsunami hit its coastline, leaving large stretches of land devastated and thousands of people dead. In the 2011/2012 monsoon season, severe flooding paralysed large parts of the country, including its capital Bangkok. In combination with other factors, these events have increased awareness of climate change in Thailand, making it an important policy issue addressed in the country's National Economic and Social Development Plans (NESDP). The 10th NESDP (2007-2011) defined objectives and targets to mitigate the impacts of climate change and developed a policy framework to increase energy efficiency and to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The Plan included measures to promote sustainable transport (e.g. electric vehicles) and expand green areas in Thailand's cities.

BHUTAN	
Income Group (World Bank)	Lower middle income
Annual loss from natural disasters (average percent of GDP)	2.214%
GHG Emissions (MtCO ₂ e, including LULUCF), 2013	-2.35
Rank as emitter	Below Top 50
Main groups	LDC; G77
Paris Agreement ratification status:	Ratified (19/09/2017)

Bhutan is a small, land locked country located in the fragile eastern Himalayan ecosystem for which climate change is not just an environmental problem but a serious challenge to sustainable development and the livelihoods of its people. However, the environment in Bhutan is one of most pristine in Asia with clean air, water and primeval forest. Around 70

per cent of the country is forested (much of it primary forests), and approximately 80 per cent of the country’s population depends on subsistence farming for their livelihoods (RGB, 2006). Bhutan’s hydropower production—much of which it exports to India—is described as the backbone of the country’s economy, and there are early concerns that this resource may be adversely impacted by climate change (RGB, 2008). With high growth rates in population, unchecked rural to urban migration, increased population density in the towns and cities, rapid increases in imports of cars, and rising demand for fuel wood, roads and building construction, the future suggests many negative effects on environmental assets, which can further expose the population to climate change vulnerabilities.

SRI LANKA	
Income Group (World Bank)	Lower middle income
Annual loss from natural disasters (average percent of GDP)	0.213%
GHG Emissions (MtCO ₂ e, including LULUCF), 2013	42.83
Rank as emitter	Below Top 50
Main groups	G77
Paris Agreement ratification status:	Ratified (21/09/2016)

Sri Lanka is an island nation with a tropical monsoon climate. It is highly vulnerable to current and projected climate change impacts. It ranked second in the 2017 Climate Risk Index, and trends show increases in average ambient temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns and extreme weather events, which can trigger disasters including floods, droughts and landslides. The socio-economic impacts of climate change are also significant. Sri Lanka’s key infrastructure is concentrated in its coastal zones, which are highly vulnerable to sea level rise. Annual economic losses from climate-induced disasters are estimated at US\$350 million on average, a significant share of total economy. “As a developing country, climate change has affected the economic growth of Sri Lanka,” says Dr Sunimal Jayathunga, Director of the Climate Change Secretariat in the Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment. “It has affected all the sectors in the country, and all the levels.”

Cyber Security

BANGLADESH		
<p>Introduction :</p> <p>It manages cyber security in Bangladesh government's e-Government network and related infrastructure. It also makes efforts to establish national cyber security incident management capabilities in Bangladesh.</p>	<p>Objectives :</p> <p>BGD e-GOV CIRT assist to solve security related issues in the National Data Centre (NDC) including provision of obligatory instructions for BCC (Bangladesh Computer Council) personnel to secure NDC information resources.</p> <p>Along with, it supports capacity building of the existing BCC manpower to establish National CIRT.</p>	<p>Programmes (If Any) :</p> <p>Cyber Security Incident Handling: Reporting, Coordination, Incidence response support, and Incident analysis and evidence collection.</p> <p>Digital Forensic Laboratory: Evidence detection, acquisition, Analysis, Documenting and Reporting.</p> <p>Proactive Services: Security Assessments, Configuration and maintenance of security tools, applications, infrastructure, and services, Intrusion detection, Security consulting, Awareness building.</p>
<p>Formed in July 2007 and started its operation on 15 November 2007. Bd-CERT works closely with ISPAB (ISP Association-Bangladesh), and along with other CERTs to deal with cyber threats, incidents, and incident response for Bangladesh government, business organisations, and academic organisations. Bd-CERT is an independent non-profit organisation.</p>		<p>Provide a single point of contact for reporting local problems.</p> <p>Share information and lessons learned with CERT/CC, other CERTs, response teams, organizations and sites.</p> <p>Incident tracing & response.</p> <p>Vulnerability analysis and response.</p> <p>Guide and help the System Administrators take follow up action to prevent recurrence of similar incidents.</p> <p>Organize training, research and development.</p> <p>Issue security guidelines, advisories and timely advice for the CERT users.</p>
BHUTAN		
<p>Introduction:</p> <p>It is a part of Bhutan Government's Department of Information Technology and Telecom of Ministry of Information and Communication.</p>	<p>Objectives:</p> <p>To enhance the cyber security in Bhutan by information coordination, and establishment of indigenous capabilities of computer security incident handling. The BtCIRT commenced its operations from April 2016.</p>	
MYANMAR		
<p>Introduction:</p> <p>Formed on 23 July 2004, by e-National Task Force, and was launched by Ministry of Communication and Information Technology on 15 December 2010. CERT— a nation-level CERT in Myanmar, is a non-profit organization for dealing with cyber security incidents across an organisation based in Myanmar.</p>	<p>Objectives:</p> <p>To create National IT image by cooperating with international CERTs for cyber security and cyber-crime;</p> <p>Disseminate Security Information and Advisories;</p> <p>Provide technical assistance; and</p> <p>Cooperate with law enforcement organizations for cyber-crime.</p>	<p>Programmes (If Any) :</p> <p>In 2015, mm-CERT organised a State-level competition 'ASEAN-Japan Cyber Sea Game focusing on Forensics, Reverse Engineering, Computer Network Defence Cyber Security Knowledge.</p> <p>In 2016, BaseCTF— a State-level cyber security competition was organised with the similar themes of previous year's competition.</p> <p>In 2018, and 2019, Myanmar Cyber Security Challenge (MCSC) were organised with the objective to bring cyber security awareness and improvement in skills of Myanmar youth. Major focus areas of the competition were: web security, Forensics, Cryptography, Problem Solving, Reverse Engineering, and Binary Exploits.</p>

SRI LANKA		
<p>Introduction:</p> <p>Formed by the ICT Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA) in 2006. Since 2018, it is under the Ministry of Telecommunications Digital Infrastructure and Foreign Employment.</p>	<p>Objectives:</p> <p>To be the single and the most trusted point of contact for Information Security in Sri Lanka.</p> <p>To protect Information Technology users in the Public and Private Sector Organizations and the General Public by providing up-to-date information on potential threats and vulnerabilities and by undertaking computer emergency response handling services.</p> <p>To Act as the most authoritative national source for all ICT security related issues across the nation.</p> <p>To link with other CERTs and CIRTs around the world to share the knowledge and know-how relating to Information Security.</p>	<p>Programmes (If any):</p> <p>Responsive Services: Incident Handling and Digital Forensics.</p> <p>Awareness Services: Provision of technology watch, providing cyber security threat alerts, conducting seminars and workshops.</p> <p>Research and Policy Development: Assisting Sri Lanka government and private organisations to develop their respective information security policy.</p> <p>Consultancy Services: Technical audits, penetration testing, disaster recovery, and business continuity planning.</p>
THAILAND		
<p>Founded in 2000 by National Electronics and Computer Technology Centre (NECTC), Ministry of Science and Technology. In February 2011, by the resolution of Thai cabinet ThaiCERT operations were transferred to a new administrative team in a new public organization named Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA) under the supervision of Ministry of Information and Communication Technology.</p>	<p>Thai CERT collaborates with Thai government sector, organizations, universities, ISPs and other relevant entities to handle computer security incidents in Thailand. Additionally, as a full and active member of Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST) and Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT), ThaiCERT coordinates with both globally and regionally trusted CSIRTs in responding to computer security incidents.</p>	<p>Thai CERT provide services:</p> <p>Incident Coordination</p> <p>Digital Forensic Services</p> <p>For complicated forensic cases, such as examinations of damaged mobile phones or deep malware behaviour analyses, the DFC (Digital Forensic Centre) utilises equipment and advanced technical specialties, such as chip-off and virtual environment emulation techniques.</p>
<p>Operational in January 2004. CERT-In is the national nodal agency for responding to computer security incidents “as and when they occur”. CERT-In consist of 95 technical members as a team.</p>		<p>Functions of CERT-In:</p> <p>Collection, Analysis, and Dissemination of information on cyber-related incidents.</p> <p>Forecasts and alerts of cyber security incidents</p> <p>Emergency measures for handling cyber security incidents.</p> <p>Issue guidelines, advisories, vulnerability notes, and whitepapers relating to information security and reporting of cyber incidents.</p>

NEPAL		
Established as an expert group to handle incidents related to computer security and aware people in the area of cyber security in Nepal.	With the initiation of Federation of Computer Association of Nepal (CAN Federation) a team involving experts, professionals, entrepreneurs, organizations and government officials is established. CERT Nepal leads efforts to improve the Nation's cybersecurity posture, coordinate cyber information sharing, and proactively manage cyber risks to the nation while protecting the constitutional rights of Nepalese citizens.	Services provided: Publish security alerts. Perform Information security Audits and Assurance. Conduct Cyber Security Awareness and Training. Perform Analysis and Forensic investigation of cyber incidents. Response to cyber security incidents. Coordination with global and local agencies towards Cybercrime.

Official Data of Cyber Security related Incidents among BIMSTEC States													
Incident Type / Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Sum
Abusive content	0	0	1	6	98	7	5	2	2	-	-	-	121
Availability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	29	-	-	-	50
Fraud	87	46	59	60	84	53	128	69	86	-	-	-	672
Information gathering	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	4	-	-	-	44
Information security	39	0	0	3	40	1	45	22	11	-	-	-	161
Intrusion Attempts	78	90	62	33	24	43	84	22	9	-	-	-	445
Intrusions	12	10	24	13	34	12	6	46	39	-	-	-	196
Malicious code	20	8	13	7	6	7	16	88	51	-	-	-	216
Other	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	5	-	-	-	8
Sum	236	154	159	125	286	123	284	310	236	-	-	-	1913

Source: Thai CERT: <https://www.thaicert.or.th/statistics/statistics-en.html>

India/Activities Wise - 2018	
Security incidents handled	2,08,456
Security Alerts issued	193
Advisories Published	36
Vulnerability notes published	222
Trainings organised	24
Indian Website Defacements tracked	16,655
India/Security Incidents – Wise - 2018	
Phishing Attacks	454(1%)
Network Scanning/Vulnerable Services	1, 27,481(60%)
Virus/Malicious Code Attacks	61,055(29%)
Website Defacements	16,655(8%)

Institutional Cooperation and Capacity Building within BIMSTEC States

The BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks was established subsequent to the decision taken at the Second BIMSTEC Summit which was held in New Delhi, India on 13 November 2008. The current members of the BNPTT are as follows:

Bangladesh: Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

Bhutan: Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies (RIGSS)

India: Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)

Myanmar: Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS)

Nepal: Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA)

Sri Lanka: Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS)

Thailand: Indian Studies Centre of Chulalongkorn University (ISCCU)

Though social institutions like Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), and Observer Research Foundation (ORF) have been organizing annual conferences on specific issues related to BIMSTEC.

Event	Date and Location	Details
First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks	18-19 February 2010, New Delhi, India	Organized by Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)
Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks	08-09 October 2015, Bangkok, Thailand	Organized by Indian Studies Centre of Chulalongkorn University (ISCCU)
Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks	22 April 2017, Dhaka, Bangladesh	Held at BIMSTEC Secretariat.
Ninth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-Group Anti Money laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism	26 April 2017, Yangon, Myanmar	
The International Conference on Strengthening Cultural Linkages in the Bay of Bengal Region	27-28 May 2017, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.	
The 20th Anniversary of the Establishment of BIMSTEC	07 June 2017	
First Meeting of BIMSTEC Track 1.5 Security Dialogue Forum	22 September 2017, New Delhi, India.	Held in Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi India. The Dialogue deliberated on both traditional and non-traditional security threats to the BIMSTEC Member States and measures necessary to deal with these threats in a collective manner.
The First BIMSTEC Annual Disaster Management Exercise	10-13 October 2017, New Delhi, India.	The main Exercise consisted of three components, i.e., Table Top Exercise (TTX), Field Training Exercises (FTXs) on Earthquake and Flood and an After Action Review (AAR).
The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine	24-25 October 2017, New Delhi, India.	
The First BIMSTEC Experts Group Meeting on Poverty Alleviation	01 November 2017, New Delhi, India.	Experts Group reviewed the implementation status of the Poverty Plan of Actions (PPA) – 2012 and recommended to mainstream the PPA in the national plans and annual budgets of the respective Member States to enable them to eradicate the extreme poverty in all forms by 2030, which is the overall objective of the BIMSTEC-PPA.
The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group	13-14 November 2017, Bangkok, Thailand.	The Meeting discussed about modalities of drafting a BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity.
The Fourth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility	21-22 November 2017, Colombo, Sri Lanka.	The Meeting finalized the draft text of the Memorandum of Association (MoA) on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TTF) and the proposed budget for the BIMSTEC TTF for submission to the Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) for Consideration.

Sixth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation	12-16 December 2017 , Chiang Rai, Thailand	The Meeting reviewed the implementation status of the Nine Identified Common Projects and proposed the following agendas for submission to the First BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agricultural Cooperation to be held in Myanmar in 2018-19, for deepening the agricultural cooperation among the Member States.
The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group on Customs Cooperation	10-11 May 2018, New Delhi, India.	The Meeting reviewed the progress in matters of BIMSTEC customs cooperation and finalized the draft text of the Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters for BIMSTEC Free Trade Area for submission to the 21st Meeting of the BIMSTEC Trade Negotiating Committee.
Fifth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemicals	23 May 2018, Kathman- du, Nepal.	The Meeting reviewed the progress made since the Fourth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemicals held in Yangon, Myanmar on 12 September 2016.
Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime	13-14 August 2018, Dhaka, Bangladesh.	The Meeting deliberated and made recommendations on wide ranging issues in the CTTC Sector.
The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit	30-31 August 2018, Kathmandu, Nepal.	
Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Legal and Law Enforcement Issues	29-30 October 2018, Kathmandu, Nepal.	The Meeting negotiated the BIMSTEC Convention Against Trafficking in Persons.
The Fourth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks	27-28 December 2018, Thimpu, Bhutan	
The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Energy	28-29 March 2019, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.	Meeting finalized the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Coordination Committee (BGICC), which can be considered as one of the important outcomes of the Meeting. The Meeting also highlighted the importance of having the First Meeting of the BGICC before holding the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Energy (2nd EGME).
Second Meeting of the Track 1.5 BIMSTEC Security Dialogue Forum	30-31 July 2019, Dhaka, Bangladesh.	The Dialogue deliberated on both traditional and non-traditional security threats to the BIMSTEC Member States and made recommendations to deal with these threats in a collective manner.

Eleventh Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism	03-04 September 2019, Bangkok, Thailand.	Delegations from all the Member States attended the Meeting. The Meeting discussed to finalize an Action Plan to prevent the Illicit Flow of Funds (IFF) among the BIMSTEC Member States.
Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group on Trade Facilitation	29-30 September 2019, Dhaka, Bangladesh.	Meeting discussed and revised the draft text. The delegates of the Member States agreed on most of the articles of the draft text and suggested some amendments on few articles.
Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC)	10-11 October 2019, Colombo, Sri Lanka.	Meeting deliberated on some important issues, including BIMSTEC Charter, Administrative and Financial matters of the Secretariat.

Compiled By:

Aakriti Vinayak ((Young Professional)

Alakh Ranjan (Young Professional)

Anjali Gupta (Young Professional)

Anurag Sharma (Research Associate)

BIMSTEC Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index 2019

The SDG Index: score signifies a country's position between the worst (0) and the best or target (100) outcomes. Denmark's overall Index score (85) suggest that the country is on average 85% of the way to the best possible outcome across the 17 SDGs.

Rank	Country	Index Score
40	Thailand	73
84	Bhutan	67.6
93	Sri Lanka	65.8
103	Nepal	63.9
110	Myanmar	62.2
115	India	61.1
116	Bangladesh	60.9

Major SDG - Indicators

SDG 1- No Poverty



Quick Facts:

736 Million People still live in extreme poverty. 10% of world's population lives in extreme poverty, down from 36% in 1990. 80% of people living on less than \$ 1.90 are in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Population Headcount Ratio at \$1.90/day (% population)

Estimated percentage of the population that in 2019 is living under the poverty threshold of US\$ 1.90 a day. Estimated using historical estimates of income distribution, projections of population changes by age and educational attainment, and GDP projections.

Source: World Data Lab

Country	Population Headcount Ratio at \$1.90/day (% population)
Bhutan	0.0
Bangladesh	7.2
India	2.9
Myanmar	2.9
Nepal	7.2
Sri Lanka	0.3
Thailand	0.0

SDG 2- Zero Hunger



Quick Facts:

An estimated 821 million people were undernourished in 2017. The majority of the world's hungry people live in developing countries, where 12.9 per cent of the population is undernourished. Poor nutrition causes nearly half (45 per cent) of deaths in children under five – 3.1 million children each year. 149 million children under 5 years of age—22 per cent of the global under-5 population—were still chronically undernourished in 2018.

Prevalence of Undernourishment (Percentage of Population)

The percentage of the population whose food intake is insufficient to meet dietary energy requirements for minimum one year. Dietary energy requirements are defined as the amount of dietary energy required by an individual to maintain body functions, health and normal activity. FAO et al. (2015) report 14.7 million undernourished people in developed regions, which correspond to an average prevalence of 1.17 per cent in the developed regions. We assumed a 1.2 Per cent prevalence rate for each high-income country.(World Bank, 2018) with missing data. Source: FAO

Country	Prevalence of Undernourishment (Percentage of Population)
Bhutan	NA
Bangladesh	15.2
India	14.8
Myanmar	10.5
Nepal	9.5
Sri Lanka	10.9
Thailand	9

SDG 3- Good Health and Well-Being



At least 400 million people have no basic healthcare, and 40 percent lack social protection. More than 1.6 billion people live in fragile settings where protracted crises, combined with weak national capacity to deliver basic health services, present a significant challenge to global health. 7 million people die every year from exposure to fine particles in polluted air.

Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)

The estimated number of women, between the age of 15-49, who die from pregnancy-related causes while pregnant, or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, per 100,000 live births. Source: WHO

Country	Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)
Bhutan	148
Bangladesh	176
India	174
Myanmar	178
Nepal	258
Sri Lanka	30
Thailand	20

Incidence of tuberculosis (per 100,000 population)

The estimated rate of new and relapse cases of tuberculosis in a given year, expressed per 100,000 people. All forms of tuberculosis are included, including cases of people living with HIV.

Source: WHO

Country	Incidence of tuberculosis (per 100,000 population)
Bhutan	134
Bangladesh	221
India	204
Myanmar	358
Nepal	152
Sri Lanka	64
Thailand	156

SDG 4- Quality Education



Enrollment in primary education in developing countries has reached 91 percent. Still, 57 million primary-aged children remain out of school, more than half of them in sub-Saharan Africa. 103 million youth worldwide lack basic literacy skills, more than 60 percent of them are women. In developing countries, one in four girls is not in school.

Net primary school enrolment rate (%)

The percentage of children of the official school age population who are enrolled in primary education.

Source: UNESCO

Country	Net primary school enrolment rate (%)
Bhutan	79.9
Bangladesh	90.5
India	92.3
Myanmar	97.7
Nepal	94.7
Sri Lanka	99.1
Thailand	98

Literacy rate of 15-24 year olds, both sexes (%)

The percentage of youth, aged between 15-24 years old, who can both read and write a short simple statement on everyday life with understanding.

Source: UNESCO

Country	Literacy rate of 15-24 year olds, both sexes (%)
Bhutan	87.3
Bangladesh	93
India	86.1
Myanmar	84.8
Nepal	84.8
Sri Lanka	98.9
Thailand	98.1

SDG 5- Gender Equality



Women earn only 77 cents for every dollar that men get for the same work. 35 percent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence. 2/3rds of developing countries have achieved gender parity in primary education. Only 24 percent of national parliamentarians were women as of November 2018, a small increase from 11.3 percent in 1995.

Ratio of female to male labour force participation rate

The proportion of the female population aged 15 years and older that is economically active, divided by the same proportion for men. The ratio was calculated as: labour force participation rate (female) / labour force participation (male).
Source: ILO

Country	Ratio of female to male labour force participation rate
Bhutan	78.7
Bangladesh	41.6
India	34.2
Myanmar	64.2
Nepal	96.4
Sri Lanka	47.3
Thailand	78.2

Seats held by women in national parliaments (%)

The number of seats held by women in single or lower chambers of national parliaments, expressed as a percentage of all occupied seats. Seats refer to the number of parliamentary mandates, or the number of members of parliament.
Source:

Country	Seats held by women in national parliaments (%)
Bhutan	8.5
Bangladesh	20.3
India	11.8
Myanmar	10.2
Nepal	32.7
Sri Lanka	5.8
Thailand	5.3

SDG 6- Clean Water and Sanitation



71 percent of the global population, 5.2 billion people, had safely managed drinking water in 2015, but 844 million people still lacked basic drinking water. 39 percent of the global population, 2.9 billion people, had safe sanitation in 2015, but 2.3 billion people still lacked basic sanitation. 892 million people practiced open defecation. Water stress affects more than 2 billion people, with this figure projected to increase.

Population using at least basic drinking water services (%)

The percentage of the population using at least a basic service; that is, drinking water from an improved source, provided collection time is not more than 30 minutes for a round trip, including queuing.
Source: JMP

Country	Population using at least basic drinking water services (%)
Bhutan	97.6
Bangladesh	97.3
India	87.6
Myanmar	67.5
Nepal	87.7
Sri Lanka	92.3
Thailand	98.2

SDG 7- Affordable and Clean Energy



Quick Facts :

One in 7 people still lacks electricity, and most of them live in rural areas of the developing world. Energy is the main contributor to climate change; it produces around 60 percent of the greenhouse gases. More than 40 percent of the world's population-3 billion-rely on polluting and unhealthy fuels for cooking

Access to electricity (% population)

The percentage of the total population who has access to electricity.

Source: SE4All

Country	Access to electricity (% population)
Bhutan	100
Bangladesh	75.9
India	84.5
Myanmar	57
Nepal	90.7
Sri Lanka	95.6
Thailand	100

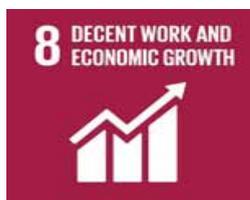
Access to clean fuels & technology for cooking (% population)

The percentage of total population primarily using clean cooking fuels and technologies for cooking. Under WHO guidelines, kerosene is excluded from clean cooking fuels.

Source: SE4All

Country	Access to clean fuels & technology for cooking (% population)
Bhutan	52.5
Bangladesh	17.7
India	41
Myanmar	18.4
Nepal	27.6
Sri Lanka	26.3
Thailand	74.4

SDG 8- Decent Work and Economic Growth



Quick Facts

An estimated 172 million people worldwide were without work in 2018- an unemployment rate of 5 percent. As a result of an expanding labour force, the number of unemployed is projected to increase by 1 million every year and reach 174 million by 2020. Overall, 2 billion workers were in informal employment in 2016, accounting for 61 percent of the world's work force.

Adjusted growth (%)

The growth rate of GDP adjusted to income levels (where rich countries are expected to grow less) and expressed relative to the US growth performance. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy, plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products.

****USA's Adjusted growth= 0.0 percent**

Source: World Bank

Country	Adjusted growth (%)
Bhutan	-0.4
Bangladesh	-0.3
India	1
Myanmar	1.1
Nepal	-3
Sri Lanka	-0.6
Thailand	-0.9

Unemployment rate (% total labour force)

The share of the labour force that is without work but is available and actively seeking employment. The indicator reflects the inability of an economy to generate employment for those persons who want to work but are not doing so.

Source: ILO

Country	Unemployment rate (% total labour force)
Bhutan	2.4
Bangladesh	4.4
India	3.5
Myanmar	0.8
Nepal	2.7
Sri Lanka	4.1
Thailand	1.3

SDG 9- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure



Quick Facts :

More than 4 billion still do not have access to the internet; 90 percent of them are in the developing world. The renewable energy sectors currently employ more than 2.3 million people; the number could reach 20 million by 2030. In developing countries, barely 30 percent of agricultural products undergo industrial processing, compared to 98 percent in high-income countries.

Population using the internet (%)

The percentage of the total population who used the internet from any location in the last three months. Access could be fixed or via a mobile network.
Source: ITU

Country	Population using the internet (%)
Bhutan	48.1
Bangladesh	18
India	34.5
Myanmar	30.7
Nepal	21.4
Sri Lanka	34.1
Thailand	52.9

SDG 11- Sustainable Cities and Communities



Quick facts :

The world's cities occupy just 3 per cent of the Earth's land, but account for 60-80 per cent of energy consumption and 75 per cent of carbon emissions. Rapid urbanization is exerting pressure on fresh water supplies, sewage, the living environment, and public health

Annual mean concentration of particulate matter of less than 2.5 microns of diameter (PM2.5) in urban areas ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) - Air pollution measured as the population-weighted mean annual concentration of PM2.5 for the urban population in a country. PM2.5 is suspended particles measuring less than 2.5 microns in aerodynamic diameter, which are capable of penetrating deep into the respiratory tract and can cause severe health damage.

Source: Brauer et al.

Country	Annual mean concentration of particulate matter of less than 2.5 microns of diameter (PM2.5) in urban areas ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)
Bhutan	37.9
Bangladesh	60.8
India	90.9
Myanmar	35.6
Nepal	99.7
Sri Lanka	11.1
Thailand	26.3

Percentage of the urban population with access to improved drinking water piped

The percentage of the urban population with access to improved drinking water piped on premises. An "improved" drinking-water source is one that, by the nature of its construction and when properly used, adequately protects the source from outside contamination, particularly fecal matter.

Source: WHO and UNICEF

Country	Percentage of the urban population with access to improved drinking water piped
Bhutan	99.0
Bangladesh	37.9
India	68.7
Myanmar	51.9
Nepal	60.0
Sri Lanka	75.4
Thailand	83.9

SGD 13 – Climate Action



Quick Facts :

As of April 2018, 175 parties had ratified the Paris Agreement and 168 parties had communicated their first nationally determined contributions to the UN framework convention on Climate Change Secretariat. As of April 2018, 10 developing countries had successfully completed and submitted their first iteration of their national adaptation plans for responding to climate change.

Emissions of carbon dioxide per capita

Emissions of carbon dioxide per capita that arise from the consumption of energy. This includes emissions due to the consumption of petroleum, natural gas, coal, and also from natural gas flaring.

Source: Oak Ridge National Laboratory

Country	Emissions of carbon dioxide per capita
Bhutan	0.7
Bangladesh	0.5
India	1.7
Myanmar	0.5
Nepal	0.3
Sri Lanka	1
Thailand	4.5

SDG 14 – Life below Water



Oceans cover three quarters of the Earth's surface, contain 97 per cent of the Earth's water, and represent 99 per cent of the living space on the planet by volume. Over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods. Globally, the market value of marine and coastal resources and industries is estimated at \$3 trillion per year or about 5 per cent of global GDP.

Mean percentage area of marine Key Biodiversity Areas

The mean percentage area of marine Key Biodiversity Areas (sites that are important for the global persistence of marine biodiversity) that is covered by protected areas.

Source: Birdlife International et al

Country	Mean percentage area of marine Key Biodiversity Areas
Bhutan	NA
Bangladesh	25.9
India	29
Myanmar	18.9
Nepal	NA
Sri Lanka	43.4
Thailand	64.1

Percentage of fish stocks overexploited or collapsed by EEZ (%)

The percentage of a country's total catch, within its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) that is comprised of species that are overexploited or collapsed weighted by the quality of fish catch data.

Source: Sea around Us & EPI

Country	Percentage of fish stocks overexploited or collapsed by EEZ (%)
Bhutan	NA
Bangladesh	1.7
India	12.4
Myanmar	19.7
Nepal	NA
Sri Lanka	18.2
Thailand	55.6

SDG- 15- Life on Land



Quick Facts :

Around 1.6 billion people depend on forest for their livelihood. Forests are home to more than 80 percent of all the terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects. Nature based climate solutions can contribute about a third of CO2 reduction by 2030

Mean area that is protected in terrestrial sites important to biodiversity (%)

The mean percentage area of terrestrial Key Biodiversity Areas (sites that are important for the global persistence of biodiversity) that is covered by protected areas. Source: Birdlife International et al.

Country	Mean area that is protected in terrestrial sites important to biodiversity (%)
Bhutan	42.9
Bangladesh	48
India	26.1
Myanmar	22.9
Nepal	54.6
Sri Lanka	49.8
Thailand	71.7

SDG-17- Partnership for the Goals



Quick Facts :

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) says achieving SDGs will require US\$ 5 trillion to US\$ 7 trillion in annual investment. Total official development assistance reached US\$ 147.2 billion in 2017. In 2017, international remittances totaled US\$ 155.5 billion, up 78 percent from previous year.

Government health and education spending (% GDP)

Total general (local, regional and central) government expenditure on health and education (current, capital, and transfers), expressed as a percentage of GDP. Source: UNESCO; WHO

Country	Government health and education spending (% GDP)
Bhutan	9.9
Bangladesh	2.4
India	4.7
Myanmar	1.0
Nepal	4.8
Sri Lanka	3.8
Thailand	6.8

About the VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

The Vivekananda International Foundation is an independent non-partisan institution that conducts research and analysis on domestic and international issues, and offers a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution. Some of India's leading practitioners from the fields of security, military, diplomacy, government, academia and media have come together to generate ideas and stimulate action on national security issues.

The defining feature of VIF lies in its provision of core institutional support which enables the organisation to be flexible in its approach and proactive in changing circumstances, with a long-term focus on India's strategic, developmental and civilisational interests. The VIF aims to channelise fresh insights and decades of experience harnessed from its faculty into fostering actionable ideas for the nation's stakeholders.

Since its inception, VIF has pursued quality research and scholarship and made efforts to highlight issues in governance, and strengthen national security. This is being actualised through numerous activities like seminars, round tables, interactive dialogues, Vimarsh (public discourse), conferences and briefings. The publications of VIF form lasting deliverables of VIF's aspiration to impact on the prevailing discourse on issues concerning India's national interest.



VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

3, San Martin Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi – 110021

Phone: +91-11-24121764, 24106698

Email: info@vifindia.org,

Website: <https://www.vifindia.org>

Follow us on [twitter@vifindia](https://twitter.com/vifindia)