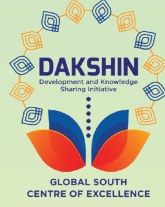




RIS

**Research and Information System
for Developing Countries**

विकासशील देशों की अनुसन्धान एवं सूचना प्रणाली



MoU Signing Ceremony & Roundtable on India-Thailand Cooperation in Promoting South-South Development

27 February 2026

Report

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Agenda

Time (IST)	Details
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	<p>Welcome Remarks</p> <p>Professor Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS</p> <p>Dr Siriporn Jantanasakulwong, Dean, Faculty of Political Science, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand</p>
3:15 pm – 3:20 pm	<p>Keynote Address</p> <p>Mr Prashant Agrawal, Additional Secretary (Southern Division), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India; Former Ambassador of India to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic</p>
3:20 pm – 3:25 pm	MoU Signing Ceremony
3:25 pm – 4:00 pm	<p>Roundtable Discussion</p> <p>Moderator: Dr Pankaj Vashisht, Coordinator, DAKSHIN, RIS</p> <p>Speakers</p> <p>Dr Atul Kaushik, GDC Fellow, RIS</p> <p>Dr Titipol Phakdeewanich, Director, Regional Center for Human Rights Study and Coordination, Faculty of Political Science, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand</p> <p>Dr Monika Kochar, Advisor-Health, DAKSHIN, RIS</p> <p>Mr Abhimanyu Saxena, Head, Health Systems Strengthening, UNDP India</p> <p>Open Discussion</p>
4:00 pm onwards	High Tea

Introduction

The Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), through its initiative DAKSHIN - Global South Centre of Excellence, hosted the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand on 27 February 2026. The event was followed by a closed-door roundtable discussion bringing together scholars, policymakers, and institutional representatives to explore potential areas of collaboration between India and Thailand.

The engagement aimed to strengthen academic and policy cooperation under the broader framework of South-South Cooperation, with particular focus on knowledge exchange in the areas of health systems, agriculture, and digital technologies. The event also served as a platform to discuss practical pathways for collaboration in digital public infrastructure, health supply chains, and research partnerships.



The roundtable discussion emphasized how partnerships between institutions in the Global South can foster mutual learning, address shared development challenges, and promote evidence-based policymaking. A key theme was the complementarity between India's digital public infrastructure and Thailand's strong public health systems, creating opportunities for collaborative research, pilot projects, and policy dialogue.

Summary of Discussions by Speaker

Professor Sachin Kumar Sharma

Director General, RIS

Professor Sharma welcomed the delegation from Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand and highlighted the strategic importance of academic cooperation between India and Thailand. He emphasized that DAKSHIN was established to strengthen South-South Cooperation by promoting knowledge exchange, best practices, and joint research across countries of the Global South.

He noted that RIS has built an extensive global network of think tanks and academic institutions and is working across several sectors including health, agriculture, digital technologies, and connectivity.

He stressed that the MoU should translate into concrete collaborative activities such as joint research, academic exchanges, and knowledge sharing initiatives rather than remaining a symbolic agreement.

Dr Siriporn Jantanasakulwong

Dean, Faculty of Political Science, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand

Dr Siriporn expressed appreciation for the opportunity to collaborate with RIS and emphasized the importance of partnerships between institutions in the Global South. She noted that Ubon Ratchathani University, located in north-eastern Thailand, plays an important role in regional engagement and cross-border cooperation.

“South–South Cooperation is about learning from each other's experiences and translating knowledge into practical solutions for shared challenges.”

“This partnership represents an important step toward strengthening academic collaboration and long-term cooperation among institutions of the Global South.”

She highlighted that the collaboration would create opportunities for long-term research partnerships, academic exchanges, and policy dialogue across areas such as sustainable development, governance, and regional cooperation.

Mr Prashant Agrawal

Additional Secretary (Southern Division), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

Mr Agrawal delivered the keynote address and highlighted the deep historical and cultural ties between India and Thailand, noting that the relationship is anchored in shared civilization links and strong people-to-people connections.

He emphasized that Thailand plays a key role in India's Act East Policy and is an important partner in regional forums such as ASEAN and BIMSTEC. He also noted the growing connectivity between the two countries, including increasing travel and academic exchange.

He pointed out that collaboration in sectors such as health, agriculture, and digital technologies aligns with broader regional priorities and can contribute to strengthening resilience and development across the Global South.

Mr Agrawal also highlighted emerging opportunities in digital cooperation, including digital payments, artificial intelligence, and digital public infrastructure.

Dr Atul Kaushik

GDC Fellow, RIS

Dr Kaushik discussed possible pathways for institutional collaboration between RIS and Ubon Ratchathani University. He highlighted the potential for expanding cooperation within the ASEAN region and leveraging Thailand's strategic position as a gateway to Southeast Asia.

He emphasized opportunities for collaboration in agriculture technology, digital payments, and research exchanges. In particular, he highlighted the potential integration of digital payment systems

"India and Thailand share not only civilizational links but also a forward-looking partnership that can shape cooperation across the Global South."

"There are immense possibilities for collaboration if we combine academic research with policy engagement to support regional development."

and ongoing discussions on cross-border payment connectivity under the Nexus initiative.

Dr Kaushik also emphasized the importance of research that can inform government policies in areas such as digital systems, agriculture productivity, and financial connectivity.

“Academic collaboration must not only generate knowledge but also support communities and regional development.”

Dr Titipol Phakdeewanich

Director, Regional Center for Human Rights Study and Coordination, Faculty of Political Science, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand

Dr Titipol highlighted the role of universities in fostering regional knowledge networks and promoting community-oriented development. He noted that Ubon Ratchathani University has strong engagement with local communities and regional institutions.

He emphasized the potential for collaboration with RIS on research related to agriculture, digital innovation, and social development. He also highlighted the importance of exploring how artificial intelligence and digital technologies can support sustainable agricultural practices.

Dr Monika Kochar

Advisor-Health, DAKSHIN, RIS

“The opportunity before us is not to replicate each other’s systems but to complement each other’s strengths.”

Dr Kochar highlighted the complementarities between India’s and Thailand’s health systems. She explained that while Thailand has built a strong primary healthcare system supported by robust financing mechanisms, India has focused extensively on building digital health infrastructure and scalable public health platforms.

She discussed India’s experience with digital health systems such as the National Digital Health Mission and digital public infrastructure platforms that enable interoperable health records, provider registries, and integrated health services.

Dr Kochar proposed three areas for collaboration:

- Institutionalized knowledge exchange through conferences, fellowships, and academic engagement.

- Projects to test collaborative innovations in health systems.
- Joint research and policy papers to support evidence-based policymaking.

“Digital public goods can transform health systems when they are designed as scalable and open platforms.”

Mr Abhimanyu Saxena

Head, Health Systems Strengthening, UNDP India

Mr Saxena discussed India’s experience in digitalizing health supply chains, particularly through the Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN). He explained that the platform digitized vaccine stock management and cold chain monitoring across India, improving transparency and efficiency. He noted that eVIN supported real-time monitoring of vaccine stocks and temperature control across approximately 30,000 cold chain points, significantly improving supply chain management and reducing vaccine wastage.

He emphasized that open-source digital platforms can be adapted across countries and sectors and highlighted the importance of building interoperable systems supported by strong governance frameworks.

Key Takeaways

The roundtable discussion generated several important recommendations for future collaboration.

- **Institutionalize India-Thailand Knowledge Exchange:** Both institutions should organize regular conferences, workshops, and fellowships to facilitate exchange of expertise in health, agriculture, and digital technologies.
- **Promote Joint Research and Policy Studies:** Collaborative research initiatives should be developed to analyze digital health systems, supply chain management, and digital public infrastructure in both countries.
- **Develop Projects in Digital Health:** Pilot projects could be initiated to explore adaptation of digital supply chain systems, telemedicine platforms, and health data interoperability frameworks.
- **Expand Cooperation in Digital Public Infrastructure:** The collaboration should explore opportunities to study and adapt India's digital public infrastructure models including digital payments and health data platforms.
- **Strengthen South-South Learning Platforms:** India and Thailand can jointly support capacity-building initiatives and knowledge exchange programs for other countries in the Global South.
- **Facilitate Regional Collaboration:** The partnership should engage with regional platforms such as ASEAN and BIMSTEC to promote wider cooperation in areas including digital connectivity, public health, and agriculture.

Final Reflection

The MoU between DAKSHIN and Ubon Ratchathani University marks an important step toward strengthening academic and policy cooperation between India and Thailand. The dialogue highlighted the strong complementarities between the two countries, particularly in digital innovation and public health systems.

The discussions demonstrated how partnerships between institutions in the Global South can move beyond traditional academic exchanges to support practical solutions for development challenges. By combining India's experience in digital public infrastructure with Thailand's strengths in health system governance and regional engagement, the collaboration has the potential to generate innovative models for other countries facing similar challenges.

More importantly, the dialogue reinforced the broader vision of South-South Cooperation, a framework where countries learn from each other's experiences, co-develop solutions, and collectively contribute to building resilient and inclusive systems.

As the partnership progresses, translating dialogue into concrete research initiatives, pilot programs, and policy engagement will be critical in realizing the full potential of this collaboration.





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RIS specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. It is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues. The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. Through its following centres/forums, RIS promotes policy dialogue and coherence on regional and international economic issues.



The word “DAKSHIN” (दक्षिण) is of Sanskrit origin, meaning “South.” The Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence in November 2023. The initiative was inspired by the deliberations of Global South leaders during the Voice of the Global South Summits. DAKSHIN stands for Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative. Hosted at the RIS, DAKSHIN has established linkages with leading think tanks and universities across the Global South and is building a dynamic network of scholars working on Global South issues.



AIC at RIS has been working to strengthen India’s strategic partnership with ASEAN in its realisation of the ASEAN Community. AIC at RIS undertakes research, policy advocacy and regular networking activities with relevant organisations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN countries, with the aim of providing policy inputs, up-to-date information, data resources and sustained interaction, for strengthening ASEAN-India partnership.



CMEC has been established at RIS under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPS&W), Government of India. CMEC is a collaboration between RIS and Indian Ports Association (IPA). It has been mandated to act as an advisory/technological arm of MoPSW to provide the analytical support on policies and their implementation.



FITM is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Ayush and RIS. It has been established with the objective of undertaking policy research on economy, intellectual property rights (IPRs) trade, sustainability and international cooperation in traditional medicines. FITM provides analytical support to the Ministry of Ayush on policy and strategy responses on emerging national and global developments.



BEF aims to serve as a dedicated platform for fostering dialogue on promoting the concept in the Indian Ocean and other regions. The forum focuses on conducting studies on the potential, prospects and challenges of blue economy; providing regular inputs to practitioners in the government and the private sectors; and promoting advocacy for its smooth adoption in national economic policies.



FIDC, has been engaged in exploring nuances of India’s development cooperation programme, keeping in view the wider perspective of South-South Cooperation in the backdrop of international development cooperation scenario. It is a tripartite initiative of the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, academia and civil society organisations.



FIRD aims to harness the full potential and synergy between science and technology, diplomacy, foreign policy and development cooperation in order to meet India’s development and security needs. It is also engaged in strengthening India’s engagement with the international system and on key global issues involving science and technology.



As part of its work programme, RIS has been deeply involved in strengthening economic integration in the South Asia region. In this context, the role of the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) is very important. SACEPS is a network organisation engaged in addressing regional issues of common concerns in South Asia.



Knowledge generated endogenously among the Southern partners can help in consolidation of stronger common issues at different global policy fora. The purpose of NeST is to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks for collaboratively generating, systematising, consolidating and sharing knowledge on South South Cooperation approaches for international development.



DST-Satellite Centre for Policy Research on STI Diplomacy at RIS aims to advance policy research at the intersection of science, technology, innovation (STI) and diplomacy, in alignment with India’s developmental priorities and foreign policy objectives.

— Policy research to shape the international development agenda —

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