



SPECIAL  
ISSUE

RIS Diary  
— Research shaping the development agenda



## The Lynchpins for Re-invigorating the World Trade Organization: WTO Reforms and Dispute Settlement Reforms



*Brainstorming session 'The Lynchpins for Re-invigorating the World Trade Organization: WTO Reforms and Dispute Settlement Reforms' in full swing.*

RIS organised the first in a series of brainstorming sessions on “The Lynchpins for Re-invigorating the World Trade Organization: WTO Reforms and Dispute Settlement Reforms” on 5 January 2026 to deliberate on reform priorities ahead of the WTO’s 14th Ministerial Conference.

The event featured focused discussions on WTO reform and dispute settlement reform, bringing together policymakers and experts for dialogue on strengthening the multilateral trading system.

Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, highlighted the need to build coherent Global South perspectives on WTO reforms, while Mr. Amitabh Kumar, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, highlighted the importance of preserving multilateralism, Special & Differential Treatment (S&DT), consensus-based decision-making, and restoring the WTO’s two-tier dispute settlement mechanism for ensuring credibility and predictability in global trade governance.

Mr. Rajeev Kher, Distinguished Fellow at RIS and moderator of the first session, observed that debates on WTO reform were taking place amid weakening faith in rules-based systems globally. Dr. Harsha Vardhana Singh, Chairman, IKDHVAJ Advisers, and Dr. Atul Kaushik, GDC Fellow at RIS, discussed the importance of preserving core WTO principles such as MFN and consensus for maintaining predictability in the multilateral trading system.



Amb. Jayant Dasgupta, former Ambassador to the WTO, cautioned against erosion of consensus and emphasised coalition-building around S&DT. Mr. Dammu Ravi highlighted the need for pragmatic engagement with both developing and major economies. Dr. Pritam Banerjee stressed the importance of defining guardrails for plurilateral arrangements. Contributions during the discussion also came from Mr. Anwarul Hoda, Ms. Amrita Narlikar, Dr. V. S. Seshadri, Dr. Sabyasachi Saha, Dr. Shishir

Shrotriya, and Mr. Mukesh Bhatnagar.

In the session on dispute settlement reform, Ms. Aparna Ray, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, emphasised the need for a proactive developing-country approach to DS reform. Dr. Atul Kaushik reviewed the evolution of DSU negotiations and raised questions regarding India's long-term dispute settlement strategy. Mr. Anwarul Hoda supported India joining MPIA as an interim arrangement, while

Dr. V. S. Seshadri disagreed, arguing that adjudication reform should follow substantive WTO rule reforms. Prof. Prabhash Ranjan supported preserving a standing Appellate Body and orthodox treaty interpretation principles.

Concluding the session, Prof. Sheela Rai highlighted concerns regarding MPIA's impact on institutional coherence and stressed the importance of preserving the integrity of the WTO dispute settlement system. ■

## Dialogue on Agriculture Negotiations and Public Stockholding



*Agriculture Negotiations and Public Stockholding for Food Security.*

RIS organised the second Brainstorming Series on "Agriculture Negotiations and Public Stockholding for Food Security" on 9 January 2026 ahead of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14). The discussion brought together policymakers, trade negotiators, WTO experts, and researchers to deliberate on the future of WTO agriculture negotiations.

Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, welcomed participants and outlined the

objectives of the series. Shri Amitabh Kumar, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Government of India, emphasised the need for meaningful outcomes on Public Stockholding (PSH), preservation of Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT), and simplification of notification requirements. Delivering the keynote address, Prof. Ramesh Chand, Member, NITI Aayog, highlighted the urgency of credible outcomes at MC14 amid global economic uncertainty. Dr. Edwini

Kessie, Director, Agriculture and Commodities Division, WTO, provided an overview of ongoing agriculture negotiations.

During the discussion, Mr. J.S. Deepak, former Ambassador to the WTO, informed against limited outcomes due to entrenched differences. Ms. Ranja Sengupta, Senior Researcher, Third World Network, stressed resolving mandated issues first and avoiding bilateral approaches in agriculture. Ms. R.V. Anuradha, Partner, Clarus Law Associates, underscored

preserving S&DT and strengthening developing-country coalitions on PSH, SSM, and Cotton. Mr. Abhijit Das, WTO expert, warned against introducing new issues at MC14 that could dilute existing mandates and policy flexibilities for food security.

Session II of the Brainstorming Series on 'Public Stockholding for Food Security,' focused on Public Stockholding (PSH) as a key development and food security issue within the WTO framework. Chaired by Amb. Jayant Dasgupta, former Ambassador to the WTO, the session underscored the importance of PSH in protecting food security and rural livelihoods in developing countries.

Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, opened the session with a presentation on the significance of PSH, tracing the evolution of WTO disciplines, highlighting methodological concerns in support calculations, and noting that nearly 80 WTO Members continue to seek a



*Deliberations in progress on 'Public Stockholding for Food Security.'*

permanent solution on PSH ahead of MC14.

Among the discussants, Mr. Anwarul Hoda, former Deputy Director-General of the WTO, highlighted asymmetries in the Agreement on Agriculture that favour developed countries and noted that strategic trade-offs may be required for a permanent solution. Dr. Edwini Kessie, Director, Agriculture and Commodities Division, WTO,

outlined the differing positions of Members and the complexity of negotiations. Ms. Nidhi Srivastava, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India to the WTO, stressed that MC14 must deliver on PSH without diluting mandates through broader reform linkages. Ms. Vahini Naidu, Programme Coordinator, South Centre, emphasised coalition-building and narrative clarity in advancing a permanent PSH solution. ■



*Panelists and the researchers in one frame during the first session on Agriculture Negotiations and Public Stockholding for Food Security.*

## E-Commerce Moratorium and New Landscape of Trade, Investment, and Services



*Shri Ganesh Dutt Lohani, addressing the session.*

As part of the Brainstorming Series ahead of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14), Research and Information System for Developing Countries organised the fourth brainstorming session on “E-Commerce Moratorium and New Landscape of Trade, Investment, and Services” on 30 January 2026. The discussion brought together policymakers, trade experts, academics, and practitioners to deliberate on the implications of the WTO e-commerce moratorium for developing countries and the evolving digital trade landscape.

In his welcome remarks, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS, emphasised that the e-commerce moratorium has evolved beyond a technical trade issue into a broader question of development, digital sovereignty, and policy space. Prof. Sharma also stressed upon the need for balanced digital trade rules that support innovation

without constraining development pathways for countries still building digital capacities.

Chairing the session, Ambassador J.S. Deepak, former Permanent Representative of India to the WTO, Geneva, highlighted the need for a strategic reassessment of the moratorium that balances digital trade liberalisation with domestic industry protection, policy flexibility, and revenue concerns. Shri Ganesh Dutt Lohani, former Minister (Customs), Permanent Mission of India to the WTO, Geneva, underscored the importance of evidence-based decision-making as WTO Members deliberate on the future of the moratorium amid rapid digital trade expansion.

Joining online, Mr. Aashish Chandorkar, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India to the WTO, Geneva, observed that discussions since MC12 have advanced under a dedicated work programme,

making the coming weeks critical for digital trade negotiations. Prof. Pritam Banerjee, Head, Centre for WTO Studies, IIFT, stressed the need to clearly define digital trade and maintain a temporary moratorium while clarifying global rules. Shri Dammu Ravi, former Secretary (ER), Ministry of External Affairs, highlighted the importance of aligning digital trade decisions with India’s economic realities and domestic innovation ecosystem.

Mr. Abhijit Das, former Head, Centre for WTO Studies, IIFT, called for a balanced and pragmatic negotiating strategy to safeguard national interests, while Mr. Deepak Maheshwari, Senior Policy Advisor, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), highlighted how digitalisation has transformed trade flows and stressed the need for stronger data and evidence to guide future policy decisions on the moratorium. ■



*Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, addressing the session 'New Landscape of Trade, Investment and Services: Global Perspectives'*

As part of its Brainstorming Series ahead of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14), Research and Information System for Developing Countries organised a session on “New Landscape of Trade, Investment and Services: Global Perspectives” on 30 January 2026 at India Habitat Centre. The discussion brought together trade economists, policy experts, and researchers to deliberate on changing global trade patterns, investment flows, and emerging opportunities for the Global South.

Chairing the session, Professor Nagesh Kumar highlighted the importance of timely and evidence-based research in strengthening developing countries’ negotiating positions at the WTO, recalling lessons from the Cancun Ministerial Conference of 2003.

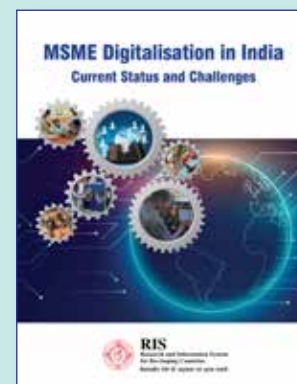
During his presentation, Professor S.K. Mohanty emphasised the growing convergence between the Global North and South in trade and FDI, while highlighting the increasing role of developing economies in technology-intensive exports and the need for targeted international support to sustain

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## Report Launch: MSME Digitalisation in India: Current Status and Challenges

RIS organised the launch of the report “MSME Digitalisation in India: Current Status & Challenges,” which examines patterns, drivers, and constraints of digital adoption among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in India. Delivering the opening remarks, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS, highlighted MSME digitalisation as a major driver of economic growth, employment generation, and financial inclusion. Prof. Sharma noted that MSMEs contribute nearly 30 per cent to India’s GDP and stressed the significant potential for expanding digital adoption across the sector. He emphasised that digital tools can improve productivity, market access, financial inclusion, and business resilience in an evolving economic landscape.

Presenting the report, Dr. Pankaj Vashisht, Associate Professor, RIS, outlined findings from a primary survey of 2,882 MSMEs across 14 states and five sectors. He noted the widespread adoption of basic digital tools, particularly digital payments, driven by India’s digital public infrastructure. However, he highlighted uneven adoption of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, e-commerce platforms, and supply chain management tools. Dr. Vashisht also emphasised the positive link between digitalisation and enterprise growth, while identifying barriers such as low awareness, skill gaps, cost constraints, and concerns related to trust and data security. He called for targeted policy interventions focused on awareness, skill development, affordability, and trust-building to ensure inclusive digital transformation of MSMEs. ■



## Brainstorming Series on Special & Differential Treatment and Trade & Sustainability



*Fifth Brainstorming Series, Session I 'Special and Differential Treatment' on 9th February 2026 at Tamarind Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.*

As part of its Brainstorming Series ahead of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14), Research and Information System for Developing Countries organised discussions on 'Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT)' and 'Trade and Sustainability,' 9th February 2026.

In his introductory remarks, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, emphasised that S&DT remains central to the development dimension of the WTO and cautioned that emerging reform proposals on eligibility and graduation criteria could significantly shape the future development agenda at MC14.

The session on S&DT was chaired by Dr. V.S. Seshadri, former Ambassador, who stressed the need to balance multilateral trade disciplines with adequate development policy space for developing economies. Mr. Abhijit Das, International Trade Policy and WTO Expert, traced the evolution of S&DT from the GATT era to the WTO framework and highlighted

continuing debates on eligibility, graduation, and needs-based approaches.

Mr. Shashank Priya, former Special Secretary, DPIIT, Government of India, advocated a pragmatic and sector-specific approach linking S&DT to implementation capacities. Mr. Sudhanshu Pandey, former Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, highlighted the importance of preserving treaty-based flexibilities while strengthening coalition-building among developing countries. Mr.

Dammu Ravi, former Secretary (ER), Ministry of External Affairs, stressed that S&DT must evolve dynamically while remaining foundational to the WTO framework. Ms. Ranja Sengupta, Senior Researcher, Third World Network, cautioned against needs-based fragmentation that could weaken policy tools in sectors such as agriculture. Dr. Murali Kallummall, Professor and Head of Administration, Centre for WTO Studies, highlighted emerging challenges related to data gaps and technological inequalities in future S&DT discussions.



*Panel posing for a group photograph post session.*

The session on “Trade and Sustainability” was chaired by Dr. Mohan Kumar, Professor and Dean, Jindal School of International Affairs, who reflected on WTO environmental negotiations and emerging measures such as the EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). Ms. R.V. Anuradha, Co-Founder, Clarus Associates, mapped evolving discussions on sustainability, trade, and multilateral environmental agreements, including initiatives

on plastics pollution and fossil fuel subsidy reforms. Mr. Aashish Chandorkar, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India, Geneva, outlined developments at the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment and plurilateral sustainability discussions. Mr. Anil Jauhri, Visiting Fellow, RIS, stressed the importance of standards, conformity assessment, and domestic certification systems.

Ms. Sangeeta Godbole, former Indian Revenue Service officer,

highlighted India’s Carbon Credit Trading Scheme and emphasised safeguarding India’s carbon space under the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR-RC). Ms. Arpita Mukherjee, Professor, ICRIER, underlined the labour dimension of sustainability, while Ms. Shiny Pradeep, Associate Professor, CTIL, highlighted the importance of bilateral engagement and international legal principles in shaping sustainability-related trade outcomes. ■

## Dialogue on Industrial Policy and Fisheries Subsidies



*RIS Brainstorming Series for MC14, WTO: Dialogue on Industrial Policy.*

As part of its Brainstorming Series ahead of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14), Research and Information System for Developing Countries organised discussions on ‘Industrial Policy’ and ‘WTO Negotiations on Additional Provisions on Fisheries Subsidies,’ on 11th Feb 2026.

In his welcome remarks, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, highlighted the

resurgence of state-led industrial strategies globally, referring to initiatives such as the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act, China’s industrial expansion, and India’s renewed manufacturing push. He stressed that subsidy rules, including fisheries subsidies, remain central to WTO debates ahead of MC14.

Session I on ‘Industrial Policy at a Crossroads: WTO Rules and Developmental Constraints’ was

moderated by Prof. Nagesh Kumar, Director and Chief Executive, ISID. Opening the discussion, Dr. Pritam Banerjee, Head, Centre for WTO Studies, highlighted structural asymmetries in global trade and cautioned that stricter subsidy disciplines could disproportionately constrain late industrialisers, particularly in emerging sectors such as EVs and renewable technologies.

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## Roundtable on Plurilateral Agreements at the WTO



*Panellists obliging the shutterbugs after the Brainstorming session on 'Plurilateral Agreements at the WTO'.*

As part of the RIS Brainstorming Series in the lead-up to the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14), Research and Information System for Developing Countries organised a roundtable discussion on “Plurilateral Agreements at the WTO” on 22 January 2026. The discussion brought together policymakers, former negotiators, academics, and trade experts to examine the growing role of plurilateral initiatives and Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs) within the WTO framework and their implications for multilateralism, development priorities, and institutional governance.

Opening the discussion, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, highlighted the fragmentation of the global trading system and the risks posed to development concerns. Shri Rajesh Agarwal, Commerce Secretary, Government of India, stressed that debates on plurilateralism are closely linked to WTO reform and the

need to preserve consensus-based decision-making. Mr. Amit Yadav, former Secretary, Government of India, noted the rapid rise of JSIs and raised questions regarding India’s participation and negotiating interests.

Ms. Shailja Singh, CTIL, argued that JSIs lack a clear legal basis under WTO law and risk sidelining agriculture and development priorities. Mr. Ujal Singh Bhatia, former Ambassador to the WTO, called for a more forward-looking Indian approach combining defence of multilateralism with constructive reform engagement. Dr. Harsha Vardhana Singh, former WTO Deputy Director-General and President of IKDHAVJ Advisors, stated that plurilateral agreements should be assessed case-by-case, focusing on their impact on India’s WTO rights and obligations.

Mr. Abhijit Das, International Trade Policy Expert, cautioned that unchecked plurilateralism could weaken negotiating

leverage for developing countries. Ms. Kinda Mohamadieh, Third World Network, warned against plurilaterals replacing multilateral negotiations. Chairing the second session, Mr. Anup Wadhawan, former Commerce Secretary, described the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement as a critical test case for WTO plurilateralism.

Dr. Prabhash Ranjan, Jindal Global Law School, highlighted treaty law concerns surrounding Annex 4 incorporation, while Mr. Anwar H. Shaik, former Chair of the WTO-IBT Committee, cautioned against the indirect expansion of investment disciplines. Mr. G.D. Lohani, former Permanent Representative to the WTO, raised concerns over institutional legitimacy, and Mr. Vaibhav Rundwal, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, stressed the need to balance investment facilitation with regulatory autonomy. ■

# International Conference on Multilateralism Under Pressure - Roadmap to the WTO Ministerial Conference



*Inaugural Session at international conference on 'Multilateralism Under Pressure - Roadmap to the WTO Ministerial Conference' on 21st March 2026 at Taj Mahal, New Delhi.*

Research and Information System for Developing Countries, RIS, organised a major international conference titled “Multilateralism Under Pressure: Roadmap to the WTO Ministerial Conference” on 21 March 2026 at Taj Mahal Palace Hotel to launch the RIS World Trade and Development Report 2026 (WTDR 2026). The conference brought together policymakers, diplomats, trade experts, academics, researchers, and students to deliberate on the future of the multilateral trading system ahead of the WTO’s 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Cameroon.

The inaugural session began with welcome remarks by Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, who highlighted the importance of the conference at a time when the WTO faces significant internal and external pressures. He underlined the relevance of RIS’s

flagship WTDR 2026 as an analytical contribution aimed at strengthening evidence-based policy discussions ahead of MC14. Amb. Jayant Dasgupta, Member, RIS Governing Council and former Ambassador to the WTO, reaffirmed the importance of preserving the WTO’s core principles such as Most Favoured Nation (MFN), consensus-based decision-making, and Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) to ensure fairness and inclusivity for developing countries.

In his special address, Ambassador Sudhakar Dalela, Secretary (ER), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, emphasised that the WTO remains central to economic multilateralism despite mounting geopolitical and technological disruptions. He stressed the importance of rebuilding trust in multilateral institutions and noted that the

Global South is emerging as a major driver of global production and trade networks. Dr. Senthil Pandian C., Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the WTO, highlighted the WTO’s role in ensuring predictability, transparency, and stability in the global economy. He underlined the importance of restoring the dispute settlement mechanism and reviving the Appellate Body while adopting a constructive and evidence-based negotiating approach at MC14.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr. Arvind Virmani, Member, NITI Aayog, highlighted that India’s long-term growth strategy should leverage its comparative advantage in human capital while complementing the financial and technological strengths of advanced economies. He stressed the importance of “Skill for India, Skill for the World” as a pathway



*Launch of RIS World Trade and Development Report (WTDR) 2026 at International Conference on 'Multilateralism Under Pressure: Roadmap to the WTO Ministerial Conference' .*

for inclusive growth. Dr. Prabir De delivered the vote of thanks and highlighted the collaborative efforts behind the WTDR 2026 publication.

WTDR 2026, RIS's flagship publication since 2003 ahead of WTO Ministerial Conferences, provides analytical and policy perspectives on major trade issues including WTO reform, agriculture, fisheries subsidies, plurilateral agreements, industrial policy, sustainability, and S&DT. The report draws on contributions from

39 trade experts and the outcomes of 12 brainstorming sessions involving over 100 negotiators, academics, diplomats, and practitioners.

Session I on "Broader Issues at the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference" was chaired by Mr. Rajeev Kher, Distinguished Fellow, RIS. Dr. Harsha Vardhana Singh, Chairman, IKDHVAJ Advisors LLP and former WTO Deputy Director General, stressed that WTO reform must preserve core multilateral principles such as inclusiveness, fairness, and

predictability. Mr. Atul Kaushik, GDC Fellow, RIS, highlighted the need to restore a functional dispute settlement system, especially the appellate mechanism. Prof. S. K. Mohanty, Distinguished Fellow, RIS, highlighted growing imbalances in services trade and development finance, while Mr. Abhijit Das, International Trade Policy Expert stressed that S&DT must remain integral to preserving development policy space. Ms. R. V. Anuradha, Clarus Law



*Session I on Broader Issues at the 14th WTO MC at conference on 'Multilateralism Under Pressure - Roadmap to the WTO Ministerial Conference' .*

Associates, emphasised the need for multilateral discussions on trade, sustainability, and environmental measures, while Prof. Shailja Singh highlighted concerns that Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs) should not undermine multilateral foundations.

Session II on “Specific Issues at the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference” was chaired by Ambassador J. S. Deepak, former Permanent

Representative of India to the WTO. Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma stressed that WTO agriculture negotiations remain at a critical juncture, especially on mandated issues such as food security. Dr. Suvayan Neogi highlighted the importance of securing a permanent solution on Public Stockholding (PSH) for food security. Prof. Mukesh Bhatnagar and Dr. Pankhuri Gaur highlighted the need for fisheries

subsidies disciplines that balance sustainability and development concerns. Mr. Anwar Hussain Shaik cautioned against incorporating the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement under Annex 4, while Dr. Amit Kumar highlighted concerns surrounding the WTO e-commerce moratorium, including revenue losses, policy

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*Session II on Specific Issues at the 14th WTO MC at the conference on ‘Multilateralism Under Pressure - Roadmap to the WTO Ministerial Conference’ on 21st March 2026 at Taj Mahal, New Delhi.*



*Session III: Negotiations Strategies at the WTO: Lessons from the Past at conference on ‘Multilateralism Under Pressure - Roadmap to the WTO Ministerial Conference’ on 21st March 2026 at Taj Mahal, New Delhi.*

## Handover Ceremony of BRICS Think Tank Network for Finance (BTTNF)

RIS, hosted a meeting with the delegation from Brazil’s Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) to review the progress of the BRICS Think Tanks Network for Finance (BTTNF) and discuss future areas of cooperation under the BRICS framework.

Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, highlighted RIS’s contributions to the BRICS process during India’s presidencies in 2012, 2016, and 2021, and appreciated IPEA’s effective coordination of BTTNF activities during the Brazilian presidency. He also underscored RIS’s contribution to the two BTTNF reports on sovereign credit ratings and climate finance.

Prof. Luciana Servo and Dr. Walter Desidera emphasised the importance of greater participation



*Launch of the IEPA’S Report during Handover Ceremony of BTTNF.*

by new BRICS members and continued focus on local currency payments, cross-border digital payments, and financial cooperation. Dr. Priyadarshi Dash and Dr. Sabyasachi Saha highlighted RIS’s engagement in BTTNF, BRICS Academic Forum, and Civil Forum activities. The meeting also witnessed the launch

of two BTTNF reports on sovereign credit ratings and national climate finance assessment. Dr. Amol Baxi presented the vote of thanks. RIS research team including Dr. Sushil Kumar, Assistant Professor, Mr. Avinash Handa, Ms. Vaishali Chaudhary and Ms. Shrinidhi Pareek joined the launching of the BTTNF reports. ■

## Multilateralism in the Age of AI: Shaping the Future of Global Health Governance

The panel session “Multilateralism in the Age of AI: Shaping the Future of Global Health Governance” was held on 12 January 2026 during the Winter Dialogue on Responsible AI for Synergistic Excellence (RAISE) at Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. The session was organised in partnership with Research and Information System for Developing Countries under DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence and moderated by Dr. Monika Kochar, Advisor Health, DAKSHIN at RIS.

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*Panelists at the ‘Multilateralism in the Age of AI: Shaping the Future of Global Health Governance’.*

## Fourth Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue (BoBED): Towards a Prosperous Bay of Bengal amidst Global Uncertainties



*Amb. Periasamy Kumaran, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs addressing BoBED inaugural session.*

RIS in collaboration with think tanks of the Bay of Bengal region, the BIMSTEC Secretariat, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and UNESCAP-SSWA, organized the fourth Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue (BoBED) on 16–17 January 2026 on the theme “Towards a Prosperous Bay of Bengal amidst Global Uncertainties.” The current network partners of the BoBED are SANEM (Bangladesh), RIS (India), SAWTEE (Nepal), Pathfinder Foundation (Sri Lanka), and Chulalongkorn University (Thailand). The previous three editions of the BoBED were held in Dhaka (2021, 2022) and Bangkok (2024), respectively.

This dialogue had six technical sessions covering all major areas of BIMSTEC cooperation. It includes Session I: Reimagining Global South

and the Role of the Bay of Bengal; Session II: Trade, Investment, and Regional Value Chains: Deepening Regional Integration amidst Global Uncertainties; Session III: Economic Corridors and Multi-Modal Connectivity: Integrating the Bay and Beyond; Session IV: Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Blue Economy: Towards a Resilient Bay of Bengal; Session V: AI Governance and Digital Integration: Enabling Integration, Key Challenges and Solutions; Session VI: Accelerating Regional Integration in the Bay of Bengal: Role of People-to-People Contacts. Valedictory session focused on ‘Towards a Resilient, Equitable and Inclusive Bay of Bengal’. Besides deliberations in the conference, the Delhi Declaration was also presented comprising the key outcomes of the 4th BoBED Dialogue.

Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General of RIS, opened the Dialogue by highlighting the challenges of fractured supply chains, trade restrictions, and weakened multilateralism, while underscoring the Bay of Bengal’s strategic role in connecting South and Southeast Asia. BoBED Chairperson Sumith Nakandala reflected on the Dialogue’s evolution since 2020, emphasizing the importance of capacity building for young scholars, academic collaboration, and fostering people-to-people ties rooted in the region’s shared civilisational heritage. Ms. Mikiko Tanaka, Head of UNESCAP, pointed to uneven growth in the Asia-Pacific and called for stronger regional cooperation through enhanced intra-regional trade, export diversification, digital innovation, and institutionalised engagement with BIMSTEC. In his Special Address, Ambassador Indramani Pandey, Secretary General of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, underscored the value of South–South and regional cooperation, and the critical role of think tanks in shaping policy and raising awareness. Delivering the Keynote Address, Amb. Periasamy Kumaran, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, India, outlined India’s strategic vision for the Bay of Bengal. He positioned BIMSTEC as a bridge between the Neighbourhood First and Act East policies, aligned with SAGAR and a rules-based Indo-Pacific. He emphasized key priorities including the blue

economy, climate resilience, digital public infrastructure, connectivity, and people-to-people engagement.

Dr. Seshadri Chari, Member, Governing Council, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), emphasized the increasing significance of regional groupings like BIMSTEC amid shifting geopolitical dynamics and the strategic deployment of trade and technology. Delivering the Valedictory Address, Mr. C. S. R. Ram, Joint Secretary (SAARC & BIMSTEC), Ministry of External Affairs, India, highlighted India's leadership in promoting BIMSTEC economic integration. He stressed the importance of intra-regional trade, private sector participation, multimodal connectivity, people-to-people exchanges, and capacity building. He called for a pragmatic, technology-driven, and collaborative approach with shared ownership among all Member States.

In his closing remarks, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director



*Panelists of the Fourth Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue (BoBED), held at the India Habitat Centre (IHC), New Delhi.*

General, RIS, noted that the Dialogue convened over 100 participants, featured six thematic sessions on AI, climate change, trade, and connectivity, and included 45 speakers from BIMSTEC countries and partner institutions. He reiterated the need to shift from intent to impact in regional cooperation and reaffirmed RIS's commitment to policy-relevant

research and capacity development. Dr. Prabir De, RIS, presented the Delhi Declaration, identifying regional value chains, connectivity, capacity building, infrastructure, food security, and trade facilitation as priorities for a resilient and integrated BIMSTEC. He extended gratitude to all partners and participants for their collective contributions. ■



*Inaugural Session of the Fourth Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue.*

## Interaction Meeting with Media Delegation from Central and West Africa



*Media Delegation from Central and West Africa at RIS for Deliberations on South-South Cooperation.*

On 14th January 2026, RIS hosted a media delegation from Central and West African countries as part of its ongoing engagement with partners from the Global South.

While welcoming the delegation, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS, emphasised the importance of research and development across sectors to support innovation,

resilience, and sustainable growth. He highlighted the role of policy research and knowledge partnerships in advancing long-term development cooperation.

RIS faculty members briefed the delegation on the institution's research programmes and ongoing initiatives, including work on the blue economy, critical and rare

earth materials, and other areas of strategic relevance.

The discussions focused on deepening economic cooperation, strengthening policy research collaboration, and advancing shared development priorities between India and African partner countries. ■

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Panellists highlighted the importance of AI diplomacy and South-South cooperation in shaping inclusive global AI standards. Speakers also stressed the need to translate global AI principles into practical country-level guidance

that remains inclusive of women, children, and marginalised populations. From a health systems perspective, the discussion emphasized the importance of institutional capacity building over fragmented interventions. The session further examined

issues of interoperability, data sovereignty, and public-private partnerships, while recognising universities as trusted institutions for contextualising global AI frameworks within national health priorities. ■

## CMEC at RIS Foundation Day: Brainstorming on Connectivity and Productivity



*Proceedings at the Panel Discussion on 'Connectivity for Productivity: Ports as Production Engines'.*

Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity (CMEC), at RIS, marked its Foundation Day with a high-level panel discussion on “Connectivity for Productivity: Ports as Production Engines” on 19 January 2026. The discussion focused on leveraging the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan to strengthen multimodal logistics integration, coastal shipping, and inland waterways connectivity.

Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG RIS set the context for the discussion by highlighting the importance of ports as engines of overall growth of the Indian economy. The panel further deliberated on the transition from “Connectivity for Transport” to “Connectivity for Productivity,” integrated planning under PM GatiShakti, the role of Multi-Modal Logistics Parks (MMLPs), and infrastructure priorities for Union Budget 2026–27.

Mr. Davinder Sandhu, Co-Founder and Chairman, Primus Partners, advocated a “systems thinking” approach, viewing infrastructure as an interconnected network supported by digital and energy connectivity. Capt. Rakesh Singh, President, Indian Coastal Ship Owners’ Association (ICCSA) and representative of the National Shipping Board, emphasized the need for unified maritime governance and supportive flagging policies to strengthen India’s control over trade routes.

Shri L.V.S. Sudhakar Babu, Managing Director, Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL), highlighted the role of government-backed financing in port-led industrialisation. Shri Shiv Om Dwivedi, General Manager, DMRC, suggested adapting metro rail SPV models and land acquisition frameworks for the maritime sector.

Capt. R. Poswal, Directorate General of Shipping (MMI Noida), presented the “E-Samudra” initiative to digitise maritime licensing and assessments.

Joining virtually from Peru, Mr. Sachin Bhanushali, former CEO, Distriparks, stressed reliability as the key driver of transport choices and advocated a unified e-Bill of Lading system. Prof. Prabir De, Faculty at CMEC, RIS, highlighted the absence of weight-based trade data for assessing logistics costs and accentuated the geostrategic importance of connectivity. Mr. Murlidhar Venkata Satya, MVS Consultancy, recommended cargo-centric planning and strategic placement of MMLPs to improve container movement between India’s coasts. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Shishir Shrotriya, Coordinator, CMEC at RIS. ■

# Maritime Knowledge Lecture Series on Enabling Ship Leasing and Chartering



*The Maritime Knowledge Lecture Series on “Enabling Ship Leasing and Chartering” in progress, fostering dialogue on maritime financing and regulatory frameworks.*

CMEC at RIS, hosted the Maritime Knowledge Lecture Series on “Maritime India – Enabling Ship Leasing and Chartering” on 19 January 2026. The lecture, organised as part of the Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 initiatives, highlighted the strategic importance of ship leasing and chartering for India’s maritime sovereignty, foreign exchange management, and economic resilience.

In his introductory remarks, Dr. Shishir Shrotriya, Coordinator, CMEC, highlighted that although India handles over 95 per cent of its trade volume through maritime routes, its share in global ship ownership and chartering remains limited. He also noted that recent reforms, including the Merchant

Shipping Act, 2025 and recognition of bareboat charter-cum-demise arrangements, could support domestic tonnage expansion, ship finance, and operational autonomy.

The lead speaker, Mr. Amit Oza, Director, Astramar Shipping and Trading Services, traced the evolution of India’s shipping sector from FERA to FEMA-era reforms, noting how talent and capital gradually shifted overseas. He highlighted GIFT City’s role as a FEMA-neutral IFSC aimed at bringing ship leasing, finance, and trading back to India. He also emphasized the need for tax and legal alignment, capacity building, and structured training to create globally competitive commercial maritime capabilities. ■

activities through GIFT City and strengthening India’s ecosystem for finance, insurance, bunkering, and maritime services.

Chairing the session, Mr. Amit Oza, Director, Astramar Shipping and Trading Services, traced the evolution of India’s shipping sector from FERA to FEMA-era reforms, noting how talent and capital gradually shifted overseas. He highlighted GIFT City’s role as a FEMA-neutral IFSC aimed at bringing ship leasing, finance, and trading back to India. He also emphasized the need for tax and legal alignment, capacity building, and structured training to create globally competitive commercial maritime capabilities. ■

# Training Programme: ISO/IEC 17065:2012: Conformity Assessment -Requirements for Bodies Certifying Products, Processes and Services

Research and Information System for Developing Countries organised a three-day Training Programme on “ISO/IEC 17065:2012 – Conformity Assessment: Requirements for Bodies Certifying Products, Processes and Services” from 27–29 January 2026 at CSIR-National Physical Laboratory. The programme, delivered by Mr. Anil Jauhri and Ms. Neeta Sharma, brought together 22 professionals from NPL for technical engagement on product certification, conformity assessment systems, and international standards frameworks.

The training was organised in the context of NPL’s role as India’s national verification agency for certification of instruments and equipment used in monitoring emissions and ambient air quality under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The sessions focused on



*Training Programme: ISO/IEC 17065:2012: Conformity Assessment -Requirements for Bodies Certifying Products, Processes and Services being conducted.*

strengthening institutional capacity in certification scheme design, governance, and accreditation-ready processes amid evolving regulatory requirements. The technical sessions covered the core requirements of ISO/IEC 17065, including legal responsibility,



*Capturing a moment of learning and excellence during the training programme.*

impartiality, confidentiality, organisational structures, competence requirements, certification processes, and management systems for product certification bodies. Discussions also examined certification scheme design, ISO 17067 standards, practical case studies, and accreditation procedures under the National Accreditation Board

for Certification Bodies (NABCB).

Addressing the valedictory session, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS, highlighted the growing importance of standards, certification, and accreditation systems in shaping trade governance, regulatory credibility, and global market access. He also underlined RIS's expanding engagement in quality infrastructure and

conformity assessment systems, stressing the need for sustained capacity building in India and other developing economies. The programme concluded with certificate distribution and a vote of thanks by Mr. Sachchidanand, Head of Department, CSIR-National Physical Laboratory. ■

## Discussion on Union Budget 2026-27 and Economic Survey 2025-26: Roadmap for Atmanirbhar Bharat in a Fragmented World with Strong Headwinds

Research and Information System for Developing Countries and Delhi School of Economics jointly organised a high-level panel discussion on "Roadmap for Atmanirbhar Bharat in a Fragmented World with Strong Headwinds" on 7 February 2026. The discussion drew upon the Economic Survey 2025-26 and Union Budget 2026-27 to examine India's development strategy amid global economic fragmentation, geopolitical uncertainty, and changing trade and technology dynamics.

Setting the context, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, highlighted that despite global turbulence, India's macroeconomic indicators remain strong and reflect a stable growth trajectory. He emphasised that weakening multilateralism, market fragmentation, and deglobalisation are reshaping policy and research priorities worldwide. He noted that Atmanirbhar Bharat is outward-oriented, aimed at strengthening



*Dr. V. Anantha Nageswaran, Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India, delivering the keynote address*

domestic capabilities to improve competitiveness, resilience, and global integration. Prof. Sharma also underlined RIS's expanding international collaborations and policy engagement across trade, technology, and development

issues to amplify the voice of the Global South.

Prof. Ram Singh, Director, Delhi School of Economics, announced the formalisation of collaboration between RIS and DSE through a Memorandum of Understanding,

marking a deeper partnership between academic and policy institutions. Referring to the Economic Survey, he highlighted structural challenges in India's regulatory and institutional systems, particularly those affecting MSMEs and long-term growth. He also stressed the need for stronger fiscal responsibility, cooperative federalism, and evidence-based policymaking to address systemic bottlenecks.

Dr. Seshadri Chari, Member, Governing Council, RIS, described the Union Budget as a milestone in India's journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047. He highlighted the Budget's focus on

workforce development, labour support, health, welfare, regional development, and infrastructure expansion through higher capital expenditure, logistics corridors, national waterways, and freight networks. He also underlined the emphasis on manufacturing, MSME revival, semiconductors, electronics, and research institutions, while maintaining fiscal discipline and export promotion.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr. V. Anantha Nageswaran, Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India, clarified that Atmanirbhar Bharat is based on competitive resilience and strategic global integration rather

than isolationism. He observed that recent trade agreements have improved market access and eased external pressures, even as protectionism, conflicts, and financial vulnerabilities continue to shape the global environment. He stressed that sustained public capital expenditure, fiscal discipline, stronger manufacturing, deregulation, lower compliance costs, skill development, and responsible use of AI are essential for long-term competitiveness. He further highlighted the importance of investments in mental health, education, and social well-being for harnessing India's demographic dividend. ■

## Panel Discussion- Atmanirbhar Bharat in the Era of Global Uncertainty

In the panel discussion, Mr. A.K. Bhattacharya, Editorial Director, Business Standard, noted that India has made significant progress in fiscal consolidation since the pandemic, with the fiscal deficit declining sharply. However, he cautioned that the pace of consolidation is slowing and that structural weaknesses

in expenditure management and rising fiscal stress among states are affecting liquidity and private investment. He argued that the focus should shift from headline fiscal targets towards improving spending efficiency and strengthening institutional capacity.

Mr. P. Vaidyanathan Iyer, Managing Editor, Indian Express,

observed that the fragmented global environment presents both opportunities and risks for India. While high public capital expenditure remains necessary due to infrastructure gaps and weak private investment, manufacturing continues to remain a weak link despite its employment potential. He highlighted that



*Discussion on Union Budget 2026-27 and Economic Survey 2025-26 'Roadmap for Atmanirbhar Bharat in a Fragmented World with Strong Headwinds'*



*Panellists during Discussion on Union Budget 2026-27 and Economic Survey 2025-26 'Roadmap for Atmanirbhar Bharat in a Fragmented World with Strong Headwinds'.*

customs duty rationalisation and MSME support are positive measures but emphasised the need for stronger reforms related to pollution management, strategic disinvestment, capital attraction, and market distortions.

Prof. Simrit Kaur, Principal, Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC) and Professor at the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS), University of Delhi, stressed that technology and artificial intelligence are becoming central drivers of competitiveness and productivity. She emphasised the importance of digital capabilities, continuous upskilling, employment generation, gender inclusion, climate action, renewable energy transition, and cooperative federalism in sustaining long-term growth.

Dr. Charan Singh, CEO and Founder Director, EGROW Foundation, stated that India is increasingly being viewed as a future engine of global growth. He highlighted that long-term

development depends on stronger female labour force participation, skilling, literacy, and healthcare. He described the Budget as a strategic long-term policy statement rather than merely a numbers exercise and stressed the importance of financial sector reforms, taxation stability, and stronger banking institutions to mobilise resources for exports, industry, housing, and MSMEs.

Dr. C.S.C. Sekhar, Professor, Institute of Economic Growth, highlighted the growing contribution of livestock, fisheries, and allied sectors to agricultural growth, while noting persistent underutilisation of crop-scheme funds and implementation constraints. He pointed to digital agriculture and farmer data integration as promising initiatives but noted that access to affordable technologies remains uneven.

Prof. Prabir De, RIS, argued that India's long-term export ambitions depend on continuity in trade and export strategies. He stressed that

customs reforms, digitisation, trade facilitation, logistics infrastructure, and institutional capacity building are as important as tariff reductions. He also highlighted the need for stronger centre-state coordination, MSME export support, digital trade integration, and improved overseas commercial engagement.

Moderating the discussion, Prof. Ram Singh concluded that while public investment remains India's principal growth driver, the effectiveness of capital expenditure ultimately depends on state capacity, implementation efficiency, and deeper integration into global value chains. He underlined that agriculture, sustainability, environmental management, and institutional reforms will remain central to India's pathway towards resilient, inclusive, and globally competitive growth under Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat 2047. ■

## Roundtable Consultation on Artificial Intelligence in Medical and Nursing Education



*Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS, addressing the Roundtable Consultation on 'Artificial Intelligence in Medical and Nursing Education'*

DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence at RIS, in collaboration with Jhpiego and NIMS University, Jaipur, organised a closed-door roundtable consultation on “Blueprint for the Responsible Use of AI in Medical and Nursing Education” on 4 February 2026 at RIS, New Delhi, as a pre-event to the AI Impact Summit. The consultation brought together policymakers, regulators, academic leaders, faculty, legal experts, and technologists to discuss governance frameworks for responsible AI adoption in health professional education.

In his welcome remarks, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, emphasised the importance of proactive governance and South-South collaboration to ensure equitable and context-sensitive AI integration in medical and nursing education.

Dr. Monika Kochar, Advisor Health, DAKSHIN-Global South Centre of Excellence, highlighted the growing use of generative AI in classrooms and clinical training for drafting, simulations, and assessments, often without institutional guidelines.

The discussions focused on governance gaps, faculty preparedness, nursing inclusion, ethical safeguards, infrastructure readiness, and academic integrity. Participants stressed that AI should support rather than replace educators and underscored the need for faculty training, transparent validation systems, low-bandwidth solutions, regional language support, and stronger South-South collaboration to ensure inclusive and trustworthy AI integration in health education systems. ■

*Continued from page 5*

global growth. Professor C. Veeramani underlined the rising importance of merchandise trade and AI-related products in shaping global trade dynamics and stressed the significance of FDI inflows for India’s economic growth.

Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna stressed that developing economies must strengthen domestic capabilities, reduce trade costs, invest in skills, and

leverage digital and services sectors to remain competitive in a rapidly changing global environment. Dr. Dipankar Sengupta highlighted the importance of strengthening domestic demand, capital formation, branding, trade facilitation, and digital public infrastructure for the Global South’s sustainable integration into the world economy.

Dr. Nitya Nanda emphasised that sustainable economic growth

depends on greenfield investment, productive capacity creation, and strategic trade engagement rather than headline investment figures alone. The discussion broadly underscored that the future of global trade integration will depend increasingly on competitiveness, diversification, regional cooperation, and domestic economic resilience rather than preferential market access alone. ■

# India AI Impact Summit 2026: RIS Panel Discussion on Workforce Readiness for Artificial Intelligence in Primary Health Care



*India AI Impact Summit 2026: RIS Panel Discussion on 'Workforce Readiness for Artificial Intelligence in Primary Health Care' at Bharat Mandapam.*

DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence at RIS, in partnership with ICMR-National Institute for Research in Digital Health and Data Science and Johns Hopkins University, convened a panel discussion on “Workforce Readiness for Artificial Intelligence in Primary Health Care” on 18 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam. The discussion examined how health systems, academic institutions, governments, and innovation ecosystems must adapt to AI-driven transformation in primary healthcare.

Dr. Smisha Agarwal, Associate Professor and Director, Center for Global Digital Health Innovation, Johns Hopkins University, emphasised that AI-readiness must include workforce competencies, institutional leadership, pedagogical reform, infrastructure, and equity considerations. She warned that education systems must evolve rapidly to prevent widening gaps between technological capability

and human preparedness. Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS, highlighted the realities of Global South health systems, including limited connectivity, hardware shortages, and constrained human resources. He stressed that AI integration must be accompanied by foundational system strengthening, large-scale skilling, affordable devices, multilingual interfaces, and inclusive design to avoid deepening inequalities.

Professor Anurag Agrawal, Dean, BioSciences and Health Research, Ashoka University, argued that while AI can improve productivity, professionals must retain core competencies and adopt systems thinking, interdisciplinary collaboration, and strategic AI use. Dr. Mona Duggal, Director, ICMR-NIRDHDS, stressed comprehensive upskilling across all levels of healthcare and called for integrating AI, digital health, epidemiology, and ethics into medical education.

Professor Fuad, Education and Cultural Attaché, Embassy of Indonesia, emphasised coordinated governance and noted that AI should reduce administrative burden rather than replace clinical responsibility. Dr. Titipol Phakdeewanich, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand, highlighted the importance of digital hygiene, cybersecurity awareness, and combating misinformation.

Dr. Ranjana Kumar, CEO, Centre for Health Applied Knowledge and Research Autonomy, Maharashtra, stressed interoperability, faculty development, and change management to reduce resistance to AI adoption. Dr. Monika Kochar, Advisor Health, DAKSHIN-RIS, accentuated the need for structured South-South collaboration, ethical safeguards, and long-term ecosystem strengthening to ensure equitable and trustworthy AI integration in primary healthcare systems. ■

## AI Impact Summit – From Regulatory Guardrails to Adaptive Governance in the Global South



*'From Guardrails to Adaptive Governance in the Global South: Building a Joint Responsible Governance–HTA Framework to Deliver Safe, Trusted, and Scalable AI in Health'.*

Research and Information System for Developing Countries, through DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence, in partnership with ICMR-National Institute for Research in Digital Health and Data Science and HealthAI – The Global Agency for Responsible AI in Health, convened a high-level panel discussion on “From Guardrails to Adaptive Governance in the Global South: Building a Joint Responsible Governance–HTA Framework to Deliver Safe, Trusted, and Scalable AI in Health” on 16 February 2026 at the AI Impact Summit held at Bharat Mandapam.

The discussion brought together policymakers, regulators, researchers, and global experts to deliberate on adaptive, lifecycle-based governance frameworks for responsible AI adoption in healthcare, particularly in the Global South.

Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, highlighted

the need for governance systems that reflect domestic public health priorities, infrastructural realities, and development needs rather than relying solely on imported regulatory models. Ms. Vidushi Chaturvedi, Lead Architect, NITI Aayog, stressed the importance of transparent, interoperable, and citizen-centric digital public infrastructure for scalable AI deployment.

Dr. Ricardo Gregorio Corpuz, University of Fiji, highlighted the importance of contextualised governance frameworks for smaller and resource-constrained countries. Mr. Haitham El-noush, Senior Advisor, Norad, emphasised international cooperation and institutional strengthening to support responsible AI ecosystems. Dr. Apoorva Dharmendra, Senior Editor, The Lancet Regional Health – Southeast Asia, underlined the need for evidence-based validation and ethical safeguards in AI deployment.

Mr. Rado A., Director of AI, HealthAI, stressed lifecycle-based oversight, regulatory sandboxes, and validation platforms to balance innovation with accountability. Dr. Anant Bhan, Principal Investigator and Project Lead, Sangath India, highlighted ethical governance, clinician preparedness, and inclusive policy design. Dr. Monika Kochar, Advisor Health, DAKSHIN, emphasised South-South collaboration, shared governance standards, and AI-specific Health Technology Assessment (HTA) frameworks.

The session concluded that adaptive governance, contextualised HTA mechanisms, and sustained multilateral collaboration are essential to ensure that Global South countries emerge not merely as users of AI systems, but as active co-creators of the evolving global AI governance architecture. ■

# India AI Impact Summit 2026: RIS Panel Discussion on Safe and Trusted AI: The Ethics and Governance Perspective



*Panel Discussion on 'Safe and Trusted AI: The Ethics and Governance Perspective' held on 18th February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.*

As Knowledge Partner of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, Research and Information System for Developing Countries organised a panel discussion on “Safe and Trusted AI: The Ethics and Governance Perspective” on 18 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam. The session brought together experts from government, academia, research, and industry to deliberate on ethical safeguards, accountability, and governance frameworks for safe and trustworthy AI systems.

Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, delivered the welcome remarks, highlighting the importance of human-centric and responsible AI governance. Dr. Amit Kumar, Faculty, RIS, provided introductory remarks, while the session was moderated

by Dr. S.K. Varshney, former Head (International Cooperation), Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, and Science Consultant, RIS.

The panel featured Dr. Geetha Vani Rayasam, Director, CSIR-NIScPR; Dr. Titipol Phakdeewanich, Director, Regional Center for Human Rights, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand; Dr. B.K. Murthy, former Scientist G, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, and Dean, Amity University; Dr. Roli Mathur, Scientist G and Head, Bioethics Unit, ICMR; Dr. K. Ravi Srinivas, Adjunct Professor, NALSAR and Associate Faculty Fellow, IIT Madras; Mr. Saurabh Kapil, Co-founder and Director, BioSky; Dr. Neethu Rajam, Associate

Professor of Law, National Law University Delhi; and Dr. Nupur Chowdhury, Faculty, JNU.

The discussion emphasised that AI ethics must be integrated into governance frameworks from design to deployment. Panelists highlighted the importance of transparency, explainability, accountability, and mitigation of algorithmic bias. They stressed the need for robust privacy protections, human oversight, and safety testing in high-risk AI systems. The session also underlined the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration and global cooperation to develop common standards and ensure that AI innovation remains inclusive, secure, and aligned with public interest and societal well-being. ■

## International Seminar on India-Nepal Trade Facilitation: Towards Seamless Borders and Shared Prosperity



*India–Nepal Trade Facilitation: Towards Seamless Borders and Shared Prosperity on 20th February 2026 at the RIS Conference Room, New Delhi.*

Research and Information System for Developing Countries, in partnership with Neeti Anusandhan Pratishthan and the Eastern Himalayas Socio Cultural and Educational Foundation, organised an international seminar on “India–Nepal Trade Facilitation: Towards Seamless Borders and Shared Prosperity” on 20 February 2026 in New Delhi. The seminar brought together policymakers, researchers, and trade experts to discuss measures for improving bilateral trade efficiency and strengthening economic cooperation between India and Nepal.

In his opening remarks, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, highlighted the deep economic interdependence between India and

Nepal and stressed the importance of addressing procedural and regulatory barriers limiting bilateral trade potential. He emphasised that improvements in customs procedures, transit arrangements, and digital documentation could significantly strengthen cross-border economic integration.

Shri Deepak Kumar Adhikari, Director, NeNAP, underlined the need for stronger institutional coordination and policy dialogue to ensure that trade and investment flows contribute to broader developmental outcomes.

The technical session, chaired by Dr. Prabir De, Professor at RIS, began with a presentation by Mr. Rudra Prasad Sharma Phual, Managing Partner, Transnational Law House,

Kathmandu, who identified bottlenecks in bilateral trade and called for greater transparency, streamlined customs systems, and improved regulatory coordination. Prof. Nisha Taneja, ICRIER, stressed the importance of reducing procedural delays at border points, while Mr. Joseph George, Trade Analyst, UNESCAP-SSWA, highlighted the role of digitalisation and transit efficiency in reducing trade costs and promoting regional value chains. Dr. Pankaj Vashisht, Associate Professor, RIS, emphasised the importance of hydropower cooperation and called for balanced approaches to royalty structures and investment viability in Nepal’s hydropower sector. ■

## India–Brazil Partnership in the Global South

Research and Information System for Developing Countries organised a policy dialogue on ‘India–Brazil Partnership in the Global South’ on 21 February 2026 at the G. Parthasarathi Conference Hall, RIS, New Delhi. The discussion examined the evolving India–Brazil partnership and its role in strengthening South–South cooperation and advancing development priorities in global governance.

In his welcome remarks, Professor Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS, highlighted the long-standing partnership between India and Brazil across platforms such as the United Nations, WTO, BRICS, and G20. He emphasised opportunities to deepen cooperation



in biofuels, green energy transition, agriculture, technology, digital public infrastructure, and trade engagement, including through

regional groupings such as Mercosur. Ambassador Luiza Lopes da Silva, Deputy Director

*Continued on page 41*

## ASEAN–India Maritime Security Cooperation: The Case of Singapore and Vietnam

The Maritime Knowledge Lecture Series on “ASEAN–India Maritime Security Cooperation: The Case of Singapore and Vietnam” was organised on 24 February 2026, by CMEC and AIC, centres at RIS.

In his welcome remarks, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS, highlighted the strategic importance of strengthening India’s maritime cooperation with ASEAN. He referred to RIS initiatives through the ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) and the Centre for Maritime Economy & Connectivity (CMEC), which promote research and policy dialogue on maritime and connectivity issues. He stressed deeper engagement with Singapore and Vietnam to support a stable,



*Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan (Retd.), Director General, National Maritime Foundation, addressing the Maritime Knowledge Lecture Series on ‘ASEAN–India Maritime Security Cooperation: The Case of Singapore and Vietnam’*

secure, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region. The lead speaker, Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan

(Retd.), Director General, National Maritime Foundation, outlined a comprehensive framework for

maritime cooperation centred on holistic maritime security encompassing political, economic, societal, environmental, and military dimensions. He explained India's maritime vision through SAGAR and MAHASAGAR, emphasising freedom from threats "in, from, or through" the sea. He highlighted India's geo-economic goals, including 'Viksit Bharat 2047' and blue economy expansion, alongside strategic objectives such as maritime domain awareness and a rules-based regional order.

Vice Admiral Chauhan also highlighted the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) as a practical framework aligned with ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).

He underscored Singapore's role as a major maritime hub and strategic partner through initiatives such as SIMBEX, ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise (AIME), and cooperation between Information Fusion Centres. Vietnam was highlighted for its strategic alignment with India in maritime security, seaport modernisation, and South China Sea cooperation.

Chairing the session, Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra, Founder and Chairman, Kalinga Institute of Indo-Pacific Studies, stressed the need for a stronger ASEAN-India maritime security framework, describing Singapore and Vietnam as pivotal partners in balancing regional dynamics. Dr. Seshadri

Chari, Member, Governing Council, RIS, highlighted India's broader maritime and security agenda, including freedom of navigation, anti-piracy efforts, and the need for an integrated Indo-Pacific security framework.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Shishir Shrotriya, Coordinator, CMEC at RIS, underlined the importance of regional cooperation, maritime trade, digital ocean technologies, near-coastal shipping, and skills development for seafarers. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Pankaj Vashisht, Associate Professor and Coordinator, ASEAN-India Centre, RIS. ■

## MoU Signing Ceremony and Roundtable on India–Thailand Cooperation in Promoting South-South Development

DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence at Research and Information System for Developing Countries formalised a partnership with Ubon Ratchathani University through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 27 February 2026. The partnership aims to promote joint research, academic exchanges, and collaborative initiatives in priority areas such as health, agriculture, and digital solutions, reflecting a shared commitment to advancing knowledge exchange and addressing development challenges across the Global South.

Discussions during the event highlighted the importance of ensuring that institutional partnerships lead to tangible outcomes through sustained



*MoU Signing Ceremony between DAKSHIN (at RIS) and Ubon Ratchathani University*

academic engagement, collaborative research, and policy-oriented initiatives. Participants also reaffirmed the strong India–Thailand relationship, shaped by shared regional and development

priorities, and recognised academic institutions as important platforms for strengthening bilateral cooperation.

The deliberations during the ceremony highlighted Thailand's

importance to India as a maritime neighbour and key Act East partner, noting complementarities in health systems, agriculture, digital public infrastructure, trade, climate change, and global governance. Roundtable

discussions explored opportunities for cooperation in agricultural technology, healthcare systems, rural health delivery, rice innovation, and artificial intelligence applications in development sectors. India's

scalable digital public infrastructure, including health and vaccine delivery platforms, was also highlighted as a strong foundation for expanding collaboration across ASEAN and the broader Global South. ■

## Roundtable Discussion on India-EU Free Trade Agreement: Geoeconomic and Geopolitical Implications for a Changing World Order

Research and Information System for Developing Countries and German Institute of Development and Sustainability organised a roundtable discussion on 'India-EU Free Trade Agreement: Geoeconomic and Geopolitical Implications for a Changing World Order', on 5 March 2026. The discussion brought together policymakers, economists, and trade experts to examine the significance of the India-EU FTA amid rising protectionism, global uncertainty, and weakening multilateral institutions.

In his welcome remarks, Mr. Rajeev Kher, Distinguished Fellow, RIS, described the India-EU FTA as a landmark agreement following nearly two decades of negotiations. He highlighted the importance

of stronger trade partnerships in a changing global economy and stressed that the agreement's success would depend on effective implementation and utilisation.

Delivering the special remarks, Mr. Niels Annen, State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany, underlined the growing geopolitical importance of FTAs and highlighted the EU's role as a stable and predictable trade partner. He also emphasised opportunities for cooperation in green and sustainable development and the need to preserve a rules-based global trading system.

Mr. Dammu Ravi, former Secretary (Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs,

India, described the agreement as comprehensive and reform-oriented, stressing its potential to strengthen manufacturing, MSMEs, and India-EU trade complementarities while also highlighting concerns related to CBAM and the absence of an investment chapter.

Professor Anna-Katharina Hornidge, Director, IDOS, emphasised that the agreement should be viewed as a broader governance framework linking trade, sustainability, mobility, and climate action. Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna highlighted the role of FTAs in investment promotion, supply-chain integration, and sustainability cooperation.



RIS and IDOS hosted Roundtable Discussion 'India-EU Free Trade Agreement: Geoeconomic and Geopolitical Implications for a Changing World Order'.

Professor S.K. Mohanty stressed the significance of tariff liberalisation, services trade, and digital cooperation, while Dr. Pritam Banerjee highlighted the

growing importance of services, digitalisation, and policy space for industrial development. The discussion concluded that the India-EU FTA could significantly

strengthen trade, investment, technology transfer, and long-term strategic cooperation between the two partners. ■

# Roundtable Discussion on Aligning the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP): Establishing Operational Frameworks

The ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at Research and Information System for Developing Countries organised a Roundtable Discussion on “Aligning the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP): Establishing Operational Frameworks” on 14 March 2026 at India Habitat Centre. The discussion brought together diplomats, maritime experts, researchers, and practitioners to explore pathways for operationalising cooperation between India and ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific.

The inaugural session began with welcome remarks by Dr. Pankaj Vashisht, Associate Professor

and Coordinator, ASEAN-India Centre, RIS, who highlighted the growing relevance of India-ASEAN maritime cooperation. In his opening remarks, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS, emphasised the need for practical frameworks to strengthen India-ASEAN engagement in a rules-based and inclusive Indo-Pacific. Shri Vishwesh Negi, Joint Secretary (Indo-Pacific), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, underlined the significance of the first joint statement aligning IPOI and AOIP, while H.E. Josel F. Ignacio, Ambassador of the Philippines to India, stressed ASEAN centrality and regional cooperation.

Session I, chaired by Ambassador Riva Ganguly Das, former Secretary (East), focused on translating Indo-Pacific visions into actionable cooperation. Dr. Don McLain Gill, De La Salle University & Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, highlighted the importance of institutionalising pillar-based cooperation and building trust through practical outcomes.

Mr. Sanjay Pulipaka, Chairperson, Politeia Research Foundation, emphasised strategic coordination and stronger India-ASEAN engagement in emerging sectors such as the digital economy and connectivity. Dr. Monish Tourangbam, Senior Research



*From the session I titled 'From Vision to Action: Operationalising IPOI-AOIP Synergy in Roundtable Discussion.*

Fellow, Chintan Research Foundation, stressed the importance of shaping strategic narratives and strengthening regional resilience amid geopolitical uncertainty.

Session II on “Maritime Cooperation for a Secure and Sustainable Indo-Pacific” was chaired by Capt. Sarabjeet S. Parmar (Retd.), Visiting Fellow, RIS, who highlighted the need

to operationalise AOIP and IPOI through concrete maritime cooperation. Ambassador Lahpai Zau Goone, Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies, stressed inclusive regional engagement and ASEAN unity. Cmde. Anil Jai Singh (Retd.), Indian Maritime Foundation, highlighted the importance of maritime domain awareness and naval

cooperation. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vo Xuan Vin, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, underlined the significance of adherence to international law and capacity building, while Dr. Stuti Banerjee, Indian Council of World Affairs, emphasised blue economy cooperation, connectivity, and sustainable maritime governance. ■

## Roundtable Discussion Navigating the Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Landscape: Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation in a Changing World

The ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at Research and Information System for Developing Countries organised a Roundtable Discussion on “Navigating the Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Landscape: Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation in a Changing World” on 2 March 2026 at RIS, New Delhi, in hybrid mode. The discussion was organised in the context of celebrating 2026 as the ASEAN-India Year of Maritime Cooperation.

The inaugural session began with remarks by Capt. Sarabjeet S. Parmar (Retd.), Visiting Fellow, RIS, who highlighted the increasing strategic importance of India-ASEAN maritime cooperation amid changing geopolitical realities. Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS, emphasised that maritime engagement between India and ASEAN is rooted in historical linkages but must now evolve into practical and outcome-oriented cooperation. Delivering the special remarks, Ms. Thao Thi Thanh Nguyen, Assistant Director, Political Cooperation Division II,



*Roundtable Discussion on ‘Navigating the Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Landscape: Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation in a Changing World’.*

ASEAN Secretariat, underlined the importance of ASEAN centrality, connectivity, and regional resilience in the Indo-Pacific.

The technical session was chaired by Mr. Jaideep Mazumdar, former Secretary (East) and Indian Ambassador to the Philippines. Cmde. Sujeet Samaddar (Retd.), Visiting Fellow, RIS, stressed the importance of maritime domain awareness, information-sharing, and coordinated responses to non-traditional maritime threats. Professor Ruth Banomyong,

Thammasat University, highlighted the need for stronger logistics integration, port efficiency, and multimodal connectivity. Haikal Amran, Maritime Institute of Malaysia, emphasised sustainable maritime governance, blue economy cooperation, and climate resilience. Dr. Rahul Mishra, Associate Professor, JNU, highlighted the strategic significance of digital connectivity, cybersecurity, and protection of critical maritime infrastructure, including submarine cables.

The discussions underlined the need to operationalise the ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2026-2030), strengthen institutional coordination, address non-tariff barriers, and expand cooperation in emerging sectors such as semiconductor supply chains and digital maritime systems. Participants agreed that enhanced India-ASEAN maritime cooperation will be essential for promoting a secure, stable, and rules-based Indo-Pacific. ■

## Interactive Session on International Cooperation and the Global South



*RIS and OECD (Development Centre) hosted an interactive session on 'International Cooperation and the Global South'*

Research and Information System for Developing Countries and DAKSHIN - Global South Centre of Excellence, in partnership with OECD Development Centre, organised an interactive session on "International Cooperation and the Global South" on 12 March 2026. The session brought together policymakers, researchers, and development practitioners to deliberate on emerging approaches to international cooperation and pathways towards a fair, equitable,

and inclusive global development architecture.

In his opening remarks, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, emphasised that strengthening international cooperation is essential to address emerging global challenges and accelerate inclusive development across the Global South. Dr. Sabyasachi Saha highlighted the importance of stronger collaboration among research institutions, policymakers, and practitioners to

support sustainable development through dialogue and knowledge exchange.

Mr. Pankaj Vashisht underlined the role of DAKSHIN - Global South Centre of Excellence as a platform for research collaboration, policy innovation, and sharing development experiences among developing countries. Dr. Federico Bonaglia stressed that the rise of emerging economies has transformed the global development landscape, requiring more inclusive

and adaptive models of international cooperation rooted in institutional learning and collaborative policy innovation.

Shri Debashis Chakraborty noted that the growing importance of the Global South is reshaping global economic governance and requires more representative multilateral frameworks. Shri Anish Kumar highlighted that India's development cooperation model is based on partnership, mutual learning, and respect for national priorities, with digital

public infrastructure and capacity building emerging as important pillars of cooperation.

Prof. S. K. Mohanty observed that although the Global South has become a major driver of economic growth, development outcomes remain uneven, requiring stronger institutions and coordinated policy frameworks. Shri Virjesh Upadhyay stressed the importance of inclusive development, social protection, and digital governance in addressing development deficits.

Dr. B. K. Murthy highlighted the transformative role of emerging technologies such as AI, digital public infrastructure, and clean energy innovations in shaping future development cooperation. Dr. Sushil Kumar emphasised India's evolving development cooperation model through the Global Development Compact, while Dr. Renu Mann highlighted green hydrogen cooperation as a promising avenue for strengthening South-South collaboration and sustainable energy partnerships ■

## Roundtable Discussion on WTO MC14 Future of Trade and Development Cooperation



*Signing of the MoU between RIS and IDS, the University of Sussex, and UKTPO during the roundtable discussions on 'WTO MC14 Future of Trade and Development Cooperation'.*

RIS in collaboration with the UK Trade Policy Observatory (UK TPO), and the University of Sussex, convened a Roundtable Discussion on the 'WTO MC14 Future of Trade and Development Cooperation' on 18 March 2026 at Tamarind Hall, IHC, New Delhi. The discussion was structured in two sessions along with an inaugural session.

During the inaugural session, moderated by Prof. Prabir De, who

conceptualised and brought the roundtable together, distinguished panellists, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS, Dr. Amrita Saha, Lead, Trade and Development, IDS, and Dr. Seshadri Chari, Member, Governing Council, RIS, shared insights on the evolving global trade landscape, emphasizing the need for cooperation, leadership, and inclusive WTO processes. They also reflected on rising inequalities,

climate pressures, and the shift toward a multipolar, regionally segmented trade order. A key highlight of the session was the signing of the MoU between RIS and IDS, the University of Sussex, and UKTPO. The MoU aims to strengthen collaboration between the signatory think tanks.

The session aimed to deliberate and discuss key questions, such

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## Seminar on Smart Ports and Resilient Maritime Corridors: Drivers of Growth



CMEC at RIS and IPA jointly hosted a seminar on “Smart Ports and Resilient Maritime Corridors: Drivers of Growth”.

Research and Information System for Developing Countries through its Centre for Maritime Economy & Connectivity (CMEC), jointly with Indian Ports Association, organised a seminar titled “Smart Ports and Resilient Maritime Corridors: Drivers of Growth” on 23 March 2026. The seminar examined the slow adoption of digital and emerging technologies in India’s maritime sector despite the availability of operational data and digital platforms such as e-Bill of Lading and MAITRI Virtual Trade Corridors. Discussions focused on resilient maritime corridors, green ports, and digital ports and corridors as critical drivers of India’s future trade competitiveness.

Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS, highlighted that high logistics costs remain a major challenge for India’s international competitiveness, particularly as 90–95 per cent of India’s trade is conducted through maritime routes. He stressed the

importance of maritime and inland infrastructure integration under initiatives such as PM Gati Shakti.

Former Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Shri T. K. Ramachandran, emphasised that the evolving global environment requires ports to become greener, smarter, and more connected. He highlighted key digital initiatives of the Ministry, including the National Logistics Portal (Marine), EBS systems, E-Samudra, and the Sagar Manthan portal. He further noted that the next phase of transformation would be driven by artificial intelligence, with implications for both strategy and maritime security. He also stressed the importance of pursuing green targets through solar, hydrogen, and ammonia-based initiatives while strengthening corridors such as IMEC, INSTC, and the Eastern Maritime Corridor.

Dr. Seshadri Chari, Member, Governing Council, RIS, referred to Alfred Mahan’s sea power theory

and emphasised the strategic importance of maritime strength for economic and geopolitical influence. He acknowledged progress made through government facilitation and private sector participation, while highlighting challenges such as inadequate shipbuilding capacity, outdated ocean trade regulations, and limited insurance insulation. He called for stronger industry-government coordination to address these structural gaps.

The discussions emphasised that ports must evolve beyond basic automation towards fully integrated, multimodal, and digitally connected logistics ecosystems. Participants stressed the need for resilient supply chains, greater standardisation, paperless transactions, and stronger regional cooperation frameworks to support secure, green, and efficient maritime trade corridors in an increasingly uncertain geopolitical environment. ■

## Roundtable Discussion on the Future of SDGs



*RIS hosted a Roundtable Discussion on "Future of SDGs".*

DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence, at RIS organised the second Roundtable Discussion on "Future of SDGs" on 24 March 2026, continuing RIS's engagement on sustainable development pathways and their implications for India and the Global South. The roundtable brought together policymakers, scholars, and development practitioners to deliberate on localization efforts, national policies, and future trajectories of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Opening the discussion, Ambassador Sudhir T. Devare, Chairman, RAC, RIS, noted that the world has crossed the midpoint of the SDG timeline, with progress slowing amid economic and geopolitical uncertainties. In the context-setting session, Dr. Sabyasachi Saha, Associate Professor, RIS, highlighted India's leadership in SDG localization through initiatives such as the

SDG India Index and Aspirational Districts Programme, while stressing the continued importance of multilateral cooperation and evidence-based policymaking. Professor S.K. Mohanty traced the transition from MDGs to SDGs and highlighted widening financing gaps, declining global support, and the need for stronger international cooperation. Delivering the keynote address, Mr. Stefan Priesner underlined that SDGs remain a landmark multilateral framework but now face challenges arising from global disruptions, debt burdens, and institutional pressures. Ms. Angela Lusigi emphasised a people-centric approach focused on marginalized communities, resilient systems, and innovative financing mechanisms.

Session I on "Lessons from Localisation Efforts and National Policies," chaired by Dr. P.K. Anand, highlighted the importance of integrated and context-specific

interventions. Dr. Pratap Singh Birthal stressed agriculture's critical role in food security and climate resilience, while Professor Jyoti Chandiramani highlighted gaps between policy frameworks and grassroots realities. Dr. Manish Priyadarshi emphasised localized solutions and stronger last-mile delivery mechanisms. Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Varshney highlighted the role of science, technology, AI, and systems thinking in achieving SDGs. Dr. Ganga Tilakaratra reflected on Sri Lanka's human development achievements while stressing regional disparities and financing constraints. Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay highlighted the importance of civil society participation, stronger local governance, and climate integration.

Session II on "Future of SDGs," chaired by Professor Pami Dua, focused on future pathways beyond 2030. Professor Sandhya Seshadri

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## CMEC-Maritime Knowledge Lecture Series: CEZ Development, Biomanufacturing and Circular Economy



*CMEC and FICD at RIS co-hosted, 15th Maritime Knowledge Lecture Series on “CEZ Development, Biomanufacturing and Circular Economy”.*

CMEC and the Forum for Indian Science Diplomacy, policy limbs of RIS, organised the 15th Maritime Knowledge Lecture Series on “CEZ Development, Biomanufacturing and Circular economy,” with knowledge support from the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India. The session examined the role of biomanufacturing and circular economy in shaping the next phase of India’s coastal industrial development under the broader framework of Maritime Amritkaal Vision 2047.

Introducing the session, Dr. Shishir Shrotriya, CMEC, highlighted that programmes such as Sagarmala have created

the foundation for port-led industrialisation, but the next phase of Coastal Economic Zone (CEZ) development must focus on technology integration, innovation, and sustainable resource utilization. He stressed that CEZs should evolve into integrated ecosystems combining logistics, manufacturing, and marine resource-based industries.

Dr. Vaishali Panjabi, Associate Head (Biomanufacturing), Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, outlined the BioE3 policy framework focused on Economy, Environment, and Employment. She highlighted the growing potential of marine biomass and coastal waste

streams for producing biofuels, bioplastics, and biofertilizers, while emphasizing integrated biorefineries, bio-foundries, and carbon capture-linked closed-loop production systems.

Delivering the lead lecture, Dr. Debasis Dash, Director, Institute of Life Sciences, highlighted the immense untapped potential of marine bioresources such as seaweed, microalgae, and coastal organic waste. He stressed the importance of circular bioeconomy systems based on zero-waste extraction and highlighted research on marine microbial isolation, industrial enzymes, and aquaculture probiotics. Dr. Dash also pointed to challenges including regulatory

gaps, fragmented institutional responsibilities, and the need for localized biomass processing and mechanized seaweed farming near coastal regions.

From an industry perspective, Dr. Rajkumar Halder, Founder and CEO, Ruhvenile Biomedical, highlighted the gap between innovation and commercialization, particularly at Technology Readiness Levels 7–9. He stressed the need for stronger validation systems, investment support, and ecosystem

development to scale indigenous marine biotechnology solutions and reduce import dependence.

Dr. Amit Kumar, Forum for Indian Science Diplomacy, RIS, emphasised the transformative role of synthetic biology and artificial intelligence in next-generation biomanufacturing. He underlined the need for interdisciplinary convergence, stronger institutional coordination, and accelerated technology adoption to position India competitively in the global

bioeconomy landscape.

The session concluded that biomanufacturing and circular bioeconomy will be central to CEZ development and India's maritime strategy, requiring coordinated regulatory reforms, localized processing systems, advanced technologies, and stronger research-to-market pathways to build sustainable and innovation-driven marine industrial clusters. ■

## Training and Capacity Building Programme on Global and Regional Economic Issues for BIMSTEC Countries



*Training & Capacity Building Programme for BIMSTEC Countries.*

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) in collaboration with BIMSTEC Secretariat and IDRC conducted two-day training programme on 13-14 January 2026 for BIMSTEC members on Global and Regional Economic Issues for BIMSTEC

countries, bringing together researchers and practitioners to strengthen regional policy dialogue and cooperation.

This training and capacity building programme is designed to equip students and scholars in the region with knowledge on

contemporary challenges facing the Bay of Bengal and to enhance their contribution to the evolving literature on BIMSTEC. The significant numbers of participants have joined this programme from India and other BIMSTEC countries. The participants represent a diverse

group, including PhD scholars from universities, early-stage researchers working with think tanks in BIMSTEC countries, practitioners, and young professionals from across the region. A total 13 participants, including two speakers, have joined from BIMSTEC countries; 11 participants were part of the University Connect initiative from Indian universities; 15 of RIS young colleagues have also joined; and in addition, 31 participants also attended the programme online. In this two-day training programme, following key thematic areas were covered: BIMSTEC: Progress and Challenges; Global Uncertainties, Multilateral and Regional Integration; Agriculture and Food Security; Digital and Financial Cooperation; Trade and Technology; Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs); Maritime Cooperation; and People-to-People Contacts.

In his welcome address, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General of RIS, emphasized the importance of policy-driven research, cross-country knowledge exchange, and collaboration among BIMSTEC researchers. He announced that RIS will host the 4th Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue on 16 January 2026, reaffirming its commitment to regional cooperation. Dr. Edgard Rodriguez, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), acknowledged RIS's long-standing partnership with IDRC and reflected on IDRC's decades of engagement across BIMSTEC countries. Mr. Md. Robiul Islam, Director, BIMSTEC Secretariat, highlighted the programme's role in addressing key regional and

global economic issues, stressing the need for coordinated efforts in sustainability, energy, connectivity, the blue economy, and digital infrastructure

In the Closing Session, Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General of RIS, concluded the programme by emphasizing the value of sustained policy dialogue and capacity-building. He encouraged participants to develop policy briefs aligned with the programme's themes, supported by mentorship and funding. High-quality research outputs may be published in an edited volume, showcasing regional insights and fostering deeper cooperation across BIMSTEC. Prof. Prabir De, who coordinated the programme, gave Vote of Thanks and thanks all the participants. ■



*Training & Capacity Building Programme for BIMSTEC Countries, 13-14 January 2026*

## Visit of Delegation from the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam to RIS

A delegation from the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, headed by Dr. Đỗ Thanh Hải, Deputy Director-General, called on Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) on 13 March 2026. They discussed current global headwinds and explored opportunities for strengthening India-Vietnam regional cooperation. Dr. Vu Hai Dang, Acting Director, Centre for Maritime Diplomacy, East Sea Institute, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, and Mr. Bui Ngoc Tuan, First Secretary at the Embassy of Vietnam in India. Prof. Prabir De, RIS was also present in the meeting. ■



## Visit of President, IDE to RIS



A delegation of Institute of Developing Economies (IDE), headed by Prof. Fukunari Kimura, President, IDE, visited RIS and held interaction with RIS team, headed by Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director-General, RIS,

on 16 March 2026. RIS and IDE discussed the current status of institutional engagements and opportunities for expansion of institutional collaboration. Mr. Isamu Wakamatsu, Director-General, ERIA also accompanied

the IDE President. Cmde. Sujeet Samaddar, Dr. Atul Kaushik, Prof. Prabir De, Dr. Sabyasachi Saha, Dr. Pankaj Vashisht, Dr. Sushil Kumar, Dr. Pankhuri Gaur were also present in the meeting. ■

## Visit of President, KIEP to RIS



A High-level delegation from the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), led by Dr. Siwook Lee, President, KIEP, visited the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), and met Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS on 17 March 2026. KIEP and RIS are long-standing partners, working closely on issues related to the Global South and development cooperation. RIS,

along with the Indian Council of World Affairs, is also engaged in a strategic 2+2 dialogue with Korea's KNDA and KIEP to strengthen India-Korea bilateral relations. New areas of cooperation such as shipbuilding, semiconductors, maritime connectivity, critical minerals, green hydrogen, the India-Korea CEPA, and AI and digital cooperation were explored. The KIEP delegation included Dr.

Kyunghoon Kim, Head of the South Asia Team; Dr. Cho Chongjae, Director of the KIEP Delhi Office; and Dr. Wonbin Park, Deputy Director of the KIEP Delhi Office. The RIS side was represented by Prof. Prabir De, Dr. Sabyasachi Saha, Cmde. Sujeet Samaddar, Dr. Atul Kaushik, Dr. Amit Kumar, Dr. Sushil Kumar, and Dr. Pankhuri Gaur. ■

## Visit of World Bank Transport Practice Manager for South Asia to RIS

Ms. Jen Jungeun Oh, Transport Practice Manager for South Asia, World Bank along with Mr. Arnab Bandyopadhyay, Programme Leader and Lead Transport Specialist, World Bank visited the RIS and met Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS on 17 February 2026 to discuss the current status of the IMEC. RIS side was represented by Prof. S K Mohanty, Dr. Sabyasachi Saha, Dr. Prabir De, and Cmde. Sujeet Samaddar. ■



## Visit of DDG, METI to RIS



Mr. Koichi Chiyo, Deputy Director-General for Trade, METI in charge of Japan-India-Africa cooperation, visited RIS on 13 February 2026 and met Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, Director General, RIS. Mr Nagumune, Head of METI in India also accompanied him.

Mr. Chiyo discussed the India-Africa cooperation in the areas of manufacturing, digital & communication and critical minerals. They have also discussed India's initiatives in Africa, and potential areas for Japan-India collaboration in Africa, including specific sectors

(incl. critical minerals) and countries, and the value of Japan-India partnerships (respective strengths and complementarities). The RIS side was represented by Prof. Prabir De, Cmde. Sujeet Samaddar, Dr. Atul Kaushik, Dr. Pankaj Vashisht and Dr. Sushil Kumar. ■

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Iyer stressed resilience and Global South leadership in shaping inclusive development frameworks. Ms. Anita Prakash highlighted the importance of regional cooperation and stronger alignment between SDGs and global frameworks such as Paris and Sendai. Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna underscored financing gaps and

the need for innovative tools such as green bonds and digitalization. Dr. Nicolas J.A. Buchoud advocated flexible and systemic approaches led by the Global South, while Professor Gladys Lechini stressed trust-based cooperation and redefining development beyond GDP. Professor Sanjeev Kumar highlighted the

transformative impact of AI and the need for education systems that foster deeper understanding and sustainability. Concluding the discussion, Dr. Saha emphasised the importance of continued dialogue, research collaboration, and evolving evaluation systems to address emerging development challenges. ■

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of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), noted that Brazil's development cooperation model is rooted in knowledge sharing, institutional capacity building, and solidarity among developing countries. She highlighted Brazil's experience in agriculture, public health, and social protection, and underlined the potential for

expanding structured cooperation with India. The technical session, chaired by Professor Amitabh Mattoo, focused on prospects for triangular cooperation and enhanced collaboration in trade, energy transition, digital governance, agriculture, and technology.

Participants highlighted complementarities between India and Brazil in areas such as energy,

food security, pharmaceuticals, and innovation, while emphasising their shared commitment to strengthening the voice of the Global South and promoting a more inclusive and development-oriented international order. The session was coordinated by Dr. Sushil Kumar, Assistant Professor at RIS. ■

### DG RIS's Visit to Sri Lanka

- Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma, DG, RIS and Prof. Prabir De visited Colombo to attend the ADB's Advisory Group Workshop, held on 6-7 March 2026.
- RIS DG also called on Dr. Dushini Weerakoon, ED, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) on 6 March 2026 and exchange views on institutional collaboration between IPS and RIS.
- DG RIS called on Indian High Commissioner in Colombo, Mr. Santosh Jha at the Indian High Commission Colombo on 6 March 2026. Dr. Prabir De accompanied the DG RIS. High Commissioner Jha shared his views on current status of the India-Sri Lanka relations and future prospects.

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Mr. Harsha Vardhana Singh, former WTO Deputy Director-General, argued that existing WTO rules still provide substantial flexibility for India's industrial policy, though future subsidy disciplines and plurilateral initiatives could gradually narrow policy space. Professor Surender Kumar, Delhi School of Economics, stressed the importance of manufacturing, domestic structural reforms, infrastructure improvement, and global value chain integration for long-term growth and employment.

Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Deputy Head, UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office, called for a more proactive Indian role in WTO reform debates and emphasised evidence-based industrial strategies. Dr. Nitya Nanda, Professor, Council for Social Development, highlighted the need for innovative industrial policy design and cautioned that new subsidy disciplines may disproportionately affect transparent developing economies. Dr. Surendar Singh,

Associate Professor, Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, raised concerns regarding WTO consistency of Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes and advocated greater flexibility for technology collaboration and value-chain upgrading.

Session II on "WTO Negotiations on Additional Provisions on Fisheries Subsidies" was moderated by Ambassador J.S. Deepak, former Permanent Representative of India to the WTO, who stressed the importance of meaningful Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT), transition periods, and coalition-building for developing countries.

Prof. Mukesh Bhatnagar, former Professor, Centre for WTO Studies, traced the evolution of fisheries negotiations and highlighted the need for calibrated overcapacity disciplines and development-oriented S&DT provisions. Ms. Neetu Kumari Prasad, Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, emphasised flexibility in defining

small-scale fishers and safeguarding livelihoods alongside sustainability goals.

Ms. Vahini Naidu, Programme Coordinator, South Centre, stressed the need for policy flexibility, technical support, and credible data systems to balance conservation objectives with food security and livelihoods. Ms. Tanu Singh, Secretary, Permanent Mission of India, Geneva, highlighted India's coalition-building efforts and advocacy for stronger disciplines on distant-water subsidies. Mr. Sebastian Mathew, Independent Advisor on Small-scale Fisheries, underlined the need for stronger monitoring, governance reforms, and resilience-building in fisheries management. Ms. Pallavi Arora, Consultant, Centre for WTO Studies, highlighted concerns regarding notification requirements, institutional capacity, and sustainability-linked rules, while stressing the importance of safeguarding domestic policy space. ■

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as examining the future of trade governance ahead of WTO MC14. It includes exploring the progress, or lack thereof, on key negotiating areas that may influence confidence in the multilateral trading system,

and what this means for countries with differing economic structures and development priorities. The discussion will span core aspects of WTO reform, including rule-making, dispute settlement,

development provisions, and institutional effectiveness, while also addressing how emerging issues are being incorporated into the trade governance framework. ■

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*Valedictory Session at the International Conference on 'Multilateralism Under Pressure - Roadmap to the WTO Ministerial Conference'*

space, and digital inequality for developing countries. Dr. Pritam Banerjee argued that rigid industrial policy disciplines risk limiting development opportunities for late industrialisers such as India.

Session III on “Negotiation Strategies at the WTO: Lessons from the Past” was chaired by Ms. Sindhushree Khullar, Member, Research Advisory Council, RIS. Mr. Abhijit Das outlined the “5 Ps” of trade negotiations – planning, persuasive arguments, partnership, persistence, and petulance – and stressed the importance of coalition-building and contingency strategies. Dr. Amrita Narlikar, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, highlighted the growing influence of geopolitics on trade negotiations. Dr. Harsha Vardhana Singh reiterated the importance of preserving a predictable multilateral trading system, while Dr. Prabhaskar Ranjan emphasised the need for stronger expertise in international trade law and negotiation strategies.

A special session jointly organised by RIS and the Delhi School of Economics focused on “Agriculture Trade in a Fragmenting World: Food Security, Subsidies, and Sustainability.” Chaired by Prof. Ram Singh, Director, Delhi School of Economics, the session highlighted growing global uncertainty and the importance of agriculture in multilateral trade negotiations. Dr. Edwini Kessie, Director, Agriculture and Commodities Division, WTO, outlined the state of play in agriculture negotiations ahead of MC14. Dr. Ashwani Mahajan stressed the need for balanced rules that protect food security and development interests, while Dr. Pratap Singh Birthal highlighted the importance of strengthening farmers’ incomes. Mr. Aditya Sesh discussed innovative agricultural financing models, and Ms. Ranja Sengupta highlighted the importance of equitable outcomes on public stockholding, special safeguard mechanisms, and cotton negotiations.

The valedictory session reinforced the need to strengthen multilateralism and South-South cooperation amid growing institutional and geopolitical pressures. Prof. Ram Singh highlighted the importance of multilateralism as a global public good that benefits developing countries and reduces negotiating asymmetries.

Dr. Seshadri Chari stressed that evolving global realities require institutional reorganisation and stronger South-South cooperation, particularly through initiatives such as DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence. Prof. Sharad K. Soni highlighted the importance of stronger academic-policy collaboration, while Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma concluded by emphasising RIS’s commitment to bridging the gap between academia, think tanks, and policymakers through evidence-based research and dialogue. ■

### **Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma** Director General

- Discussant in the Roundtable discussion on the 'Future of Social Science Research and Methods' organized by the ICSSR on 7th February 2026, New Delhi.
- Made a presentation on 'Think Tanks Track of BRICS' at the Sherpa Meeting on the theme, "Building for Resilience Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability" organised by MEA 09th February, 2026, New Delhi.
- Discussant in the Roundtable on 'Framing mid - Century Development Goals: Investing in human flourishing?', organized by Council for Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) on 03rd March 2026, New Delhi.
- Participated as a Member in the inaugural meeting of Inter-Subregional Economic Partnership Forum (ISEPF) organized by the Asian Development Bank on 5th March 2026, Colombo.
- Chaired the Session on 'South-South Trade and Investment' at the WIDER Development Conference 2026 on "Green Industrialisation and Inclusive Growth in a Fractured World Order", organised by ISID on 19th March 2026, New Delhi.

### **Dr. Priyadarshi Dash** Associate Professor

- Panelist in the Plenary Session on "ESG-Aligned Finance & Governance to Combat Greenwashing" at the International Conference on 'Water Transversality Global Awards and Conclave 2026' organised by India Water Mission on 6-7th March, 2026, at the India International Centre, New Delhi (Online).
- Made presentation virtually on "Digital Transformation in BIMSTEC: Opportunities for Economic Transformation and Employment Generation" at International Conference on 'Economic Development and Administration' organised by

Tribhuvan University and Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA), Kathmandu, Nepal on 20-21st February 2026.

- Made presentation virtually on "Digitalization and Fintech: India's Approaches and Priorities" at Sankore Peer-to-Peer Learning Webinar organised by African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET), Ghana on 18th February 2026.
- Online Lecture on "Next Generation Infrastructure: Integrating Physical and Digital Ecosystems" at 'Short-Term Programme on Innovations' Infrastructure and Industry for Accomplishing Vikshit Bharat' organised by Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak on 10th February 2026.
- Participated in "Digital and Financial Cooperation in BIMSTC" on 13th January 2026 for the participants of the 'Training and Capacity Building Programme on Global and Regional Economic Issues for the BIMSTEC Countries' organised by RIS, New Delhi.

### **Dr. Pankaj Vashisht** Associate Professor

- Participated as panellist in discussion on Critical Mineral Security, DD News Feb 5, 2026
- Participated as panellist in discussion on PM Modi's Visit to Malaysia, DD News Feb 6, 2026
- Made a presentation on the "Benefits of a Vietnam-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership: Expectations from India at International Conference on "Promoting Friendly Relations Towards a Comprehensive Economic Partnership between Vietnam and India, Jointly Organised by Institute for South Asian, West Asian and African Studies and Indian Mission to Vietnam, Hanoi, Vietnam, March 10, 2026

### **Dr. Amit Kumar** Assistant Professor

- Participated in "AI Governance and Digital Integration: Enabling Integration, Key Challenges and Solutions" during 4th BoBED held at IHC, New Delhi (17th January 2026)
- Participated in "E-Commerce Moratorium" during RIS Brainstorming Series on WTO held at IHC, New Delhi (30th January 2026)
- Panel Discussion on "Safe and Trusted AI: The Ethics and Governance Perspective" as Official Main Summit Event during India AI Impact Summit held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi (18th February 2026) with RIS as proud Knowledge Partner.
- Spoke on "India-BIMSTEC Cooperation in Digital and AI" in the Session on "AI Governance and Digital Integration: Enabling Integration, Key Challenges and Solutions" during 4th BoBED at IHC, New Delhi (17th January 2026)
- Spoke on "AI and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in India" during Technology and Innovation Conclave 2.0 organised by UNESCAP-APCTT and DSIR at Prithvi Bhawan (29th January 2026)
- Spoke on "AI in Healthcare" during a Roundtable at RIS held as Official Pre-Summit Event of India AI Impact Summit (4th February 2026)
- Spoke on "AI and Energy Security" at International Symposium on 'Human-Centred AI and Subsumable Development: Holistic Pathways for Energy Security' organised by CSIR-NIScPR as Official Pre-Summit Event of India AI Impact Summit (9th February 2026)
- Delivered Opening Remarks in the Panel Discussion on "Safe and Trusted AI: The Ethics and Governance Perspective" held as Official Main Summit Event during India AI Impact Summit at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi (18th February 2026)

- Spoke on “India’s Semiconductor Ecosystem: Policy, Governance and Institutional Framework” during a Workshop on ‘Strengthening India’s Semiconductor Ecosystem’ organised by CSIR-NIScPR (27th February 2026)
- Spoke on “WTO Customs Duty Moratorium on Electronic Transmissions” during the International Conference on ‘Multilateralism under Pressure: Roadmap to the WTO Ministerial Conference’ (21st March 2026)
- Spoke on “Role of AI and Synthetic Biology in Biomanufacturing Sector” during the Seminar on ‘CEX Development: Biomanufacturing and Circular Economy’ held as part of Maritime Knowledge Lecture Series (25th March 2026)

### Dr. Sushil Kumar

#### Assistant Professor

- Participated in '8th India Think Tank Forum 2026' themed on 'India in the Changing World: Building Inner Resilience' on 12-13 January 2026 at Nalanda University.
- Presented on 'India-Brazil Cooperation for the Global South' during the Policy Dialogue on India-Brazil Partnership for the Global South on 21 February 2026.
- Delivered a presentation on 'Global Development Cooperation Architecture and the Global South' during the interactive session on International Cooperation and the Global South on 12 March 2026.
- Presented the outline of the chapter for ASEAN-India Development Report 2026 on 'Dynamics of India-ASEAN Development Cooperation Partnership' on 13 March 2026.

### Dr. Pankhuri Gaur

#### Assistant Professor

- Organised RIS Brainstorming Series for 14th Ministerial Conference of the WTO: Industrial Policy and Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations
- Made a presentation in a Panel Discussion on 'One year of Trump 2.0: A Reset or Rift in America First Policy' on 21st January 2026, organised by ICWA

- Made a presentation on 'Blue Economy and Sustainable Development Pathways' at the 4th Global South Young Diplomats Forum, organised by SSIFS, on 19th February 2026
- Addressed the 2nd Combined Special Course for diplomats from Cambodia and Timor-Leste, on the topic 'Blue Economy and Sustainable Ocean Governance' on 11th March
- Prepared a Concept Note on Blue Economy for BRICS Presidency.

### Dr. Atul Kaushik

#### GDC Fellow

- Contributed an Expert View Article “India’s Increased Focus on Sustainability Issues in Recent Free Trade Agreements” to Synergies of the Forum on Trade, Environment, & the SDGs of the Graduate Institute, Geneva - available at <https://tessforum.org/latest/indias-increased-focus-on-sustainability-issues-in-recent-free-trade-agreements>.
- Distinguished Speaker and Session Moderator at the International Conference on “Role of International Trade in Global Energy Transition” held on 17th January, 2026 organized by the NLUO Centre for International Trade Law in collaboration with the WTO Chairs Programme, Centre for Trade and Investment Law at National Law University Odisha.
- Distinguished Speaker at the 11th Global Leadership Research Conference on Sustainable Fintech and Global Trade Promoting Inclusive Growth and Climate Resilience, on 11th February, 2026 at Amity University.
- Participated in “E Court Administration and Judicial Proceedings- Integration of ICT” during National Seminar on Court Administration for Principal District Judges at National Judicial Academy on 22nd February, 2026.
- Represented RIS at the High-Level Dialogue on “WTO Reform at a Turning Point: A New Approach for a New Reality” organised by International Chamber of

Commerce (ICC) India and Chintan Research Foundation (CRF) on 6th March, 2026.

- Participated in 'Global Development Compact for South-South Cooperation' for Diplomats of South Sudan at the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service on 4th February, 2026, for diplomats of Cambodia and Timor-Leste on 9th March, 2026
- Featured Speaker on “Institutional Vision: The Evolution of Legal Aid” during Nyay Sabha 2026 on 14th March, 2026.
- Represented RIS at the Closed-Door Roundtable on “The Future of the WTO E-Commerce Moratorium: Implications for India and the Digital Trade Ecosystem,” organized by Economic Law Practice on 16th March 2026.
- Participated in “Decision Making” for Deputy Secretaries and Directors of the Government of India at the Institute of Secretariat and Management (ISTM) on 9th February, 2026 and on “Challenges at Middle Management Level in the Government” on 26th February, 2026.

### Cmdr Sujeet Samaddar

#### Visiting Fellow

- Attended Indian National Shipbuilding Conference 24 Feb 2026.
- Attended India Japan Maritime Conference on 5 March 2026
- Attended India-Japan Defence Cooperation by India Foundation on 24 March 2026. (7) India Korea Economic Cooperation on 7 April 2026

### Dr. Amol Baxi

#### Visiting Fellow

- Participated as RIS nominated speaker in the Panel Discussion "Financing Infrastructure and Innovations: Alliances for Global Economic Stability" in Mumbai organized by the Future Economic Cooperation Council (FECC) in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs, India and the Government of Maharashtra on February 19, 2026.

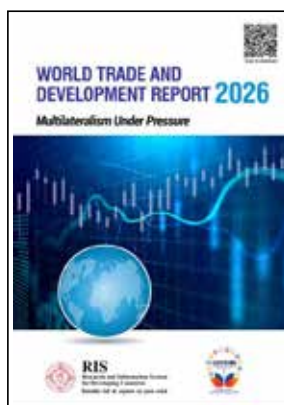
## Dr. Sarin NS Consultant

- Dr. Sarin N S, Coordinator, FITM delivered a talk on 'Traditional Medicine and Holistic Wellness' for the 4th Global South Young Diplomats at the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service on 25.02.2026.

- The FITM team members – Dr. Sarin N S and Pragyan Agarwal, participated in a Roundtable Discussion on 'Indigenous Knowledge Systems: A Priority for India's BRICS-Chairship' at

the Vivekananda International Foundation on January 8, 2026 and provided substantial inputs.

- The FITM team participated in the discussions with the ICMR-NISc team on mapping the contours of joint collaborative work with RIS.



## RIS REPORTS

- *MSME Digitalisation in India Current Status and Challenges*, RIS, New Delhi, 2026.
- *Outcome Report: Roadmap for Atmanirbhar Bharat in a Fragmented World with Strong Headwinds*, RIS, New Delhi, 2026.
- *Outcome Report: Navigating the Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Landscape: Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation in a Changing World*, RIS, New Delhi, 2026.
- *World Trade and Development Report 2026: Multilateralism Under Pressure*, RIS, New Delhi, 2026.
- *Policy Dialogue: India-Brazil Partnership in the Global South*, RIS, New Delhi, 2026.
- *Aligning the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP): Establishing Operational Frameworks*, RIS, New Delhi, 2026.

- *New Frontier of Trade Opening through India-Oman Bilateral CEPA*, RIS, New Delhi, 2026.

## RIS POLICY BRIEFS

- #126 *Dynamics of India-Germany Relations: A Case Study of Triangular Cooperation in Africa* by Sushil Kumar
- #127 *Green on Paper, Red in Practice: the EU Deforestation Regulation and its Implications for BRICS Trade* by Sachin Kumar Sharma, Lakshmi Swathi Ganti, Alisha Goswami, Paavni Mathur, Tanya Malhotra
- #128 *EU-CBAM: Trade Implications and Policy Responses* by Rajeev Kher and Anshuman Gupta
- #129 *ESanjeevani-National Telemedicine Service* by Monika Kochar
- #130 *Policy Issues Related to WTO Reform Before the 14th Ministerial Conference of the WTO* by Harsha Vardhana Singh, Atul Kaushik and Teesta Lahiri
- #131 *WTO Dispute Settlement Reform – An Issue That Goes Beyond the 14th Ministerial Conference* by Atul Kaushik and Renu

#132 *E-Commerce Moratorium: Issues before the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference and Way Forward* by G D Lohani, Amit Kumar and Alaknanda Mishra

#133 *Harvesting Consensus or Deadlock: WTO Agriculture Negotiations Ahead of MC14* by Sachin Kumar Sharma, Talha Akbar Kamal, Alisha Goswami, Yogeshwari Mahajan, and Kamna Chaudhary

#134 *Recalibrating India's Quality Control Order Framework* by Rajeev Kher & Anil Jauhri

#135 *Reaching Finish Line of WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies: Tough Road Ahead* by Mukesh Bhatnagar, Pankhuri Gaur and Ayush Tiwari

#136 *Development Dimension -The Forgotten Pillar: Special and Differential Treatment Provisions* by Abhijit Das, Paavni Mathur and Sushil Kumar

#137 *Public Stockholding for Food Security at the WTO: An Unfinished Agenda* by Sachin Kumar Sharma, Suvayan Neogi, Paavni Mathur and Palkin Ratna

#138 *Multilateralism Served à la Carte: The Rise of Joint Statement Initiatives at the WTO* by Shailja Singh, Priyadarshi Dash and Pragyan Agarwal

#139 *Trade and Sustainability: Imperatives for India to consider for MC14* by R V Anuradha, Rajeev Kher, Anshuman Gupta and Lakshmi Swathi Ganti

#140 *Investment Facilitation for Development: India's Policy Dilemma at MC 14* by Anwar H. Shaikh, Pankaj Vashisht and Vaasu Aggarwal

#141 *WTO Reform and Industrial Policy Space: An Indian Perspective for MC14* by Pritam Banerjee, Zaki Hussain, Amit Randev, Kanika Karwal and Riddhi Lakhiani

#142 *Recalibrating Global South-Global North Engagement in WTO for Global Recovery* by S.K. Mohanty, Sabyasachi Saha and Pankhuri Gaur

## RIS DISCUSSION PAPERS

#318 *Tokenisation of Maritime Assets: Solutions for Fractional Ship Owning* by Sujeet Samaddar and Vanshika Goyal

#319 *Fostering Agri-Food System Transformation for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth: Challenges and Policy Imperatives* by P. Srinivasa Rao

#320 *Scaling Telehealth Solutions: Insights from Northeast India and Applicability in the Global South* by Monika Kochar

#321 *Evolution of China's Agricultural Subsidies: Between Reform Pressures and Policy Space at the WTO* by Sachin Kumar Sharma, Kamna Chaudhary, Talha Akbar Kamal, Alisha Goswami and Teesta Lahiri

#322 *India's BRICS Chairship 2026: Cooperation for Resilience and Sustainability* by Sabyasachi Saha, Pratyush Sharma, Kanishk Rohilla and Syed Arslan Ali

#323 *Trade and Investment Convergences in Global North and Global South: Implications for WTO MC14* by S.K. Mohanty, Sabyasachi Saha and Pankhuri Gaur

#324 *E-Commerce Moratorium at WTO: Evolution, Status and Way Forward* by G D Lohani, Amit Kumar and Alaknanda Mishra

#325 *Fragmenting the Multilateral Trade System: The Rise of JSIs at the WTO* by Shailja Singh, Priyadarshi Dash and Pragyan Agarwal

#326 *Fisheries Subsidies and the Development Imperative: Balancing Sustainability and Equity* by Mukesh Bhatnagar, Pankhuri Gaur and Ayush Tiwari

#327 *WTO MC14 and Trade-Sustainability Nexus: Strategic Choices Ahead* by R V Anuradha, Rajeev Kher, Anshuman Gupta and Lakshmi Swathi Ganti

#328 *Special and Differential Treatment Provisions in the WTO: Evaluating Pathways for Development* by Abhijit Das, Paavni Mathur and Sushil Kumar

#329 *Public Stockholding for Food Security: Negotiating an Unfulfilled Commitment at the WTO* by Sachin Kumar Sharma, Suvayan Neogi, Paavni Mathur and Palkin Ratna

#330 *India's Push for Balancing Industrial Policy Space in WTO: A Developing Economy Lens* by Pritam Banerjee, Zaki Hussain, Amit Randev, Kanika Karwal and Riddhi Lakhiani

#331 *Investment Facilitation for Development at WTO: Issues and Implications* by Anwar Hussain Shaik, Pankaj Vashisht and Vaasu Aggarwal

## AIC COMMENTARIES

#58 *22nd ASEAN India Summit: Understanding the Implications* by Sampa Kundu

#59 *Beyond Festivals and Exhibitions: Deepening ASEAN-India Cultural Cooperation* by Teh Lip Li

#60 *India-Malaysia Energy Cooperation: The Next Frontier* by Rahul Mishra and Shashank Khandwe

#61 *Aligning the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP): Establishing Operational Frameworks* by Monish Tourangbam

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUTSIDE PUBLICATIONS BY RIS FACULTY

De, Prabir and Kartik Kishore (2026) 'Neighbourhood First: Changing Profile of India's Economic Engagement', In Shishir Priyadarshi and Chavi Vasisth (eds.) *Perspectives from and within India and Its Neighbourhood*, Chintan Research Foundation (CRF), New Delhi.

Sharma, Sachin Kumar. Published Podcast Interview Video on 'Strengthening Regional Cooperation in a Fractured Multilateral System', organised by Asian Confluence on 13th February 2026. <https://youtu.be/ev39SIkI3A>

Sharma, Sachin Kumar et.al. (2025). Contributed an Expert View Article "India's Increased Focus on Sustainability Issues in Recent Free Trade Agreements" to Synergies of the Forum on Trade, Environment, & the SDGs of the Graduate Institute, Geneva - available at <https://tessforum.org/latest/indias-increased-focus-on-sustainability-issues-in-recent-free-trade-agreements>

Sharma, S.K.; Vashisht, Pankaj and Mathur, Paavni (2026). 'Designing the Digital Economy: India's DPI-led Development model and its Global Relevance', Japan Spotlight, March/April 2026.



# RIS

Research and Information System  
for Developing Countries

विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

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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