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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The Institute of Social and Cultural Studies that for last four years have been informing and discussing about multiple national and International contemporary issues.Keepings its trend alive and adhering to the Institute's interest ISCS's popular Bi-Monthly "News Reel" steps into its fifth year featuring nations historic success of Chandrayaan-3 that has made India the first country to safely land a craft in the moon's south pole region From geo-political perspectives the bulletin stream how in response to China building newer and advanced military infrastructure on her side, India has started the construction work for upgrading Nyoma Advanced Landing Ground for full fledged, all weather fighter aircraft operations which is located less than fifty kilometers from the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh.

As The G20 New Delhi summit acknowledged the increasing economic and political importance of the Global South, with increase in trade and commerce the challenges of illicit smuggling of drugs also evokes. The article on "Shifting Epicentre of War on Drugs: A Long Road Ahead" gives a comprehensive ideas and understanding about the impact of narco-trafficking in South Asia, particularly for India and how country plans to implementing counternarcotics policies under these changing circumstances before it gets too late. Final article highlights that with the onset of festivities which is a fascinating display of our rich culture and tradition and sharing bond of love depicting community mutuality through rituals and practices often endanger our environment. Thus these festivals can become even more pleasant and healthier through adopting an eco-friendly way of celebration that would nurture our environment prevent everyone involved in the festivities in the longer run. With that hope I and the entire team of ISCS wishes everyone a very happy and healthy festive season.

– Arindam Mukherjee, Director, ISCS,India

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1



THE FUTURE IS HERE: INDIA'S MOON MISSION CHANDRAYAAN-3, A breakthrough in space exploration

— Shantanu Som*

India's moon mission, Chandrayaan-3, holds great significance not just for the country but for the entire world. With this mission, India aims to build on the success of its previous lunar missions and further expand its presence in space exploration.

One of the key objectives of Chandrayaan-3 is to land a rover on the moon's surface, which would allow for an in-depth study of its geology, mineralogy, and the presence of water. This could potentially unlock vital information about the moon's formation and evolution, as well as its potential for future human colonization.

In addition, Chandrayaan-3 will also contribute to the global understanding of the moon's resources and its potential as a stepping stone for further space exploration. The data and discoveries from this mission will not only benefit India's scientific community but will also be shared with scientists worldwide to advance our collective knowledge of the moon and beyond.

The positive impacts:

The successful launch and operation of Chandrayaan-3 will have a profound impact on India's space exploration sector. It will not only establish India as a major player in the global space race but also pave the way for future advancements and missions.

Firstly, Chandrayaan-3 will significantly boost India's scientific capabilities. By exploring the lunar surface in greater detail, it will provide valuable data and insights

that can be used for a variety of scientific purposes. This data will contribute to our understanding of the origin and evolution of the moon, as well as shed light on the potential for lunar resources and future human colonization.

Secondly, the success of Chandrayaan-3 will inspire and motivate future generations of scientists and engineers in India. It will showcase the country's technological prowess and ignite a new wave of innovation and research in the field of space exploration. This will not only benefit India but also contribute to the global advancements in space science and technology.

Moreover, the Chandrayaan-3 mission will also have economic ramifications. It will stimulate investments in India's space industry, leading to the creation of new job opportunities and the growth of related sectors. This, in turn, will strengthen India's economy and position it as a key player in the global space market.

These are the top ten areas where Chandrayaan-3's success is going to bring positive impacts.

1. Lunar Landing Achievement: With Chandrayaan-3's successful soft landing on the Moon, India will join the US, Russia, and China in a select club. This accomplishment will highlight India's technical and space exploration skills.

2. Increasing National and Economic Pride: Chandrayaan-3's successful completion would increase India's national pride by showcasing the nation's technological prowess and accomplishments in space exploration. Additionally, it will benefit India's economy by luring new investments into the space industry.

3. Improved Global Reputation: The Chandrayaan-3 mission will improve India's standing in the world of scientific research and space exploration. It would strengthen India's standing as a key participant in space missions, earning respect and approval from other nations.

4. Technological Development: Chandrayaan-3 will develop technology in a number of fields, including communications, engineering, and space research. The mission will promote innovation and the creation of fresh technology that can be used to various sectors of the economy. 5. Key Scientific Findings: Chandrayaan-3 will offer important information and insights into the geology, mineralogy, and environment of the moon, advancing our knowledge of space and the cosmos.

6. Possibilities for Future Exploration: Chandrayaan-3's successful conclusion will pave the way for upcoming joint missions and partnerships with other spacefaring nations. India can actively take part in international space programs and make contributions to upcoming deep space exploration initiatives.

7. Economic Growth and Job Creation: The space industry has a reputation for having the ability to stimulate economic growth. Chandrayaan-3 will open up possibilities for manufacturing, research, and development, generating work opportunities and fostering economic activity in connected sectors.

8. Education and Inspiration: The mission will stimulate young Indians' minds and motivate them to seek jobs in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The next generation of scientists and astronauts will benefit from its promotion of scientific education and important role in their development.

9. International Collaboration: Chandrayaan-3 opens doors for global cooperation, promotes information sharing, and forges closer links between India and other spacefaring countries. Collaboration can result in shared resources, joint projects, and improvements in space technology.

10. Spin-off Technologies and Applications: The technologies created for space missions frequently have applications in a number of different industries, including healthcare, telecommunications, and transportation. Innovative technologies will be developed as a result of Chandrayaan-3, which can then be applied to solve societal problems and improve daily living.

In conclusion, Chandrayaan-3's impact on India's space exploration sector will be far-reaching. It will elevate India's scientific capabilities, inspire future generations, and drive economic growth. This mission represents a significant breakthrough for India and reaffirms its commitment to pushing the boundaries of space exploration. Stay tuned for the next section, where we will delve into the technological challenges faced by ISRO during the development of Chandrayaan-3.

^{*} Founder & CEO of Somnetics, a Digital Transformation Company based out of Kolkata, India.



ADVANCED LANDING GROUND, NYOMA, LADAKH

– Bibhas Das*

In response to China building newer and advanced military infrastructure on her side, India has started the construction work for upgrading Nyoma Advanced Landing Ground for full fledged, all weather fighter aircraft operations which is located less than fifty kilometers from the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh.

At 13,700 ft above sea level, 85 Km from Chushul and the famous Pangong Lake, 75km from ISRO's Himalayan Chandra Observatory in Hanle and an approximately 100km from Manali Leh Highway (NH3) via Tsokar Lake and Pologonka Pass, Nyoma is a remote village situated in the southern region of Union Territory of Ladakh. With Dumchele on the East Pangong Tso on the North, Chumur and Imis La on the South, Nyoma is a strategic location which came into existance as an Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) during the 1962 Indo-China conflict. Notably, it is also a mere 70 Km from the famous Battlefield of Rezang la (on the Tsaka La Road) where

13 Kumayun created probably the most glorious chapter of Indian military history through their heroic last stand against the invading Chinese army.

At the peak of the Sino-Indian stand-off back in 2020, Indian Airforce moved its Mi-17 (NATO: HIP-H) medium lift choppers, CH-47F Chinook heavy-lift choppers and AH-64E Apache attack choppers to



Nyoma for supporting troops deployed in forward areas as well as for surveillance and intelligence gathering. It also saw operations of C130J Super Hercules on its semi- prepared runway.

Nyoma bridges the critical gap between Leh Air-force base and the Southern region of Ladakh all the way up until Chumur and Ukudungle as well as the South Eastern flank till Demchok. It is also acts as a force multiplier measure to nearby Chushul Advance Landing Ground. Nyoma is a relatively flatter region that is ideal for creating large airfield capable of operating heavy lift aircraft. The current plan includes building a 9,000ft long concrete runway, support infrastructures, hangers, accommodation and all weather roads connecting nearby area. The road to Hanle via Mood was already existing even back in 2015. However the road via Pologongka La to the West should be upgraded along with Tsaka La Road towards North all the way up to Man, Merak and Spangmik. The area also have to reinforced with credible air defence systems and for that newer infrastructure may also be built.

Nyoma is an extremely high altitude airfield and it poses multiple challenges to aircraft engines. To overcome the challenges in starting at high-altitude airfields, engine parameters must be tweaked to enable them to start at extremely low temperatures and in thin atmosphere with relatively low Oxygen content. Temperature in the region usually plummets to negative 40 degrees Celsius during winter season and these is a substantial challenge to maintain the functioning of lubricants, batteries and various type of oils. Currently, "weatherization kits" are being developed to operate aircraft from high-altitude airbases throughout the year in all weather conditions.

In the past years, China has upgraded its airbases in the vicinity and built new airstrips including dual use airfields, roads, accommodation for troops and ammunition dumps. China has also upgraded roads opposite eastern Ladakh as well as strengthened alternate approaches around its garrison in Spanggur (also known as Moldo Garrison) near Spanggur Tso as part of efforts to reduce its vulnerabilities in response to August 2020 hostilities against India when Indian Army deployed tanks and troops on Kailash Range overlooking what is known as the Spanggur gap. All these are part of the overall Chinese military drive along the 3,500 km Line of Actual Control that has permanently altered the status quo in the region.

The task of building the new Nyoma airbase have been given to Border Road Organization (BRO). As per Internet sources the cost of the project is somewhere between 200 to 300 crore and an estimated two to three years time-frame as construction become impossible during the harsh winter months.

Indian Air-force regularly sends Mig-29s and more recently the Rafales to Ladakh for terrain familiarization sorties. In the current situation we probably don't see reasons to station high value aircraft at Nyoma ALG. Rafale, with a combat radius (without midair refueling) in excess of 1500km along with its SCALP Beyond Visual Range (BVR) standoff missile with a range of 300 ~ 400 km, may never make Nyoma their home. But if ever such a need ever arises, we may get a straight 1800+ km strike radius inside Chinese Occupied Tibet, and that's a whole different story for another day.



5



SHIFTING EPICENTRE OF WAR ON DRUGS: A LONG ROAD AHEAD For India

— Shreyas Deshmukh*

The G20 New Delhi summit acknowledged the increasing economic and political importance of the Global South. The process of focus on the Global South has been in motionsince the beginning of this century, first with China, then South (East) Asia, and now India is emerging as industrial production hubs. With the increasing wealth, the region has attracted some misfortunes such as organised crime, money laundering, weapon smuggling, and the most devastating of them all - narco-trafficking, which significantly impacts the socio-economic stability and security of the states. In the late last century, southern countries like Columbia, Iran, and Myanmar were the major producers of plant-based narcotics substances, while the majority of the consumer market was in North America and Europe. However, the advent of Synthetic drugs changed the trends and put the global south

on the map as a producer, transit, and consumer of various narcotics substances. Globalisation's manifestation is evident in three variables (improved connectivity, a growing population, and increasing wealth) which also proved crucial for the proliferation of synthetic drugs.

India is located in between traditional narcotics supply routes of the East Golden Triangle and the West Golden Crescent and its 7516 kms of long coastline shares sea borders with the emerging narcotics market of Africa and East Asia. Squeezed between these geographies India is facing greater non-traditional security threats from narcotrafficking to India and the wider region, now more than ever. The year 2022-2023 saw the largest seizure of narcotics substance in world history. In the immediate neighbourhood of India, while Afghanistan has reported a reduction in opium and methamphetamine production under the Taliban rule, Myanmar under the Military Junta saw an increase in production owing to political and security instability in the country. Against this backdrop, it is imperative to understand the impact of narco-trafficking in South Asia, particularly for India.

Shifting Epicentre of War on Drugs

The introduction of cheaper synthetic drugs in the last decade such as methamphetamine, immediately captured market share not only in Europe and American but also inemerging markets of Asia and Africa. The drug market of all these regions was once dominated by plant-based drugs like Cocaine and Heroin. Increasing competition resulted in decreasing prices has managed to further proliferate drugs into the different strata of societies based on their purchasing capacity. Eventually, mass production helped to reduce the prices further. Revolutionary changes in the chemical and pharmaceutical industry across the world also boosted the production of refined psychedelic substances as they have been used to extract synthetic drugs and precursors to refine morphine-based substances. The production of synthetic drugs requires limited space and is mostly based on nonperishable chemicals. On the contrary, plant-based drugs like Heroin and Cocaine are produced from Poppy Opium and Coca leaves respectively, which require huge land for plantations and human resources for harvesting and processing.

According to the 2023 UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) World Drug Report, since 2011,across the world an average of 10 million people have fallen prey to drug addiction each year. By 2021, the global number of addicts stood at a total of 300 to 400 million. Such aggressive growth leaves less space for the governments with capacity building to tackle the issues at hand, in this case, the government system has had to fight against two distinct categories of substances, a new and an old.

For decades America and Europe have developed counternarcotics policies against cannabis, cocaine, and heroin and pinpointed their supply networks. The coordinated operations against these networks in 2022 and 2023 indicates that the West is trying to eradicate the old known narcotics suppliers before taking on the new one. In April 2023, Interpol in coordination with security agencies of fourteen South American States carried out one of the largest counter-narcotics and firearm operations in which 14, 260 arrests were made along with seizure of 8,263 illicit firearms and 203 tonnes of Cocaine. Between March 2022 to April 2023, the United Kingdom reported highest highestever seizure of Cocaine, Ketamine, and cannabis since 1994. Dubai Customs helped Canada, Australia, and Japan in seizing billions of dollars' worth of narcotics in 2023. А few other examples are listed in the following table.

Country of Seizure	Destination	Year	Product	Volume
Spain	US/Europe	2023	Cocaine	9.5 tonnes
Central and South America	US/Europe/ Asia	2023	Cocaine	200 tonnes
UK	UK/Europe	2022-23	Cocaine Ketamine Cannabis	18.8 tonnes1.9 tonnes35 tonnes
South American Coast	Australia	2023	Cocaine	2.4 tonnes
Iraq	West Asia	2022-23	Captagaon/ amphetamine pills	10 million pills
Portugal	Europe	2023	Cocaine	4.2 tonnes

Major seizers of narcotics substances across the world in 2022-2023, Data Source: collected from various media reports

Tightening noose in these countries may force the traffickers to expand their business in emerging markets such as India, where law enforcement is comparatively less equipped to deal with such challenges. Geographical proximity to traditional narco-trafficking routes, rapid urbanisation, and flourishing domestic and international tourism makes South Asia in general, and India, in particular, an attractive opportunity for these criminal elements.

Emerging Trend of Narcotics Trafficking in India and its Neighbourhood

In September 2023, a peculiar case was registered in Nepal, in which a few people were apprehended for trafficking marijuana from the US to India. This kinds of possibility of traffickers testing the viability of new routes before sending larger shipments of other expensive drugs cannot be denied. The reports of seizures of various narcotics substances in and around India in the last few years indicate the increasing competition among cartels to dominate the market.

Afghanistan has been the primary source of Opium, Heroin, and Methamphetamine in the South Asia. Taliban's announcement of banning the production and trafficking of narcotics substances in April 2022, drastically reduced poppy cultivation in the country, while there are some conflicting reports about theactual production of Ephedrine-based Methamphetamine. Considering the economic instability of the country, the reliance of farmers on poppy cultivation and still powerful drug lords raises questions over the sustainability of such policy in the long term. As of now, there is no visible or immediate impact of the banon traffickers as they are using strategic reserves to meet the demand. There is a possibility of Myanmar taking over Afghan heroin and opium supplies in South and Southeast Asia. UNODC reported increased Poppy cultivation in the Shan State of Myanmar, while national production of opium reached the 1999 level in 2022 which is 800 tones. Increased production of Methamphetamine in Myanmar is also flooding Bangladesh making it the largest market in South Asia. Bangladesh has strengthened the security on its border with Myanmar to check the influx of drugs. The north-eastern states of India which border with Myanmar have also seen increasing narcotics supplies. Some of these states have the highest number of opiates in India. In November 2022, the Narcotics Control Bureau of India (NCB) intercepted multiple trawlers who were trafficking opium from North East India to Rajasthan.



Seizures of methamphetamine in South Asia, 2000–2021, Source: UNODC World Drug Report 2023

On the western border, India still remainsvulnerable tothe continual increase in supplies from predominant trafficking from Pakistan through land and sea. Political and economic volatility in Pakistan provides opportune space for the traffickers. They are heavily relying on maritime routes for larger shipments of Heroin and Methamphetamine with high purity. After one of the largest seizures in India's history in 2021 where 2,988 Kg of heroin was recovered in India's



Inbound trafficking of heroin in India, 2015–2021. Source: UNODC World Drug Report 2023

Mundra port and recently in May 2023 NCB seized 2,500 Kg of Methamphetamine worth 12,000 crores. Many of these shipments are also destined for Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Coastal East African States.

Alongside the usual way of using border trade between India and Pakistan, smugglers are also using new technologies such as drones to send smaller shipments. From June- 2020 to 2023, in three years 53 incidents of recovery of drones in smuggling of arms and narcotics have been detected. Indian Ministry of Home Affairs established the Anti Rogue Drone Technology Committee (ARDTC) to evaluate available technologies to deal with such rouge drones. Along with inbound narcotics substances from Afghanistan, Myanmar, and South America, the production of synthetic drugs flourished across the north Indian States as portable labs and interstate trafficking put more pressure on the agencies.

A Cooperative Mechanism is a Must

Although the Indian government announced that it has adopted a two-pronged strategy focusing on 'supply reduction' and 'demand reduction' to achieve the target of 'Nasha Mukta Bharat'(Drug Free India). The government is trying to learn from other's experiences and establish a regular dialogue with international and regional partners. The inaugural meeting of the US-India Counter Narcotics Working Group was held in December 2020, in the same month India-Indonesia held the 4th Bilateral Joint Working Group Meeting in which they discussed increasing trafficking through the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. Tajikistan in May 2023, during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, suggested creating a 'security belt'around Afghanistan over drug smuggling.

Most of these cooperations focused on tackling the issue on the receiving end, but countries from South and East Asia need to learn lessons from the West and fight at the source. With the introduction of synthetic drugs, narcotics production and trafficking have fragmented involving more people in the business. Thousands of people are apprehended every year and it is impossible to put them in custody for long, after release most of them are returning to the same business. Therefore, it is imperative to amend and enact new laws to deal with new challenges. Further, it requires a coordinated approach as it is a transboundary issue involving multiple states. It is time to establish a new inclusive mechanism involving a Global South for drafting and implementing counternarcotics policies under these changing circumstances before it gets too late.

^{*} Research Associate, Delhi Policy Group(DPG)



A SUSTAINABLE CELEBRATION: BALANCING TRADITION AND CONSERVATION

— Soumya Bhowmick*

Major events and festivals now play a prominent role in the tourism industry, attracting large crowds and making substantial economic contributions. However, the past decade has witnessed a notable shift in focus, driven by various stakeholders, including policymakers, event organisers, sponsors, and academics, who have increasingly recognised the importance of comprehending the environmental impacts of these gatherings.

This growing awareness of sustainability aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and Goal 13 (Climate Action). Consequently, this heightened concern has led to the establishment of standards for sustainable event management and formation of organisations like *A Greener Festival* and the *Sustainable Event Alliance*, and the development of specialised software tools for environmental assessment, contributing to global efforts to achieve these SDGs by promoting responsible and environmentally conscious practices within the event and festival industry.

Global Festivals And Measuring Eco-Consciousness

Determining the environmental impact of global festivals is challenging, as it depends on various factors, such as the size of the event, location, and sustainability efforts. Some festivals have made significant strides in reducing their environmental footprint. For instance, Norway's Øya Festival has been recognised for its commitment to sustainability, focusing on waste management, food, transportation, and energy efficiency, making it one of the world's greenest events. Glastonbury Festival in the UK is known for its extensive green policies, including waste reduction and sustainable practices, making it a leader in eco-friendly festivals.

In contrast, traditional festivals like Oktoberfest in Munich have faced criticism for their environmental impact, particularly methane emissions. This festival's ecological footprint may be high due to the large volume of attendees and beer consumption, leading to concerns about greenhouse gas emissions. Ultimately, determining the global festival with the highest environmental impact can vary depending on whether one assesses positive sustainability efforts or negative ecological consequences. The eco-friendliness of festivals is an evolving field, with many events striving to reduce their environmental footprint.

However, despite a surge in festival-related sustainability efforts, there is a lack of consensus on evaluation methods. Several assessment methods exist, such as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Life Cycle Analysis (LCA), biophysical processes, and carbon emissions tracking, each with strengths and limitations. While many festivals have focused on mitigating their local environmental impacts, it's increasingly important to understand the broader global resource demands and emissions generated by these events. Concentrating solely on local impacts limits the ability to compare festivals and evaluate the effectiveness of various sustainability strategies, especially in the context of the growing need to reduce global resource use and greenhouse gas emissions.

Scholars have recently begun adopting a triplebottom-line framework, considering economic, social, and environmental impacts. However, achieving a balanced assessment remains challenging. Assessing the environmental dimensions of sustainability is particularly complex, given the absence of widely agreed-upon methods. The Ecological Footprint (EF) has garnered attention as a tool to measure the global environmental impact and has been applied to evaluate the ecological footprint of tourism and events. Still, limited studies are using it to assess festivals' environmental impacts.

Urgent Call For Sustainable Indian Festivals

While culturally significant and unifying, festivals in India have varying environmental impacts. For example,

during Diwali, the festival of lights, noise levels in several cities exceeded the permissible limits by a significant margin, impacting the local flora and fauna in addition to the adverse effects on human health and well-being. Despite the ban on firecrackers, in 2022, Diwali in New Delhi proved to be noisier than the previous year, surpassing noise levels recorded in the last Diwali and exceeding safe limits. Even a day before the festival, noise levels ranged from 47.4 dB(A) in Najafgarh to 71.2 dB(A) in Karol Bagh areas. In contrast, acceptable noise levels in residential areas are typically 55 dB(A) during the day and 45 dB(A) at night. The excessive use of firecrackers during festivals contributes to noise pollution and releases harmful chemicals into the air, impacting air quality and harming the ecosystem.

Duringfestivals like Ganesh Chaturthi in Maharashtra and Durga Puja in West Bengal, the immersion of idols made from non-biodegradable materials results in water pollution. For instance, in Mumbai, after the immersion of thousands of idols into the sea during Ganesh Chaturthi, the pollution levels in coastal waters increased due to the presence of harmful chemicals and non-biodegradable materials.

Ahead of Durga Puja in Kolkata, numerous banners made of single-use plastic are erected across the city. These banners, once discarded after the festivities, pose significant environmental concerns. Many activists and experts warn that these banners are unlikely to be recycled and will end up in waste disposal sites, hindering natural waste degradation. Officials from the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) admit difficulty in physically inspecting each banner and are unaware of the materials used. The banners are challenging to recycle; burning them can release toxic gases. Moreover, these impermeable banners create barriers in waste disposal sites, delaying natural degradation and taking years to decompose.

The 2019 Kumbh Mela held in Prayagraj was a massive event marked by its scale, with a temporary city being set up to accommodate around 100 million people. The budget for this festival tripled compared to previous years, and in line with Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary, the Uttar Pradesh government prioritised cleanliness and sanitation in and around the Mela, deploying resources like portable toilets, drinking water taps, sweeping of roads, and encouraging attendees to keep the venue clean. However, challenges loomed regarding waste management, with concerns about treating faecal matter and solid waste generated onsite. Managing this immense waste was arduous, as the existing sewage treatment capacity was insufficient. This raised questions about the environmental and health impacts of leaving untreated liquid waste on the banks of the River Ganga.

The festival of Eid-ul-Adha, in particular, involves sacrificing animals like goats and cows, which can have environmental consequences. The large-scale slaughter can lead to issues such as improper disposal of animal waste and strain on resources. Again, Christmas has its own set of environmental impacts. The holiday season is associated with increased consumerism, leading to higher energy consumption, waste generation, and carbon emissions. The production and disposal of Christmas decorations, wrapping paper, and Christmas trees can contribute to severe environmental degradation.

Festivals in India hold religious significance, marked by various practices, including fasting and abstinence, highlighting their multifaceted importance in Indian culture. While festivals play a vital role in Indian culture, there's a growing need for awareness and control of their environmental impacts to ensure a sustainable balance between tradition and conservation.

Aligning Celebrations with Sustainable Development

Festivals across the globe have witnessed a significant transformation, not only as cultural celebrations but as major contributors to tourism and economies. As they continue to attract millions, concerns over their environmental impact have surged - this focus on sustainability also aligns perfectly with the UN SDGs. Yet, the path to assessing festival impacts remains complex. No universally agreed-upon evaluation method makes it challenging to measure the environmental dimensions accurately.

While festivals are now seen as contributors to global resource demands and emissions, a myopic focus on local impacts hinders our ability to compare events and gauge the efficacy of sustainability strategies. Embracing a triple-bottom-line framework encompassing economic, social, and environmental effects is a progressive step forward. Innovations such as the Ecological Footprint tool show promise in evaluating festivals' global environmental influence. The journey towards sustainable festivals is evolving, with each event striving to minimise its ecological footprint while preserving cultural heritage and nurturing a more sustainable world.



*Associate Fellow, ORF





As part of India's Act East Policy, the Indian Railways is set to establish a rail link to the India-Myanmar border in Mizoram. The Railway Board has granted approval for the Final Location Survey (FLS) of a

Indian Railways to establish link between Myanmar

border area and Aizawl

approval for the Final Location Survey (FLS) of a 223-km stretch from Sairang in Aizawl District to Hbichhuah in Mizoram, near the Myanmar border. This strategic project aims to provide an additional access point to northeast India via Hbichhuah, reducing the cost and time of transporting goods from the Sittwe Port in Myanmar to the Northeast. The Sittwe Port was recently inaugurated by India's Union Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways. Additionally, work is progressing on a 51.38-km-long broad-gauge railway line project between Bairabi and Sairang, and the FLS for the 111-km Imphal–Moreh railway line connectivity project along the Myanmar border is nearing completion. These initiatives are expected to enhance connectivity and economic development in the region.

Myanmar government to offer visas on arrival for Indian and Chinese travellers

The present Myanmar government will offer visas on arrival to Indian and Chinese tourists in a bid to boost tourism and attract foreign cash. The ruling government plans to implement a one-year trial scheme, allowing visa holders to visit most sites except restricted security areas. Currently, citizens of India and China must apply for tourist visas online or at a Myanmar embassy. Myanmar also aims to attract Russian tourists and direct flights have been operationalised from Yangon and Mandalay to Russia's Novosibirsk. This move comes amidst ongoing political tensions and opposition to the 2021 military coup. Myanmar initially opened up to tourism in 2011 but closed its borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, further deterring tourists after the coup. Since then the Burmese economy has slumped, with the local kyat currency plunging against the dollar and rolling power outages roiling major cities.



Mandalay International Airport

India-Bangladesh Friendship Bridge Operationalised

On September 01, the India-Bangladesh Friendship Bridge, known as Maitri Setu, was operationalised with the opening of the third integrated checkpoint (ICP) in Sabroom, Tripura. The third ICP is expected to enhance trade and communication between northeast India and Bangladesh. Initially, passenger movements will be allowed, with plans to eventually include cargo transport. There are also plans to open an immigration counterto facilitate cross-border movemennts. Security will be provided by BSF on the Indian side and BGB on the Bangladesh side. Maitri Setu will facilitate travel from southern districts of Bangladesh to India through Tripura and enable international cargo transport from Chattogram seaport. The bridge spans 1.9 kilometres, connecting Sabroom in Tripura to Chittagong port in Bangladesh, reducing the road distance between the two locations.



Delhi and Dhaka working on setting up 16 new border haats

India and Bangladesh are in discussions regarding setting up 16 new border haats, in Mizoram and West Bengal to boost trade between the two nations. These border haats will aim to enhance economic opportunities and market access for border communities while reducing informal cross-border trade. Currently, there are eight operational haats in various northeastern Indian

states like Tripura and Meghalaya. Both countries have been investing in infrastructure development to improve connectivity, including with support from Japan. Additionally, the upcoming Matabari Port in Bangladesh, expected to be operationalised by 2027, is anticipated to facilitate smoother goods flow from India to Bangladesh and other Asian markets. Delhi, Dhaka and Tokyo are also collaborating on the "Bay of Bengal Northeast Industrial Value Chain Concept" to attract manufacturing in India's northeast and Bangladesh.



Tarapur Kamalasagar border haat, Kasba, Tripura.

Editor in Chief: Arindam Mukherjee; Edited by : Kankana Roy, Published by, Director, ISCS, India, 48/2, Dr. Suresh Sarkar Road, Kolkata-700 014 E-mail : iscskol@gmail.com, Website : www.iscskolkata.com; Pre-Press works : ADSONATA, (M) : 9874522778