

The BRICS Summit That Changed Nothing—And Everything

The July BRICS summit in Rio de Janeiro will go down in history not for what was achieved, but for what it revealed about shifting global power. For the first time since 2012, Chinese President Xi Jinping was absent. Vladimir Putin also skipped the gathering. The world's two most powerful challengers to Western dominance couldn't be bothered to show up to their own anti-Western club meeting.

This wasn't just a scheduling conflict. It was a sign that BRICS, the economic bloc that once promised to reshape global governance, is struggling with an identity crisis at the worst possible time.

The summit's most significant development was Indonesia's formal integration as the first Southeast Asian member, completing a process that began in January 2025. This brought BRICS membership to eleven countries, with thirteen more waiting as "partners." On paper, this looks impressive—nearly half the world's population now represented in a single bloc challenging Western institutional dominance.

identifying the attackers. This careful diplomatic dance reveals a fundamental weakness: BRICS wants to challenge the West but lacks the courage to do so directly.

The most telling moment came during discussions about financial alternatives. The New Development Bank, BRICS' answer to Western-dominated institutions, has been quietly building momentum. Member states are genuinely trying to reduce their dependence on dollar-dominated financial systems, a process that gained urgency after Western sanctions exposed the vulnerabilities of being tied to Western financial architecture.

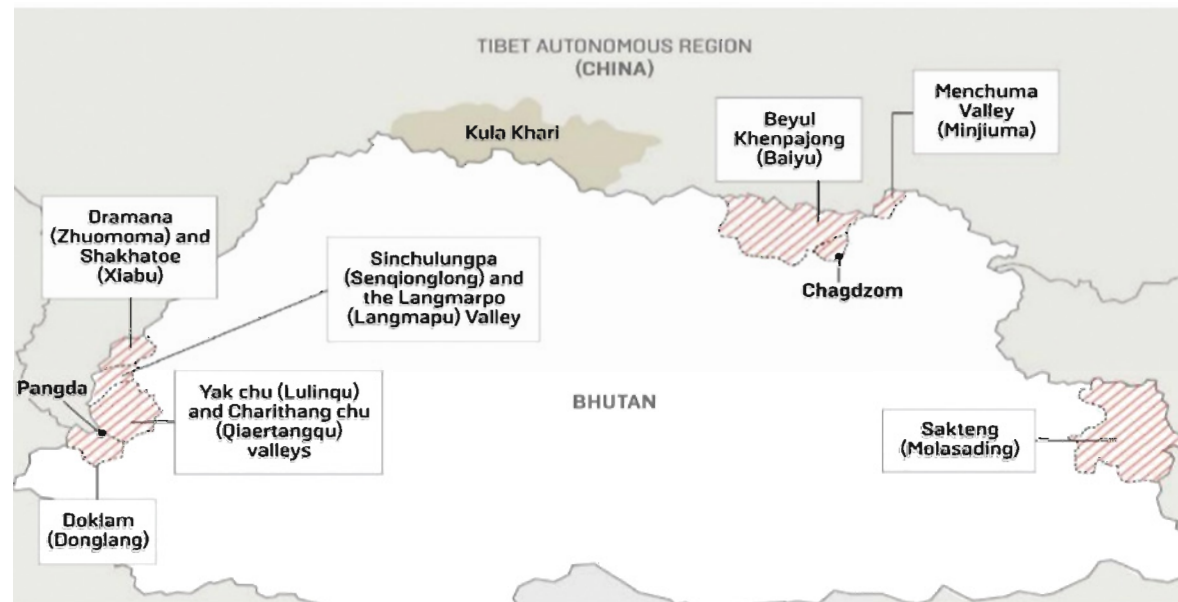
For India, this summit represented a delicate balancing act. As the world's largest democracy within BRICS, India finds itself courted by both Western powers and BRICS partners. Prime Minister Modi's presence in Rio, while Xi and Putin stayed home, highlighted India's growing importance as a bridge between competing blocs. India's approach to de-dollarization has been cautious—supporting alternative payment

The absence of Xi and Putin wasn't just about individual schedules—it reflected deeper questions about what BRICS can realistically achieve. India's position within BRICS has become increasingly complex as the bloc expands. While China and Russia view BRICS as a tool for challenging Western hegemony, India sees it more as a platform for advancing developing world interests without necessarily confronting the West. This philosophical difference became apparent in Rio, where India emphasized economic cooperation while carefully avoiding confrontational language.

The Rio summit matters not because it solved anything, but because it highlighted the fundamental challenge facing the global order. The West's institutional dominance, built after World War II, is being challenged not by revolution but by the slow construction of alternatives. This process is messier and more complicated than either BRICS supporters or critics anticipated.

The empty chairs in Rio reminded everyone

China's Silent Conquest of Bhutan



While the world watches flashpoints like Taiwan, China has been quietly perfecting territorial conquest in one of Earth's most peaceful corners. Bhutan, the tiny Himalayan kingdom famous for measuring Gross National Happiness, is discovering that Buddhist values offer little protection against systematic aggression.

China's approach follows what military experts call "salami slicing"—taking territory bit by bit until it's too late to resist. The strategy is devastatingly simple: herders enter disputed areas, followed by temporary shelters, military patrols, permanent outposts, and finally roads connecting to Tibet.

This exact pattern played out at Doka La in 2017, when Chinese road construction triggered a 73-day standoff with Indian forces. Since then, 22 Chinese villages have sprouted in the area. Today, 19 villages and three settlements sit on land Bhutan considers its own. Eight villages occupy western Bhutan's Doka La region, covering four and a half valleys along the Amu Chu river. Another 14 have appeared in northeastern Bhutan, where Chinese settlers never lived before.

The expansion isn't just physical it's technological. The People's Liberation Army has extended 5G networks to 70% of border villages, with 4G covering 90% of settlements. What appears as development is actually surveillance infrastructure making occupation irreversible.

The irony is bitter for Bhutan, which introduced television only in 1999 and carefully managed its digital entry, now finding Chinese surveillance technology spreading across disputed territories.

For Bhutanese communities, the changes are deeply personal. Traditional grazing routes used for generations are blocked by Chinese checkpoints. Sacred pilgrimage sites have become inaccessible to devotees. Local herders report being turned away from valleys their families used for centuries. The psychological impact runs deeper than territorial loss. China's campaign for "Sinicization of Buddhism" seeks to reshape Bhutanese religious practices, representing not just territorial conquest but systematic erosion of national identity.

China's ultimate prize appears to be

establishing an embassy in Thimphu, transforming the kingdom from India's close ally into a Chinese client state. Even more audacious is China's 2020 claim over the Sakteng area in eastern Bhutan—territory that doesn't even border Tibet, showing Beijing's growing appetite for Bhutanese land.

Bhutan's 700,000 people face a superpower of 1.4 billion. The kingdom's military numbers barely 8,000 troops. Its traditional protector, India, is consumed by its own border disputes with China.

Each Chinese advance is small enough to avoid international attention, yet collectively they represent fundamental alteration of regional power dynamics. The January 2022 implementation of China's Border Law suggests Beijing considers Bhutanese territories permanently integrated into Chinese administrative structures.

What's happening in Bhutan represents 21st-century conquest evolution. By targeting a peaceful nation with limited international visibility, Beijing has created a laboratory for territorial expansion techniques applicable elsewhere.

The approach exploits Bhutan's greatest strengths as vulnerabilities. The kingdom's non-violence becomes paralysis facing systematic aggression. Environmental protection creates unpopulated areas ripe for occupation. Spiritual focus leaves it unprepared for external threats.

The tragedy is that Bhutan's Gross National Happiness vision offers genuine insights for a world struggling with inequality and spiritual emptiness. Its disappearance would represent not just losing a nation, but silencing an alternative voice in how societies might organize themselves.

As the world focuses on dramatic conflicts, Bhutan's quiet conquest continues. The question isn't whether China will proceed—the strategic benefits are too significant for Beijing to abandon its approach. The question is whether the international community will recognize what's happening before the last Shangri-La disappears forever behind the Great Wall.

Author: Shruti Kaushik



But expansion has created unexpected problems. The failed attempt by foreign ministers to produce a joint statement in April wasn't just a procedural hiccup—it was a preview of the coordination nightmare ahead. Try getting Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE to agree on anything substantial.

The summit's final statement was a masterclass in saying everything while saying nothing. Instead of directly criticizing Donald Trump's trade policies, leaders spoke vaguely about "rising tariffs." Rather than naming specific Western military interventions, they condemned "attacks on Iran" without

systems while maintaining strong ties with Western financial institutions.

Yet for all the talk of "de-dollarization," most BRICS trade still happens in dollars. Creating alternatives to the existing financial system isn't just about building institutions—it's about trust, and trust takes decades to develop.

The summit's emphasis on artificial intelligence cooperation offered perhaps the only glimpse of genuine convergence. The declaration's call for "more equitable use of AI" reflected growing awareness that technological dominance could determine the next phase of global competition.

that building alternatives to the current global order is harder than criticizing it. The world is becoming more multipolar, but that transformation won't be driven by grand summits. It will happen through the slow work of building trust, creating institutions, and finding common ground among very different nations.

BRICS may not be the revolutionary force it once promised to be, but it represents something more important: the institutionalization of the Global South's demand for a greater voice in global affairs.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Russia recognizes Taliban Government as De Jure Authority in Afghanistan



In a historic turn, the Russian Federation has officially recognized the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, becoming the first country in the world to formally do so. It acknowledges the Taliban-led government as the de jure authority. The decision was conveyed during a meeting between Russian officials, including Ambassador Dmitry Zhirnov, and the Islamic Emirate's Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi. During the meeting, Russia confirmed its official recognition of the Taliban government.

In a video shared on X (formerly Twitter), Foreign Minister Muttaqi welcomed the Russians' decision, calling it a potential model for other nations. He further stated, "We will play a role in connecting the Russian Federation and South Asia".

Afghanistan hopes that Russia's recognition will help strengthen the bilateral relations across various sectors, and it would catalyze more nations to recognize the Taliban. Notably, China also welcomed Moscow's move, adding further weight to the Taliban's international engagement efforts.

A Pragmatic Turn in Russia-Taliban Relations

Despite a long history of troubled relations between Russia and the Taliban, this recognition implies a pragmatic shift in response to the geopolitical landscape, particularly considering Western isolation and sanctions. Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021 after the US force withdrawal, Kabul and Moscow have held regular dialogue, at least one high-level meeting annually since 2022, focused mainly on security and bilateral relations underscores the significance.

A major milestone reached in this evolving relationship was in 2024, when Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a decree lifting ban on the Taliban's terrorist designation, paving a way for the formal recognition. Subsequently, the Russian Supreme Court temporarily removed the ban on Taliban.

What's in it for Russia?

1. Security Cooperation

Security is the primary concern. In March 2024, the Islamic State Khorasan Province

(ISKP) an IS-affiliated group that originated and resides in Afghanistan from 2016, carried out a deadly attack in Moscow, resulting in the death of over 130 people. The ISKP has been expanding its operations into countries like China and Russia, exploiting the gaps created by the Russian-Ukraine war.

By recognizing the Taliban, Russia aims to foster counter-terrorism cooperation. At the 2024 SCO summit in Astana, President Putin referred to Afghanistan as an "Ally in the fight against terrorism", exhibiting the willingness of the Taliban in tackling terrorism and drug trafficking, both significant regional threats.

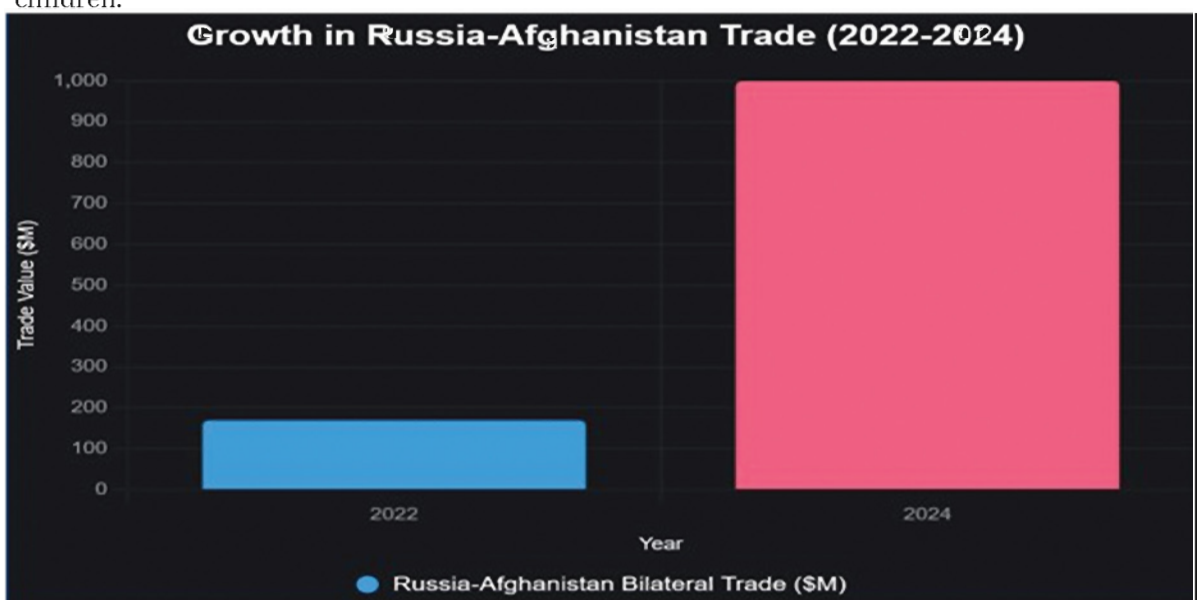
2. Economic and Trade Interests

Both Russia and Afghanistan face Western sanctions, which have resulted in adverse economic growth. While Russia's sanction stem from the invasion of Ukraine, Afghanistan faces isolation due to severe human rights concern, particularly its treatment of women and children.

Nonetheless, bilateral trade between two nations is strengthening, surging from \$170 million in 2022 to \$1 billion in 2024. Afghanistan's import of LPG from Russia has also grown rapidly. Kabul's dependent on Russia's wheat and flour also increased over the time making Russian is the largest exporter of flour. Infrastructure projects such as the Trans-Afghan Railway (Torgundi-Herat-Kandahar-Spin Boldak) and trade corridors via Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan would play a potential role in enhancing the connectivity.

A Changing International Landscape

Although nations have yet of recognize the Taliban officially, many countries gradually increase its involvement with Kabul over the time, resumed diplomatic and economic engagement. Countries like India, Pakistan, China, UAE, Iran and Turkey deepening relations especially in trade.



According to the trade data, Pakistan, India, China, UAE and Turkey being Afghanistan's top export destinations, while UAE, Pakistan, China, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are the leading import sources.

India's Turn

As usual, India has adopted a 'Neighborhood First' policy toward Afghanistan, focusing on humanitarian and developmental assistance. Although India closed its embassy in Kabul following the Taliban take over, it doesn't stop its humanitarian assistance, later re-opened the diplomatic mission. Consequently, Afghanistan opened its consulate general in Mumbai indicating progress in the diplomatic dialogue.

In addition to that, the early 2025 seen a first high-level official meeting between India and Afghanistan took place in Dubai, signaling a cautious but steady approach in developing relations.

India sees Afghanistan as a potential player for countering Pakistan's terrorism. The diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are deteriorated over the repatriation of Afghan refugee by Pakistan and the terror attacks by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the Pakistan's territory. India-Afghanistan relation paves a way for intelligence sharing that could potentially tackles the terrorist's group like LeT, JeM and the ISKPs threat of expanding its operation to South and Central Asia.

So far, India restricted its commitment to humanitarian aid, healthcare, refugee rehabilitation and trade promotion.

Author: LEA

From Dependency to Energy Powerhouse India's Oil Prospects in the Andaman Basin



Singh Puri.

Key features of Andaman Basin

The deepwater blocks are geographically like Guyana-Suriname Basin, posing promising structures that could contain up to 11.6 billion barrels of crude oil, a game changer if proven.

Strategic Location: The proximity of key Sea Line of Communication (SLOC) in Southeast Asia and the Bay of Bengal, enhances the logistical and economical relevance unlike the volatile nature of Middle East offshore sites.

Geological Potential: Multibillion-barrel hydrocarbon formation in the deepwater. Recent exploration in near Sumatra Basin, have further emphasized the prospects of Andaman.

Economic Implications for India

If the said oil exploration delivers even a fraction of estimated reserves, the impact would be significantly lifting the economy.

1. GDP Growth and Energy Security

a. Successful discovery could propel India's economy from \$3.7 trillion to 20 trillion as envisioned by the Union Minister.

b. As economy grows, like Guyana, India will experience all sectors development like agriculture, infrastructure, education, healthcare and technology sectors, crucially it will reduce the inflation by increasing employment while reducing the transport and commodity costs.

2. Reduce Import Dependancy

a. Right now, import cost India over \$100 billion annually. However, if discovery happens, it could cover domestic energy requirements

and reduce the dependence on overseas oil.

b. Enhance the energy security and stabilize the economy against global oil price volatility.

c. Reduce the dependence on the conflict affecting straits like Hormuz.

3. Employment and Infrastructure

a. Direct and Indirect job creation across various sectors including E&P, logistics, port development, refineries and research.

b. Since it is not much explored, it would attract more investment in infrastructure, transport and housing.

4. Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR)

a. India strengthening its energy security through SPRs in Visakhapatnam, Mangalore, Padur with newly constructed in Odisha, Padur and Karnataka 29.3 million and 18.3 million barrels respectively.

b. The new expected discovery potentially serves ensuring supply to SPR during global oil disruptions.

5. Foreign Investment and Collaboration

a. Andaman Basin's potential attracted global attention from oil companies like ExxonMobil, Chevron, and TotalEnergies with OIL and ONGC seeking collaborations in deepwater expertise.

b. The Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment bill 2024, aims to encourage foreign and private investments. Increased foreign investment could bolster E&P sector, contributing to economic growth.

6. Sovereign Wealth Fund

Potential discovery paves a way for India to establish sovereign wealth fund, a model

followed by countries like Norway to Saudi Arabia to handle the revenue for long term economic stability.

Such fund could finance infrastructure, renewable energy and social welfare to reduce the resource dependency economy.

Challenges ahead

Offshore drilling in bio-sensitive area like Andaman Sea could raise concern over environmental impact on marine biodiversity and coral reefs. The proximity to international waters (SLOC) connecting Southeast Asian poses security threat. Naval and maritime logistics should be taken care with caution. On the economic front, each ultra deep-water drill could cost \$80-\$100 millions.

Who else has done in the region?

Myanmar has offshore blocks in the Bay of Bengal, primarily focused on Natural gas with exports like China and Thailand involved. However, political instability in the country has hindered the potential of its resources.

Indonesia: The North Sumatra Basin, an adjacent neighbourhood to Andaman Basin, yielded significant gas discoveries in 2022. Indonesia's oil and gas sector contributes to its \$1.3 trillion economy. It is one of the competitive E&P destination for many foreign investors.

Thailand: The Mergui Basin in the Andaman Sea has seen limited commercial success though Thailand's broader oil and gas sector aiding its \$500 billion economy.

Malaysia: Petronas, its oil and gas industry contributes 20% to the GDP with offshore oil fields in the South China. It maintains sovereign fund that exemplifies prudent resource management in the region.

Is India the Next Oil Powerhouse?

India's exploration of oil reserves at Andaman Basing represents a historic opportunity for its energy independence and economic transformation. With policy reforms, geological promise and country's commitment, Andaman should yield reserves like Guyana, propels India to the new high in the region as well as in the global order. Oil reserves abruptly show geopolitical shifts in the relationship and security making India the reginal powerhouse. However, the course ahead requires sustained drilling, overseas investment, regulatory stability and above all resilience. If India plays its cards right and well, the Andaman could be more than just an offshore and strategic location, rather it would be India's energy independence.

Author: LEA

Why Guyana emphasized here?

Guyana is an only English-speaking country in the South America, was dwelled into economic strain, being poorest country, until the discovery of offshore oil reserves in 2015. Since then, Guyana has changed its fate and know as the fastest growing economy in the world. By 2022 and 2023, Guyana recorded the 62.3% GDP growth, the highest ever recorded globally.

Oil transformed Guyana from nothing to a major Petro-Economy almost overnight. The oil discovery not only helped in terms of energy sector, but also it attracts more foreign investment. Subsequently, employment opportunities generated rapidly and other sectors like agriculture, mining and infrastructure prospered. The key? Fast-tracked exploration, rapid production and enabling viable environment for investments.

India's policy makers, energy experts and investors are now wondering, can the Andaman

Basing deliver such miracles?

India's Energy Dilemma-High Demand, High Imports

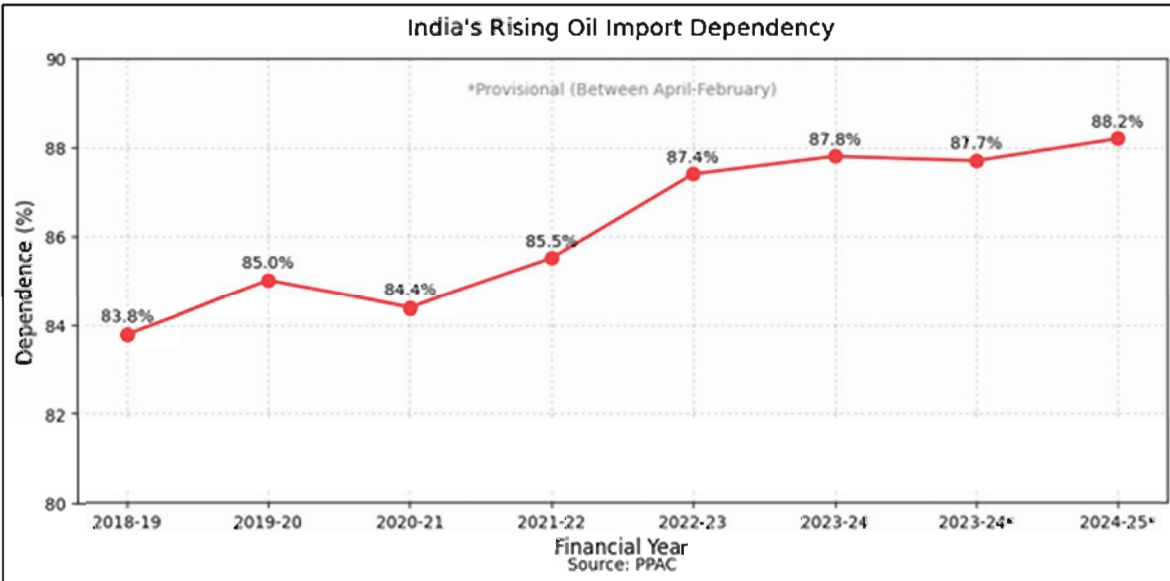
India, being the third largest crude oil importer behind the United States and China, relying on the foreign sources such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Russia for more than 85% of India's energy needs, a vulnerability exposed during the geopolitical crisis like Russian-Ukraine war and the Israel-Middle East conflicts.

Given the rise of middle-class consumption and rapid urbanization, the oil demand is projected to rise over 1 million barrels per day between 2022 and 2028, putting pressure on India's foreign reserves and trade balance. Hence, Domestic oil discovery is no longer an option, but it is an economic necessity.

The Andaman Basin: India's Untapped Oil Frontier

The Andaman Basin, once a 'no-go zone' due to its strategic perplexities now in focus amid raising energy concerns. Government of India significantly opened over 1 million square kilometres of sedimentary basin, in 2016 under Open Acreage Licencing Policy (OALP), expanded for Exploration and Production (E&P). Consequently, bidding on the untapped area increasing steadily.

State run Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Limited (OIL) increased its exploration in Andaman. In FY2024, ONGC drilled 541 wells, the highest in the 37 years. OIL have invested ₹2,500 crore in the first phase of exploration underscores the significance of potential economic opportunities. Only 8% of India's 3.5 million square kilometers sedimentary basins had been explored until recently, Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep



Global Realignment Türkiye and Pakistan Rekindle New Ties



Türkiye and Pakistan are quietly reactivating a historic bond a relationship forged in faith, tested by history, and now repurposed for strategic alignment. The recent meeting between Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Türkiye's Defence Minister Yaşar Güler in Ankara is more than ceremonial. It's a signal.

Dar, whose visit followed Pakistan's renewed outreach to non-Western partners, met Güler to discuss defence collaboration, economic revival, and regional peace. Official statements from both sides spoke of "shared values" and "brotherhood," but beneath the warm language lies a complex game of strategic balancing and mutual need.

What's Happening?

The July 2025 meeting included detailed briefings on joint defence projects, expanding bilateral trade, and Türkiye's support in stabilizing Pakistan's economy through investment in infrastructure and defence manufacturing.

Türkiye reaffirmed its commitment to providing military technology, including advanced drone systems, naval platforms, and training programs to help modernize Pakistan's forces.

Beyond defence, the two sides discussed boosting trade from its current \$1 billion to a targeted \$5 billion by 2027. Pakistani officials proposed Turkish collaboration in special economic zones, port development, and reconstruction projects, especially as Pakistan reels from its ongoing economic crisis.

Türkiye, despite its own financial constraints, sees opportunity in deepening this alliance not out of charity, but from well-calculated interest.

Why Türkiye Wants Pakistan?

It's a question many observers ask: why is Ankara investing in a country struggling with debt, political unrest, and diplomatic isolation?

First, Türkiye's defence industry is on the rise, and Pakistan represents a ready buyer. It offers a lucrative, long-term market for Turkish drones, corvettes, and artillery systems,

especially as Islamabad diversifies away from Western suppliers.

Second, Türkiye sees Pakistan as a key partner in its ambition to shape an independent Islamic bloc. Both countries support causes like Kashmir and Palestine, and their alignment challenges the Saudi-led order and Western influence in Muslim-majority states.

Third, Pakistan offers Türkiye strategic depth geographically connecting Ankara to Central Asia, the Middle East, and China's Belt and Road corridor. This aligns with Türkiye's broader vision of "strategic autonomy," where it engages with multipolar power centers while reducing dependency on the West.

An Alliance of Necessity

For Pakistan, the benefits are immediate and tangible: military support without conditionalities, diplomatic backing in Islamic forums, and the promise of investment. Türkiye, on the other hand, gains prestige, influence, and a foothold in South Asia.

Yet the relationship is not without its fragilities. Pakistan's internal instability and Türkiye's own economic balancing act could limit the alliance's depth. Both nations are also navigating competing pressures like Western skepticism, Chinese entanglements, and regional rivalries.

A Brotherhood with a Bigger Agenda

The Dar-Güler meeting may appear routine on the surface, but it reflects a deeper undercurrent shaping the Muslim world's geopolitical order.

President Erdoğan is not just building defence partnerships; he is positioning Türkiye as the ideological and strategic center of a revived Islamic bloc, with himself cast in the role of a modern-day leader of the Muslim world.

Pakistan, despite facing challenges with extremism and economic difficulties, offers Türkiye a dual advantage and a willing partner in projecting power and a soft front for expanding its pan-Islamist influence.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Pulwama attack Key components as 'Aluminium Powder' delivered by Amazon

E-commerce platform used for the procurement of explosive supporting material used in the 2019 Pulwama attack in the Indian Jammu and Kashmir, and the terror incident happened in the Gorakhnath Temple in Uttar Pradesh, stated in the recent report from the global terrorist financing watchdog Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Particularly, Aluminum powder used in the Pulwama attack was procured from Amazon.

The incident has highlighted concerns over the potential misuse of e-commerce platforms, an increasingly unavoidable problem in the digital age. Global platforms like Amazon must carefully monitor products, Consumers, and the sellers to prevent their services from being used for terror-linked incidents.

FATA also asserts that terrorists are exploiting social media, messaging applications, and crowd-funding sites for their financing.

The report cited a case study about the Gorakhnath Temple terror incident, where the accused was influenced by ISIL ideology, making multiple overseas transactions with like-minded ideologists, approximately USD 7,736 (₹ 6,69,841) using PayPal potentially considered as terror financing.

The perpetrator used a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to route the IP addresses for chatting, calling, and downloading incrimination materials to avoid suspicion or detection by the service provider and Law Enforcement.

The Pulwama attack was a terrible terror incident that targeted the Indian security (CRPF) convoy by a suicide bomber, resulting in the death of forty soldiers in Pulwama, Jammu and Kashmir. Investigation revealed the perpetrator responsible for the attack is Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), a terror group that belongs to and is backed by Pakistan. Last year, FATF condemned the Pahalgam attack, saying it wouldn't have happened without financial backing.

Author: LEA



India - Namibia's Uranium Strategic Partnership Deepens

India is positioning itself as a key partner for Namibia's emerging energy boom, with bilateral cooperation spanning uranium exports, oil exploration, and digital payments technology as the African nation sits on vast untapped mineral wealth.

Namibia's underground treasures read like a strategic commodity wishlist: uranium, oil, copper, diamonds, and rare earths. As the world's fourth-largest uranium oxide producer, Namibia holds reserves that have become increasingly valuable as nations shift away from carbon-intensive energy sources. The country's exploration territory spans 230,000 square kilometers which is twice the size of Norway but

With trade between the nations reaching \$814 million in 2023-24, dominated by Indian exports and Indian investments totaling nearly \$800 million, primarily in mining operations for zinc and diamonds, the partnership is gaining momentum.

Two memorandums of understanding signed during Modi's visit underscore the relationship's breadth. One establishes an Entrepreneurship Development Centre in Namibia, while another focuses on health and medicine cooperation. Namibia also joined India's Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the Global Biofuels Alliance, cementing future collaboration frameworks.

heavily dependent on Middle Eastern suppliers.

The UPI technology export demonstrates India's soft power projection through digital innovation. By licensing its successful payments infrastructure, India positions itself as a technology partner while potentially creating a template for similar arrangements with other nations. This approach helps establish Indian standards in emerging digital economies.

Investment opportunities in Namibia's mining sector align with India's raw material security strategies. With global supply chains under pressure and mineral resources becoming geopolitically sensitive, direct access to copper, diamonds, and rare earths provides strategic advantages.

The partnership also serves India's broader Africa strategy, positioning New Delhi as a reliable development partner offering alternatives to traditional Western or Chinese engagement models. Through entrepreneurship centers and health cooperation, India builds long-term relationships that extend beyond transactional trade.

As Namibia's energy sector development accelerates over the next 24 months, India's early positioning could yield significant returns. The combination of resource access, technology export, and strategic partnership building reflects India's evolving approach to international economic diplomacy one that leverages both traditional trade and cutting-edge technology to secure future advantages.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Russia's Strategic Engagement with Myanmar Implications for India and the Global Geopolitics



Russia's strategic engagement with Myanmar, particularly after the 2021 coup, has been a focus of great power competition. Russia is the only major power officially recognized by the junta, and Myanmar is the only South Asian country that endorsed Russia's war against Ukraine. Russia's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific nations, along with China's dominance, highlights a shift in world geopolitics. Rosoboronexport, a Russian state-owned arms company, donated \$431,000 for recovery from the March earthquake in Myanmar.

The company is the largest arms supplier to the Junta, the ruling military governance after the coup. Myanmar purchased \$1.44 billion worth of arms from 2000 to 2019, with the estimate further strengthened by \$227 million after the coup.

Russia's growing influence in Myanmar, Afghanistan, China, North Korea, and India exemplifies its global strategy amid western sanctions. Rosoboronexport handles 85% of Russia's arms exports, with key markets including India, Myanmar, Africa, Syria, Venezuela, Iran, and North Korea.

China remains the most influential foreign actor in Myanmar, with \$21 billion worth of investments in Kyaukphyu port and the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC). China's strategic interests include Indian Ocean access, border stability, and control over rare earth minerals and natural resources.

India's engagement with Myanmar is driven by national and regional security concerns, countering Chinese influence and securing the northeastern borders. India supplied \$212 million worth of arms from 2000 to 2021, but Russian and Chinese supplies outweighed India's influence. India maintains diplomatic neutrality with Myanmar, avoiding condemning the Junta. However, tensions arise with EAOs like the Arakan Army, which criticize India for its Rohingya stance.

Russia's deepening ties with Myanmar pose both challenges and opportunities for India. India's arms supplies and humanitarian aid aim to balance Russia and China influence, but non-engagement with the EAO could lead to instability in the border. Russia's geopolitical reshape in Myanmar mirrors its efforts to reshape global geopolitics.

Author: LEA

Al-Shabaab's Violent Shadow Over East Africa [Insurgency, Influence, and the Regional Struggle for Stability]

Understanding Al-Shabaab: Somalia's Persistent Insurgency

Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen, widely known as al-Shabaab, is an Islamist militant group originating as the armed faction of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), which gained control over much of southern Somalia in 2006. Though its early gains were reversed in 2007 by Somali and Ethiopian forces, the group evolved into a resilient insurgent and terrorist organization rooted in Somalia's complex clan structures. Al-Shabaab has continued to launch violent campaigns against the Somali Federal Government (FGS), African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and humanitarian organizations, using guerrilla tactics and terror operations. Despite sustained international military pressure, particularly from AMISOM and regional forces, al-Shabaab remains Somalia's most enduring security threat, with estimates in late 2023 suggesting its strength to be between 7,000 and 12,000 fighters. Their influence, however, fluctuates due to internal fractures, shifting clan alliances, and persistent counterterrorism operations.

Al-Shabaab's Journey Since 2006

Al-Shabaab emerged from the remnants of the Islamic Courts Union after its ousting by Ethiopian forces in 2006, gradually transforming into a powerful insurgent force. By exploiting clan grievances and engaging in both coercive and voluntary recruitment, the group managed to reestablish its presence across southern and central Somalia. In the late 2000s, it controlled significant portions of Mogadishu, but a military campaign led by AMISOM and bolstered by international support began reversing these gains from 2011 onward. Despite its territorial losses, the group adapted, turning to guerrilla warfare and high-profile terrorist attacks. Internal conflict also weakened its cohesion especially after the 2013 internal purge spearheaded by then-leader Ahmed Abdi Godane. Although al-Shabaab pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2012, factionalism and leadership losses, including Godane's death in 2014, strained its external ties. Recently, in response to increased Ethiopian involvement and the January 2024 MoU between Ethiopia and Somaliland, the group renewed recruitment efforts, including calls for national defense and efforts to integrate individuals with drone and engineering expertise. Though pushed out of many urban centers, al-Shabaab persists by embedding itself in clan networks, maintaining a volatile but stubborn presence across rural Somalia.

How Al-Shabaab Formed and Shaped Governance

Al-Shabaab's formation is deeply linked to Somalia's fractured political landscape following years of civil war. Initially a militant offshoot of the Islamic Courts Union, it capitalized on power vacuums, clan rivalries, and popular discontent with the transitional Somali government. The group's strategy has always involved leveraging clan loyalties sometimes voluntarily, often forcibly to build a grassroots insurgency. This decentralized structure, however, has also left it vulnerable to infighting and fragmentation. While its leadership maintains ideological ties with al-Qaeda, many foot soldiers are more driven by nationalistic opposition to foreign intervention and the federal government than global jihadist ambitions. Al-Shabaab's operations have severely destabilized Somalia's government, limiting its ability to govern outside Mogadishu. In neighboring Kenya, the group's cross-border attacks, especially the 2015 Westgate Mall and 2015 Garissa University assaults have strained national security, led to military retaliation in Somalia, and heightened internal ethnic tensions. The presence of al-Shabaab has turned Somalia into a protracted conflict zone, where progress in governance and development remains slow and fragile under the looming shadow of terrorism.

A Growing Shadow: Al-Shabaab's Resurgence Across Somalia

In recent developments, al-Shabaab has managed to reclaim significant areas in



central Somalia as of January 2025, reversing territorial losses inflicted during the Somali government's major counterterrorism operations in 2022. By regaining control over these regions, the group has effectively reconnected its strongholds across central and southern Somalia for the first time in several years, creating a corridor of influence that threatens vital transportation routes between Mogadishu and the country's interior. In March 2025, al-Shabaab also seized villages south of Mogadishu, locations critical for the Somali security forces in shielding the capital against the group's frequent use of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). While current assessments indicate that al-Shabaab is



unlikely to attempt a direct assault on Mogadishu to seize power in the immediate future, its territorial gains enhance its ability to exert both economic and military pressure on the capital. These advances not only jeopardize crucial supply lines but also undermine the authority and legitimacy of the Somali Federal Government (SFG), perpetuating instability and complicating efforts to restore governance and security across the nation.

Al-Shabaab's Ongoing Attacks Across the Region

Al-Shabaab remains highly active, carrying out near-daily attacks and assassinations across its areas of influence, targeting Somali, Ethiopian, and occasionally Kenyan security forces as well as civilians. In recent months, al-Shabaab fighters have clashed fiercely with Somali troops and allied forces over strategic positions, including an assault on a crucial army base in Wargadhi town in the Middle Shabelle region. Securing this base would allow the militants to disrupt the vital road link between Mogadishu and Galmudug State, threatening supply lines and government control. Beyond Somalia's borders, al-Shabaab has sustained its violent operations in Kenya, staging ambushes and bombings primarily in Lamu, Garissa, and Mandera counties. Kenyan security forces frequently face improvised explosive device (IED) attacks along border highways, leading to casualties among soldiers and police officers. The group has also targeted local communities and infrastructure, seeking to sow fear and pressure the Kenyan government to withdraw its troops from Somalia. These persistent attacks underscore al-Shabaab's capacity to destabilize not only Somalia but also its neighbors, maintaining a climate of insecurity and complicating regional counterterrorism efforts.

Social Media as a Weapon: Al-Shabaab's Digital Battlefield

Al-Shabaab, an extremist organization rooted primarily in Somalia and parts of Ethiopia, functions as a key regional proxy for al-Qaeda, championing violent jihadist ideology and destabilizing efforts across the Horn of Africa. Central to its propaganda machinery is the Al-Kataib Media Foundation, which produces a steady stream of videos, audio statements, and publications designed to inspire recruits and legitimize the group's actions. Platforms such as Al-Andalus, Radio Furqaan, and Shahada News Agency act as crucial channels for broadcasting al-Shabaab's narratives and official communiqués, amplifying its reach both locally

and internationally. In the digital sphere, al-Shabaab has cultivated a significant presence, particularly on Telegram and Facebook, which it exploits to disseminate extremist propaganda, circulate battlefield footage, and share ideological messaging. Through these networks, the group actively recruits new followers, both within Somalia and abroad, and seeks to radicalize young people by crafting messages tailored to resonate with local grievances or broader Islamist causes. Social media not only helps al-Shabaab maintain visibility despite military setbacks but also serves as a potent tool for coordinating operations, fundraising, and sustaining its influence in the region's volatile landscape.

Kenya and Somalia's Joint Action Against Al-Shabaab

Kenya and Somalia are actively working together on a comprehensive strategic plan aimed at curbing the influence and operations of al-Shabaab. This strategy integrates military offensives, community engagement, and robust border security measures. Both nations are conducting joint military operations, particularly along their shared border and in southern Somalia, seeking to drive al-Shabaab out of strategic areas and weaken its operational capabilities.

A significant aspect of the plan involves close collaboration with local communities to gather intelligence on militant activities and foster grassroots support for counterterrorism efforts. Kenya, in parallel, is enhancing its border security to intercept the movement of al-Shabaab fighters and disrupt the flow of resources between Somalia and Kenya.

International partners, including the African Union Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), are also involved, focusing on identifying and dismantling al-Shabaab's financial networks, which rely heavily on extortion, illegal taxation, and illicit trade.

Beyond military and security measures, the strategy acknowledges the socio-economic drivers of radicalization, such as poverty, unemployment, and the lack of essential services.

To address these root causes, both countries are engaging in development initiatives and Somalia is implementing programs to rehabilitate and reintegrate former al-Shabaab fighters, aiming to build lasting stability and resilience in the region.

Author: LEA

After Operation Sindoor Chinese Defence Supply in Doubt



China's once-unchallenged grip on Pakistan's defence procurement is beginning to loosen and shaken not by diplomacy, but by the roar of Indian missiles. In the aftermath of India's audacious Operation Sindoor, conducted between May 7 and 10, Pakistan's military establishment is facing a crisis of confidence in Chinese defence hardware.

During the operation, Indian air power tore through Pakistani airspace with surprising precision, bypassing and neutralising advanced Chinese-supplied air defence systems including the much-touted HQ-9P and HQ-16. These systems, deployed to shield high-value targets, were not only ineffective but were themselves destroyed in the strikes. For Beijing, it wasn't just a technical failure, it was a dent in prestige, unfolding live in the heart of one of its closest defence partnerships.

Lt General Wang Gang, Chief of Staff of the People's Liberation Army Air Force, arrived in Islamabad shortly after, meeting with Pakistan Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu. While the meeting was framed as a routine exchange, the urgency behind closed doors was hard to miss. With India demonstrating its ability to slip past Chinese-built defences, Pakistan's military planners have begun rethinking the foundation of their aerial deterrence.

What once was an unquestioned pipeline of Chinese military hardware now looks increasingly uncertain.

Senior officials in Islamabad are openly exploring alternatives, particularly American. The recent visit by Air Chief Marshal Sidhu to the United States, including meetings with Pentagon officials and the State Department, signalled a strategic pivot. On the table are F-16 Block 70 fighters, AIM-7 Sparrow missiles, and even HIMARS artillery systems assets that could significantly bolster Pakistan's aerial and ground response capabilities.



This quiet shift carries heavy symbolic weight. For years, Beijing had been Islamabad's go-to partner for everything from fighter jets to missile batteries. Now, battlefield evidence from Operation Sindoor has made it difficult to ignore the shortcomings of Chinese platforms. The credibility gap is growing, and with it, the possibility of a broader reorientation in Pakistan's military alliances.

Beijing, clearly unsettled by the developments, is engaging in damage control. But the trust deficit has already begun to spread across military channels, especially as India continues to signal its technological and strategic superiority in the region.

Operation Sindoor may have lasted just a few days, but its aftershocks are far from over. For China, the battlefield losses have triggered a reputational test. For Pakistan, the road ahead may involve recalibrating its defence doctrine and potentially, its loyalties.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Massive Credential Leak Poses National Cyber-Security Threat

CERT-In Issued Urgent Advisory



India's premier cyber-security watchdog, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), a wing under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, has issued a top-priority advisory following the exposure of approximately 16 billion user credentials from major global platforms. The breach involves login information from technological giants like Apple, Google, Facebook, Telegram, GitHub, and VPN providers. It is deemed to be a critical threat to both individual and national digital security.

Compromised data aggregated from at least 30 sources, including unsecured cloud databases and infostealer malware campaigns. Not just usernames and passwords but also authentication tokens, session cookies, and metadata. CERT-In warns that the data is already being circulated on dark web forums, significantly increasing the risk of widespread exploitation by cybercriminals and hostile state actors.

"This breach is not just about stolen passwords, but it's about systematic vulnerability across critical digital infrastructures," said a senior cybersecurity analyst affiliated with us.

These data could enable cybercriminals to execute Credential Stuffing, Phishing and Social Engineering, Account Takeovers, Ransomware, and Business Email Compromise.

This breach underscores India's vulnerability in the digital landscape and threatens critical sectors, including defense, government, IT, and Telecom, that have already been under threat from various groups like Pakistan-based APT36, which intensified cyberattacks during the May 2025 Operation Sindoor. The availability of authentication tokens and session cookies increased the risk of bypassing traditional password protections, potentially compromising military communications, government portals, or financial systems.

CERT-In recommended individuals to update the passwords and ensure Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) is enabled. On the other hand, it advised organizations to enforce Zero-Trust Security and create awareness among employees.

With India's cybersecurity market booming, projected to reach USD 36.8 billion by 2033, this kind of incident indicates the urgent need for robust, proactive defenses to safeguard national interests. As India advances its indigenous defense and digital capabilities under "Make in India," integrating robust and stringent cybersecurity frameworks is paramount to countering evolving cyber threats.

Author: LEA

BM-04 Short Range Ballistic Missile DRDO boost-up Indian Missile capabilities

In a landmark moment for India's missile development program, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has officially unveiled the BM-04, a next-generation short-range ballistic missile (SRBM), at the Vigyan Vaibhav 2025 defence exhibition in Hyderabad.

The BM-04 may be classified as a short-range missile, but its effective strike range of 400 to 1,500 km places it on the cusp of intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) capabilities, offering India a highly flexible platform for tactical and strategic operations.

Hypersonic Performance Meets Precision

The BM-04 is powered by a two-stage solid-fuel propulsion system and is canister-launched for rapid deployment and ease of transportation. It carries a 500 kg conventional warhead and leverages advanced satellite navigation, including GPS and India's IRNSS (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System), delivering an impressive circular error probability (CEP) of less than 30 meters.

What truly sets the BM-04 apart is its Common Hypersonic Glide Body (C-HGB), a cutting-edge warhead technology that rides atop the missile's two-stage booster. This enables the BM-04 to reach speeds of Mach 5 and beyond, blurring the line between ballistic and hypersonic weapon systems.

Such speeds, combined with a low-altitude, maneuverable flight path, make the BM-04 exceptionally capable of evading enemy radar and missile defence systems, it's an ideal tool to penetrate Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) environments.

The BM-04's induction could dramatically alter the regional balance of power, particularly with regard to China and Pakistan, both of whom are expanding their own missile arsenals and A2/AD capabilities.

• Rapid Strike Capability: Designed for swift deployment and high-speed strikes, the BM-04 is tailored for time-sensitive and high-value targets, such as enemy radar installations, missile silos, or mobile command centres.

• Extended Reach: With its 1,500 km range ceiling, the missile offers coverage deep into hostile territory, including key installations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and



potential naval targets in the Indian Ocean Region.

• Force Multiplier: As part of India's broader Integrated Rocket Force plans, the BM-04 complements existing systems like Pralay and future long-range hypersonic weapons, ensuring a multi-layered deterrence architecture.

India's Hypersonic Ambitions Take Flight

Following the successful test of a long-range hypersonic missile in November 2024, the BM-04 is a visible sign that India is not only catching up with global powers like the U.S., Russia, and China, but also asserting its indigenous innovation in the hypersonic domain.



Author: Shruti Kaushik

According to DRDO officials, the BM-04 will undergo extensive user trials in the latter half of 2025 before entering limited operational service. It is likely to be integrated into India's theatre commands, especially in regions facing elevated threats.

Conclusion: Towards a New Era of Deterrence

The BM-04 isn't just another missile; it's a strategic signal. It reflects India's ability to innovate, adapt, and deliver game-changing defence technology at a time when regional and global security dynamics are rapidly evolving.

With the BM-04, India joins an elite club of nations mastering hypersonic-capable strike platforms, significantly enhancing its offensive punch, deterrent posture, and defence self-reliance.

As the Indo-Pacific grows more contested, platforms like the BM-04 will be central to India's ability to shape outcomes, protect interests, and preserve peace through strength.

Breaking Barriers Japan's UAV expands access

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. (MHI) and Yamaha Motor Co., Ltd. demonstrated a prototype of hybrid-powered medium-sized UAV at the Japan Drone 2025 expo, held at Makuhari Messe in Chiba from June 4 to 6, 2025. This innovative aircraft has made a significant breakthrough in the field of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) with the capability to carry a payload of 200 kg across a range of 200 km.

The test flight took place in mid-April 2025 at MHI's UAV research facility and it can play a significant role in carrying out operations of both civilian and defense purposes.

MHI through its experience spanning decades in military and commercial aviation dynamics, offered design, structural integration, manufacturing, and flight testing of the UAV. Whereas, Yamaha motor through its extensive experience in the motorcycle and off-road vehicle sectors, has contributed to develop a compact and lightweight power generating unit with the aim of utilizing a hybrid power system to extend the cruising range of the medium-sized UAV.

The convergence of two technological giants in this joint research program aims to solve

logistical challenges in difficult or unreachable terrains including mountainous areas and isolated islands by playing essential roles in disaster relief, remote logistics, and infrastructure maintenance. This UAV can be utilized as a viable alternative to conventional helicopters and ground transport methods, especially in locations where infrastructure is limited, yet urgent logistics operations are necessary.

Specifications of the Medium-Sized UAV

- Payload (maximum):** 200kg
- Cruising range:** 15km (battery type), 200km (hybrid type plan)
- Dimensions:** Overall length approx. 6 meters
- Motive power:** Battery type, Hybrid type
- Ease of transport:** Can be transported by truck to takeoff/landing points

Author: Sruti Kaushik

