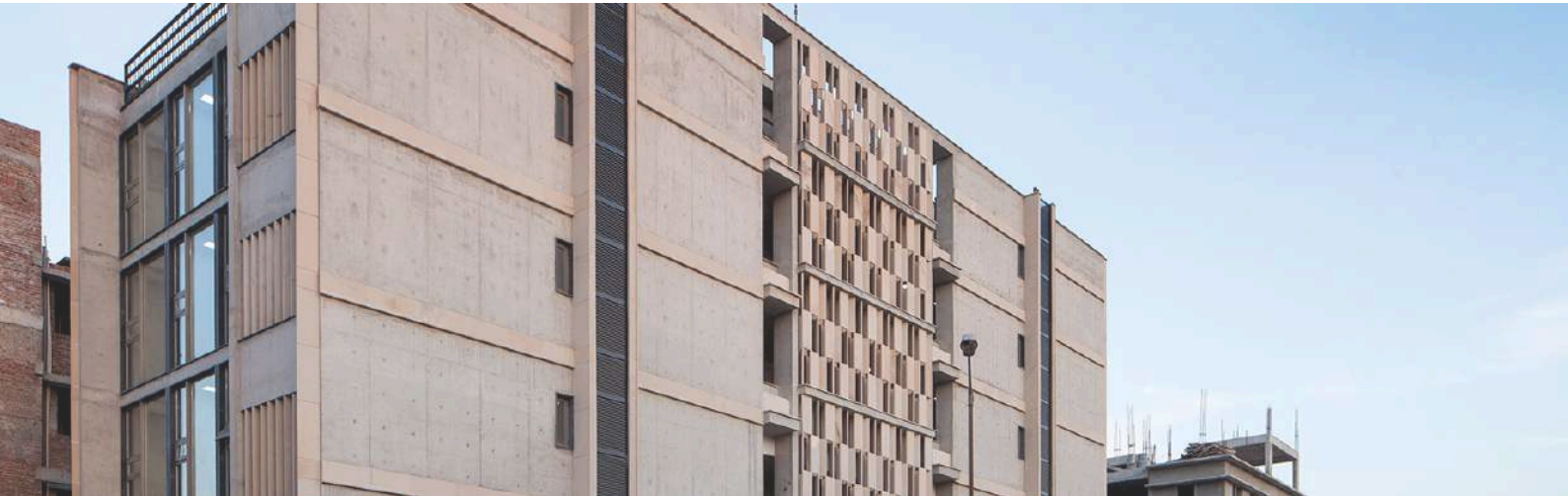


April 2026

INSIGHTS



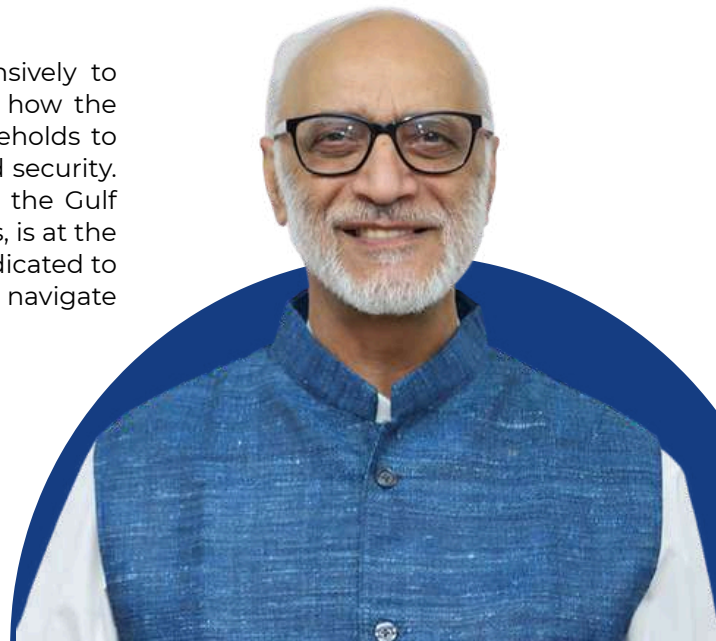
Message from the Leadership

The month of March is named after the Roman god Mars, which signifies war in the Gregorian calendar. True to its symbolism, March 2026 witnessed escalating war between Iran on one side and Israel and the USA on the other. As a result, a significant part of energy supply lines — crude oil and gas were disrupted. The price of crude oil and gas increased by more than 30 percent within two to three weeks. This called for revisiting GDP growth targets not just in India but in several countries that had a high concentration of their energy supplies coming from the Gulf region, especially through the Strait of Hormuz. One can only hope that this war remains contained and comes to an end soon. If it gets protracted and spreads to the whole region of the Gulf or beyond, the consequences for India could be significant.

Keeping this in the backdrop, the ICRIER team worked intensively to assess how this will impact imports of gas and crude oil, and how the effects are likely to play out across the economy — from households to industry, particularly fertiliser production, and consequently food security. Building energy resilience and diversifying our sources beyond the Gulf region, in an effort to de-risk our energy, gas, and fertiliser sectors, is at the top of policymakers' minds. Our team of researchers remains dedicated to providing timely, policy-grounded analysis to help policymakers navigate these challenging times.

Dr. Ashok Gulati

Distinguished Professor, ICRIER



POLICY IN ACTION

Symposium: Enhancing People-to-People Exchange between India and Japan

3 Mar, 2026 | New Delhi

ICRIER organised a symposium to explore ways to deepen people-to-people ties between India and Japan. The inaugural session featured an address by Amitabh Kant (Member, ICRIER Board of Governors), and a keynote by H.E. Keiichi ONO (Ambassador of Japan to India) followed by panel discussions on “Boosting Mobility of Skilled Workers, Professionals and Students from India to Japan” and “Ecosystem to Attract More Japanese Professionals and Students to India”.



Rice Policy Dialogue 2026

7-8 Mar, 2026 | Varanasi

ICRIER, in collaboration with the International Rice Research Institute South Asia Regional Centre (ISRAC), organised a two-day Rice Policy Dialogue bringing together policymakers, scientists, economists, and representatives from IRRI, ICRIER, and ICAR. During the event, Ashok Gulati (Distinguished Professor, ICRIER), outlined a four-point framework of policy, product, practice, and partnership to strengthen the future of India's rice sector.



The Mother of All Deals? Economic Implications of the India-EU FTA

10 Mar, 2026 | New Delhi

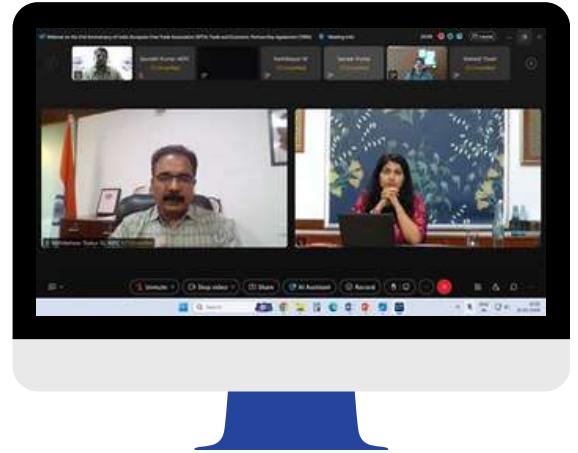
ICRIER in collaboration with Bruegel organised a seminar on the economic implications of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement. The event was inaugurated with welcome remarks by Shekhar Aiyar (Director and CE, ICRIER), and a virtual keynote by Sabine Weyand (Director-General, Trade, European Commission) followed by a panel discussion including panelists, Ignacio García Bercero and André Sapir (both Senior Fellows, Bruegel), Pritam Banerjee (Head, Centre for WTO Studies), and Arpita Mukherjee (Professor, ICRIER).



India-EFTA TEPA Second Anniversary Webinar

10 Mar, 2026 | **Virtual**

Sulakshana Rao (Senior Fellow, ICRIER) spoke at an AEPC webinar marking the second anniversary of the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement, analysing India's export concentration in the US and EU markets and highlighting emerging opportunities in EFTA markets.



4th National Agro-RE Summit

10 Mar, 2026 | **New Delhi**

At the inaugural plenary of the 4th National Agro-RE Summit hosted by NSEFI with MNRE and the India Agrivoltaics Alliance, Ashok Gulati (Distinguished Professor, ICRIER), emphasised that scaling agrivoltaics requires effective feed-in tariffs and viable rural pricing — highlighting its potential to transform farmers from “*annadata*” to “*urjadata*”, enabling diversified incomes and improved rural energy security.



Decoding the Science Behind UPF Hype

13 Mar, 2026 | **New Delhi**

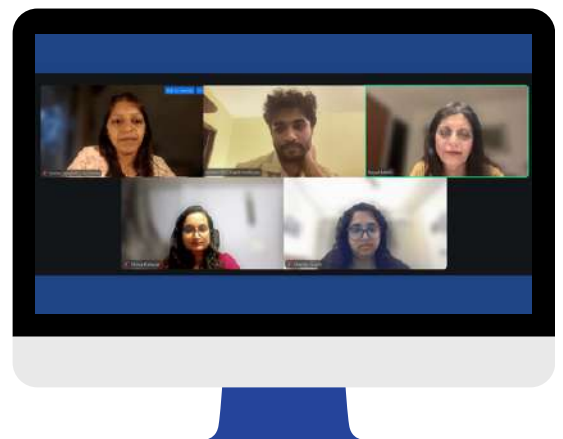
FICCI organised a symposium examining the challenges and opportunities in food processing, with a focus on consumer health, regulatory frameworks, and product innovation. Arpita Mukherjee (Professor, ICRIER) spoke on “*Sustainability, Processing, and Nutrition: The Triple Bottom Line*”, highlighting the rapid growth of India's food processing sector.



CoP DPI4D 16: Unpacking the Verifiable Credentials Ecosystem

18 Mar, 2026 | **Virtual**

As part of the CoP DPI4D webinar series, ICRIER organised a webinar focusing on the verifiable credentials ecosystem, from functional IDs to cross-border mobility. The session featured presentations by Rohan Pai (Senior Associate, Aapti Institute) and Sneha Sampath (Head- Government Advisory, Jan Sahas Foundation), moderated by Shiva Kanwar (Fellow, ICRIER).



Stitching India's Apparel Strategy: A Comparative Roadmap for Global Competitiveness

18 Mar, 2026 | New Delhi

ICRIER organised a round table discussion and the launch of the report *“Stitching India's Apparel Export Strategy: Lessons from China, Bangladesh, and Vietnam”*. The event featured a keynote by Rohit Kansal (Additional Secretary, Ministry of Textiles), and a special address by Anant Ahuja (Director, Shahi Exports). Two panel discussions followed on *“The Way Ahead: Building India's T&A Export Competitiveness from Fibre to Fashion,”* and *“Beyond Tariffs: Sustainability, Compliance and the Next Phase of Export Growth”* both chaired by Ashok Gulati (Distinguished Professor, ICRIER).



Launch of India@100 Resurgent Bharat: Road Map for 2047

24 Mar, 2026 | New Delhi

Ashok Gulati (Distinguished Professor, ICRIER) attended as Guest of Honour at the launch of India@100 Resurgent Bharat: Road Map for 2047, authored by Sita Ram Gupta and Rusen Kumar. The event brought together over 100 leaders from the CSR, sustainability, policy, academia, and corporate sectors to deliberate on India's economic growth, governance reforms, and long-term development vision for 2047.



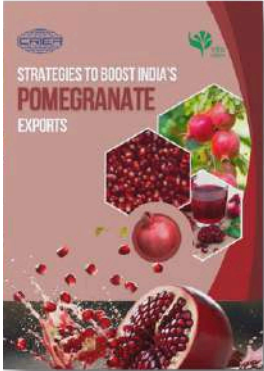
Agri Sankalp: Climate Resilient Soil and Agriculture

24 Mar, 2026 | New Delhi

Ashok Gulati (Distinguished Professor, ICRIER) attended as Chief Guest at the Agri-Sankalp event on climate-resilient soil and agriculture, organised by ISAP and OCP Foundation. The workshop brought together policymakers, research institutions, industry leaders, startups, development organisations, FPOs, and farmers on one platform to deliberate on soil health and sustainable agricultural transformation.



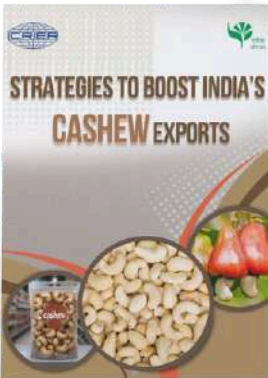
SPOTLIGHT: NEW RESEARCH



Strategies to Boost India's Pomegranate Exports

Authors: *Sulakshana Rao, Ashok Gulati, Aarushi Bhargava, Aishwarya Rohtagi*

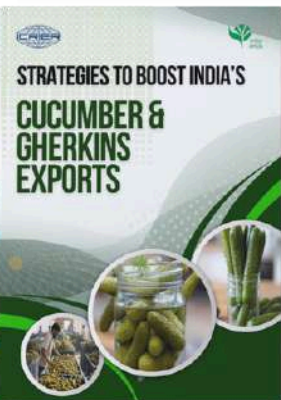
This report argues that India's pomegranate export potential remains largely untapped due to structural and regulatory bottlenecks. It offers a phased roadmap for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and exporters covering quality enhancement, infrastructure upgrades, strategic market access, and value addition to build a resilient and competitive pomegranate export ecosystem.



Strategies to Boost India's Cashew Exports

Authors: *Ritika Juneja, Emil Thomas Johny, Ashok Gulati, Kirti Goel*

This report examines India's declining share in global cashew kernel exports — down to just 8%, despite being the world's second-largest producer and largest consumer. It analyses productivity gaps, import dependencies, and market concentration challenges, and proposes strategies to improve processing competitiveness and strengthen India's position in premium global markets.



Strategies to Boost India's Cucumber & Gherkins Exports

Authors: *Harsh Wardhan, Ashok Gulati, Aishwarya Rohtagi, Kirti Goel*

This report assesses India's cucumber and gherkin export ecosystem, noting that India is already the world's largest exporter of prepared and preserved gherkins, with nearly 23% of global exports. Drawing on stakeholder consultations, it identifies policy constraints and proposes targeted strategies to strengthen India's global standing while promoting sustainability and inclusive value chain growth.



Strategies to Boost India's Pineapple Exports

Authors: *Ritika Juneja, Ashok Gulati, Aditi Bansal, Aarushi Bhargava*

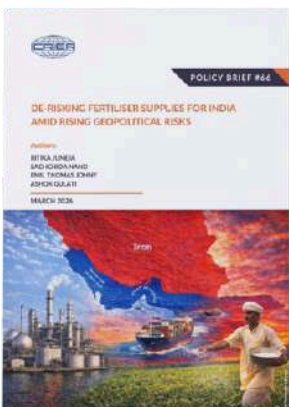
This report highlights India's limited global competitiveness in pineapple exports — holding just 0.2% of global export share, despite contributing 6.2% of global production volume. It attributes this gap to sub-par yields, fragmented cultivation, and weak integration into international value chains, and outlines strategies to improve market access, compliance, and competitiveness in premium markets.



Clean Energy Employment in India: A State-Level Analysis of Non-Fossil Fuel Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency

Authors: Amrita Goldar, Somit Dasgupta, Sajal Jain, Diya Dasgupta

This working paper evaluates the regional employment effects of India's transition to non-fossil fuel energy, estimating that clean energy employment will grow from 3.18 lakh persons in 2021–22 to 9.05 lakh by 2029–30 in renewable and other clean conventional energy sectors, while energy efficiency-related employment is projected to reach 42.87 lakh by 2030. The study also identifies where geographically this employment will be generated.



De-risking Fertiliser Supplies for India amid Rising Geopolitical Risks

Authors: Ritika Juneja, Sachchida Nand, Emil Thomas Johny, Ashok Gulati

This policy brief examines how geopolitical tensions in the Gulf, particularly threats to the Strait of Hormuz, pose significant risks to India's fertiliser supply chains, given India's effective dependence on global supply chains.



Stitching India's Apparel Export Strategy: Lessons from China, Bangladesh and Vietnam

Authors: Sulakshana Rao, Ayushi Gupta, Riya Jain, Ashok Gulati

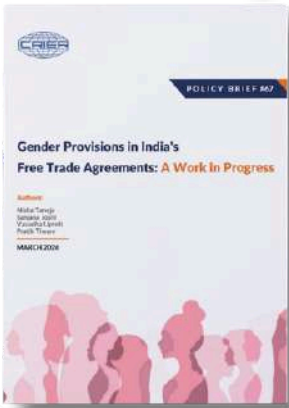
This report analyses global apparel competitiveness across China, Bangladesh, and Vietnam through five pillars — scale and capacity, capital, labour, trade facilitation, and institutional mechanisms, to chart a path for India to grow apparel exports from USD 15.7 billion to USD 40 billion by 2030.



Horizontal and Vertical Connector Countries in a Goeconomically Fragmenting World

Authors: Shekhar Aiyar, Franziska Ohnsorge, Hakan Yilmazkuday

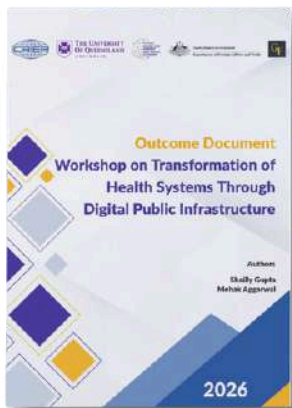
This working paper examines how geoeconomic fragmentation — where international transactions are increasingly restricted to politically aligned partners — creates both risks and opportunities for countries. It introduces a modified trade model distinguishing between "horizontal" connectedness (geopolitical diversification) and "vertical" connectedness (supply chain integration), arguing that the former is more relevant in a fragmenting world, and constructs a comprehensive database to document stylised facts on geoeconomic vulnerability and connectedness.



Gender Provisions in India's Free Trade Agreements: A Work in Progress

Authors: Nisha Taneja, Sanjana Joshi, Vasudha Upreti, Pratik Tiwary

This policy brief undertakes a gender-lens assessment of India's eight major FTAs concluded between February 2016 and February 2026. While noting the progress made, it identifies existing gaps and recommends ways to make India's future trade agreements more gender affirmative — arguing that women must be more systematically integrated into trade policy for trade to deliver truly inclusive outcomes.



Outcome Document: Workshop on Transformation of Health Systems through Digital Public Infrastructure

Authors: Shailly Gupta, Mehak Aggarwal

This workshop outcome document examines the evolving Digital Public Infrastructure for Health (DPI-H) paradigm in the Indian context through the journey of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. It captures perspectives of healthcare providers, healthtech companies, and other stakeholders in the ecosystem on progress made towards digitalisation in the sector, efficiency gains through the mission, key challenges encountered, and pathways for strengthening adoption and usage while ensuring an inclusive and secure DPI-H for all.

IN THE NEWS

AI anxiety can turn into an advantage for Atmanirbhar India

Author: Ashok Gulati | 02 Mar, 2026 | Indian Express

Heading for a chaos?

Author: Somit Dasgupta | 03 Mar, 2026
Financial Express

Trade pacts enhance market access for exports

Authors: Arpita Mukherjee & Latika Khatwani
05 Mar, 2026 | FnB News

Interactions of Artificial Intelligence with India's labour market

Authors: Payal Malik & Nikita Jain
10 Mar, 2026 | HT Insight

VOICES FROM ICRIER



Shekhar Aiyar on Trade Liberalization | Reform in Practice

In this video series, Shekhar Aiyar (Director and CE, ICRIER) identifies trade liberalisation as the one reform India must undertake now. He examines why India under-trades despite its strategic position, and outlines practical steps to unlock the country's export competitiveness.

IN THE NEWS

[Iran War Persists, India Allows Chinese Investments, U.S. Pressures Delhi](#)

ICRIER research cited | 12 Mar, 2026

[Disruption carries a reminder: Policy reforms in fertiliser sector are overdue](#)

Authors: Ashok Gulati & Ritika Juneja | 16 Mar, 2026 | Indian Express

[India on a Global Hunt for Fertilizers, from Morocco to Belarus](#)

16 Mar, 2026 | Mint | Sachchida Nand quoted

[Expand storage to make use of renewable energy](#)

Author: Somit Dasgupta | 19 Mar, 2026
Hindustan Times

[Naysayer to decision-maker](#)

Author: Arpita Mukherjee | 19 Mar, 2026
Financial Express

[Let's work on stepping up India's agri exports to the EU](#)

Authors: Arpita Mukherjee & Latika Khatwani | 25 Mar, 2026 | Mint

[The Battle for Bengal](#)

Authors: Ashok Gulati & Bidisha Chanda
29 Mar, 2026 | Financial Express

[The West Bengal Puzzle: Social Gains Have Not Translated into Higher Incomes](#)

Authors: Ashok Gulati & Bidisha Chanda
30 Mar, 2026 | Indian Express

[India's Healthcare Budget 2026-27: A Critical Assessment of Hits & Misses Amid Rising Disease Burden & Digital Expansion](#)

Author: Arpita Mukherjee | 30 Mar, 2026
Digital Health News

VOICES FROM ICRIER



[Consumer Is King: How Does Crude Oil Inflation Impact People's Pockets? | ET Now Swadesh](#)

Puja Mehra (Senior Fellow, ICRIER) joins a panel discussion on ET Now Swadesh to discuss how the US-Iran conflict-driven spike in crude oil prices and a weakening rupee could trigger a new wave of inflation in India, examining its ripple effects on fuel, fertilisers, food prices, and household budgets.



[What Did Dr. Arpita Mukherjee Say About the Possibilities of Spice Export? | FISS Spice Meet](#)

In this interview, Arpita Mukherjee (Professor, ICRIER), discusses the future of India's spice exports at the FISS Spice Meet in Ahmedabad. She argues that Indian spices like cumin and turmeric are no longer confined to food, with rapidly expanding applications in beauty, wellness, and health products opening new global export opportunities.



West Asia War Impact: Will India Face a Fertilizer Shortage Before Kharif? | Urea Supply at Risk? ET Now

In this interview, Sachchida Nand (Visiting Professor, ICRIER) examines whether the West Asia conflict could disrupt India's fertiliser supply ahead of the Kharif season — discussing LNG supply disruptions, rising global fertiliser prices, and India's strategy to diversify imports.



India Continued Chinese Imports Despite Galwan, Says Economist | The Gist | StratNewsGlobal

In this interview, Nisha Taneja (Senior Visiting Professor, ICRIER) discusses the government's move to ease Chinese investment restrictions under Press Note 3, arguing that while the updated framework allowing automatic approval for non-controlling minority stakes is a step forward, it may not fully unlock the potential of Chinese investments into India.

FIELD STORIES



Field Visit to Tiruppur Exporters Association & Kasipalayam Common Effluent Treatment Plant

2 Mar, 2026 | Tiruppur

The APSI team at ICRIER engaged in discussions with board members of the Tiruppur Exporters Association and visited the Kasipalayam Common Effluent Treatment Plant, gaining on-ground insights into the textile export ecosystem and environmental management practices.

FROM ARCHIVES



7th Asia Economic Dialogue 2026

28 Feb, 2026 | Pune

Saon Ray (Visiting Professor, ICRIER), joined as a panelist at the session "*Global Trade Systems: Which Direction is it Headed?*" — discussing how nations and industries can navigate tariffs, emerging technologies, and evolving strategic alignments in an era of geoeconomic fragmentation.