CLAWS–IIFOMAS

ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM 2026

MINE ACTION: GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INDIA'S PERSPECTIVE

Thursday, 05 November 2026

Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi

Report Prepared by: Khushboo Sen Dhuruv, Research Assistant, CLAWS

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) and the India International Forum on Mine Action and Safety (IIFOMAS) organised the third IIFOMAS Annual Symposium 2026 on "Mine Action: Global Responsibility and India's Perspective" on 5 November 2026 at the Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi. The symposium served as a platform for national and international partners, bringing together senior military leadership, diplomats, international representatives, and subject-matter experts to deliberate on mine action, humanitarian assistance, capacity building, and India's role in international cooperation. The discussions highlighted major gaps and the lack of adequate willingness to address challenges in mine action, underscoring that the issue is not merely a national concern but a shared global responsibility. The third edition focused on India's growing role and responsibility in the global mine action landscape, highlighting its expertise, technological capabilities and the civilisational philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, "the world is one family", and the collective commitment to making the world a safer place for all humankind.

The symposium commenced with the Welcome Address by Lt Gen Dushyant Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd.), Director General, CLAWS, followed by Opening Remarks by Maj Gen Ajay Seth, VSM (Retd.), Chairman, IIFOMAS Board. The Inaugural Address was delivered by Gen Anil Chauhan, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Retd.), Patron, IIFOMAS. This was followed by an online video address by the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen NS Raja Subramani, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM. The Keynote Address was delivered by Col Navneet MP Mittal (Retd.), Co-Founder and Chairman, Horizon Group, and Founder and Director General, IIFOMAS.

The technical programme comprised an Expert Talk, "Global Mine Action in 2026: Emerging Challenges and Indian Roles", by Mr Mukesh Kumar, and two panel discussions. Panel Discussion I, moderated by Maj Gen Ajay Seth, VSM (Retd.), examined "**Global Mine Action Agenda: Responsibilities and Opportunities**" through the perspectives of the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, the Ambassador of Cambodia, an international conflict-prevention expert and a senior defence analyst. Panel Discussion II, moderated by Maj Gen Rajwant Singh, AVSM (Retd.), focused on "**India's Partnership with the Global South: Capacity Building, Humanitarian Assistance and Post-Conflict Recovery**", bringing together serving and retired military leaders, a mine survivor, a maritime mine-countermeasures expert and an academic to deliberate on military training, survivor rehabilitation, underwater mine threats and South–South cooperation. The symposium concluded that mine action as essential to peace and development. It emphasised India's potential to contribute globally through a comprehensive approach covering demining, survivor rehabilitation, reconstruction and international cooperation

SUPPORTIVE PARTNERS

The symposium was organised by the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) and the India International Forum on Mine Action and Safety (IIFOMAS), with the support of the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) and the Horizon Group, whose partnership strengthened the symposium's engagement across the domains of humanitarian mine action, strategic policy, international cooperation and field implementation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The symposium highlighted the global challenge posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war, noting that approximately 60 countries and regions remain contaminated, with thousands of people losing their lives or sustaining life-altering injuries every year. It emphasised that mine action extends beyond demining and comprises five interconnected pillars: humanitarian demining, explosive ordnance risk education, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and advocacy. Collectively, these pillars contribute to humanitarian protection, peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable development. The symposium reaffirmed the importance of translating dialogue into tangible outcomes and strengthening mine action as a shared global responsibility, with emphasis on practical solutions, international cooperation and recovery,

moving beyond the politics of conflict. Speakers noted rising armed conflicts, weakening arms-control commitments and declining funding, and called on India to leverage its Armed Forces, veterans, industry, research institutions and humanitarian initiatives to lead capacity building, survivor rehabilitation and regional cooperation, particularly with the Global South. The event brought together distinguished representatives from the fields of defence, diplomacy and mine safety, including representatives of international partner nations, to deliberate on strengthening global cooperation and advancing humanitarian mine action.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES

- Armed conflicts are at their highest level since 1946, with 65 state-involved conflicts recorded in 2025, producing widespread explosive contamination, including booby-trapped buildings, drones, improvised explosive devices and scatterable mines. Ukraine alone has an estimated 139,000 sq km of land rendered unusable, and rubble in Gaza is extensively contaminated.
- Global arms-control commitments are eroding, with the withdrawal of Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine from the Mine Ban Treaty and wider withdrawals and suspensions from the Convention on Cluster Munitions, even as 166 countries continue to support the ban.
- A severe funding gap persists: global military expenditure of about USD 2.7 trillion contrasts with mine action funding of roughly USD 1.07 billion in 2024. Major donors have reduced contributions, Official Development Assistance is declining, and victim assistance receives only about 5 per cent of mine action funding.
- Humanitarian impact is rising: the 2024 Landmine Monitor recorded 6,279 casualties, of whom 90 per cent were civilians and 46 per cent were children, while the area of anti-personnel mines cleared fell to about 175 sq km in 2024 from 237 sq km in 2023. Legacy contamination, such as in Laos, endures for decades after conflicts end.
- Mine action faces coordination, technical and awareness gaps, including difficult terrain, shifting sand dunes and drifting or seabed mines, the absence of an effective regional platform, limited data on underwater mine casualties, weak national and whole-of-nation engagement, and growing mistrust that diverts attention from conflict prevention.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

- India has a strategic and humanitarian opportunity to emerge as a key contributor to global mine action, building on its experience in combat engineering, explosive ordnance disposal, Counter- Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) operations, United Nations peacekeeping and disaster response, and on its established support to training and clearance in more than 13 countries.
- Mine action should become a deliberate component of Indian foreign policy and humanitarian diplomacy, anchored in *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, South–South cooperation and assistance without conditionalities, while India retains its distinct national security position on the Ottawa Convention as a party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and all its protocols.
- India's military demining orientation must evolve towards internationally accepted humanitarian standards, as military breaching and mine-warfare training do not by themselves meet UN Mine Action Standards requirements, particularly when training foreign personnel.
- Domestic gaps need attention, including mine-protective equipment, detection of legacy and drifting mines along the Line of Control, limited deployment of robotic systems, a shortage of personnel trained for international deployment, and mine-related concerns in Naxal-affected and northeastern regions.
- India's humanitarian credentials, including the Jaipur Foot initiative, the India for Humanity programme and the Artificial Limb Centre, Pune, can be leveraged for survivor rehabilitation and a Global South centre of excellence, while its defence Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), academic institutions and veteran community offer an under-utilised base for innovation and implementation.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS BY SPEAKERS

- Explore an India-led Regional Mine Action Forum, with a concept paper submitted to the Ministry of External Affairs, supported by an online knowledge-sharing platform and

priority on bilateral cooperation with mine-affected countries, including leveraging Cambodia's operational experience.

- Establish an integrated Centre of Excellence for humanitarian mine action, and develop specialised training frameworks and courses, such as the Explosive Disposal Course at the College of Military Engineering, in line with international standards, with participation of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and Paramilitary Forces (PMFs) and international experts.
- Accelerate indigenous research and technology, including robotics, artificial intelligence, advanced sensors, unmanned systems and smart mine technologies, through collaboration among DRDO, IITs, defence MSMEs, start-ups and industry, alongside improved procurement and testing of anti-mine boots and protective equipment.
- Mobilise sustainable financing and strengthen public–private partnerships, treating mine action not merely as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) but as an opportunity linked to post-conflict reconstruction and economic recovery, and encourage Indian mine-action enterprises such as the Horizon Group to become internationally competitive partners.
- Adopt a survivor-centred, comprehensive approach by integrating rehabilitation, prosthetics, mental health support, livelihood restoration and survivor participation in policy, including documentation of every victim, trauma first-aid training in border communities, mine risk education in schools, and advocacy to raise victim assistance funding from 5% to 10%.
- Adopt a whole-of-nation approach with dedicated teams of veterans and specialists for government-funded projects, expanded attention to underwater mine action using India's hydrographic and maritime expertise, and more frequent symposiums and knowledge-sharing platforms to raise the international visibility of humanitarian mine action.
- Build an integrated mine action ecosystem that brings together think tanks (IIFOMAS, CLAWS and ICWA), field practitioners such as the Horizon Group, academia and the Armed Forces, with the active involvement of the Ministry of External Affairs and other government bodies, so that research, training, field implementation and international outreach reinforce one another.
- Establish a permanent forum in India that connects mine-affected countries, donor nations, international organisations, mine-action agencies and industry, to share

experience, coordinate resources, showcase Indian expertise and turn dialogue into joint projects.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

- Transition India's mine-action approach from a predominantly military and operational orientation to a comprehensive humanitarian framework integrating personnel protection, technological innovation, international standards, survivor rehabilitation and international cooperation.
- Position India as a regional and Global South hub for training, research, rehabilitation and capacity building, building on Africa-India Field Training Exercise (AFINDEX), (March 2027, Pune, with participation expected from more than 50 African countries and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) management as a major theme), Vietnam-India Bilateral Army Exercise (VINBAX) and international training at the College of Military Engineering.
- Institutionalise cooperation among the Armed Forces, CAPFs, DRDO, industry, academia, think tanks, humanitarian agencies and international partners to speed up the translation of research and field experience into deployable demining capability.
- Integrate demining with reconstruction, economic rehabilitation and livelihood restoration, so that cleared land supports agriculture, infrastructure and trade, and generates resources for further clearance.
- Strengthen India's humanitarian diplomacy and global advocacy through the Ministry of External Affairs, think tanks and organisations such as IIFOMAS and the Horizon Group, so that India contributes to global peace and human security in keeping with *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.
- Strengthen cooperation with key partner countries to mobilise funding, the biggest challenge in mine action, since demining is a global responsibility and not that of any single country.

The Strategic Way Forward for India, as emerging from the symposium deliberations and recommended by the speakers, is presented at Appendix I.

APPENDIX 1

S. No	Recommended Action	Government of India / MEA / MoD	Indian Armed Forces	Industry & Startups	Academia & Research Institutions
1	Establish a Permanent Mine Action Forum in India	Host the forum; submit a concept paper to MEA.	Share operational experience with partner militaries.	Support with field expertise and technology.	Run research and online knowledge-sharing.
2	Make Mine Action Part of Foreign Policy	Integrate into MEA and public diplomacy.	Link AFINDEX and VINBAX to mine action.	Join public–private humanitarian initiatives.	Advocate South–South cooperation.
3	Build Demining Capacity and Standards	Fund training of partner-country personnel.	Align training with UN Mine Action Standards.	Provide trained teams and mentoring.	Develop curricula and certification.
4	Set Up a Centre of Excellence	Provide institutional and financial backing.	Contribute instructors and facilities.	Partner on training and technology transfer.	Anchor research and publications.
5	Adopt Robotics, AI and Advanced Detection	Support indigenous R&D and procurement.	Trial and deploy robotic demining systems.	Develop affordable, field-tested solutions.	Collaborate through DRDO and IITs.
6	Strengthen Protective Equipment	Improve procurement and testing of anti-mine boots.	Evaluate equipment in the field.	Deliver certified protective gear.	Support independent testing.
7	Mobilise Funding and Partnerships	Secure donor and international funding.	Contribute personnel to funded projects.	Treat mine action as a recovery opportunity, beyond CSR.	Engage philanthropic and donor communities.
8	Integrate Survivor Assistance	Expand India for Humanity; raise victim assistance share from 5% to 10%.	Train border communities in trauma first aid.	Support prosthetics and livelihood programmes.	Include survivors in policy; study mental health.
9	Address Underwater Mine Threats	Include sea mines in maritime cooperation.	Use hydrographic and diving expertise.	Develop maritime clearance technologies.	Build casualty data and research.
10	Adopt a Whole-of-Nation Approach	Create dedicated veteran-led project teams.	Facilitate veterans' transition into mine action.	Employ veterans and volunteers in the field.	Run symposiums and risk education.

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

Time (H)	Topic	Speakers
0830-930	Reception and Registration	
0930-0935	Introduction	Ms Shreeya, Master of Ceremonies
0940-0955	Welcome Remarks	Lt Gen Dushyant Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd.), DG CLAWS
0940-0955	Opening Remarks	Maj Gen Ajay Seth, VSM (Retd), Chairman IIFOMS Board
0955-1005	Inaugural Address by Patron	Gen Anil Chauhan PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Retd), Patron IIFOMAS
1005-1020	**Special Address by the Chief of Defence Staff (Video Message)**	**Gen NS Raja Subramani, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, Chief of Defence Staff**
1020-1035	**Keynote Address:** Mine Action – Global Responsibility and India's Perspective	Col Navneet MP Mittal (Retd.), Co-Founder and Chairman, Horizon Group; Founder and DG, IIFOMAS
1034-1045	**Message from International Partners (Video/Online Messages)**	
1045-1100	**Expert Talk: "Global Mine Action in 2026 – Emerging Challenges and Indian Roles"**	Dr. Mukesh Kumar, Research Associate, ICWA
1100-1130	**Tea Break**	
1130-1210	**Panel Discussion I: Global Mine Action Agenda: Responsibilities and Opportunities**	**Moderator** Maj Gen Ajay Seth, VSM (Retd.), Chairman, IIFOMAS Board
		• H.E. Ms Mahishini Colonne, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India • H.E. Ms Rathy Many, Ambassador of Cambodia to India • Mr Peter Knoope, Distinguished Fellow, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, Netherlands • Maj Gen Rajar Kochhar, VSM, PhD (Retd.), Senior Defence Analyst
1210-1250	**Panel Discussion II: India's Partnership with the Global South: Capacity Building, Humanitarian Assistance and Post-Conflict Recovery**	**Moderator** Maj Gen Rajwant Singh, AVSM (Retd.), Senior Military Analyst
		• Maj Gen RR Bhatt, SM, DGCE, E-in-C Branch • Dr J. E. Jaganathan, Associate Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University • Col JK Chaurasia (Retd.), Veteran and mine survivor • Capt (IN) Unendra Agrawal (Retd.), Horizon Group
1250-1255	Closing Remarks	DG, IIFOMAS
1255-1300	Vote of Thanks	
1300-1320	Presentation of Mementoes and Felicitations	
1320-1330	Group Photograph	
1330-1430	Lunch & Dispersal	

Gallery



Inaugural Address

Gen Anil Chauhan PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Retd), Patron IIFOMAS



Special Address (Video Message)

Gen NS Raja Subramani, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, Chief of Defence Staff



Panel Discussion I

Global Mine Action Agenda: Responsibilities and Opportunities



Panel Discussion II

India's Partnership with the Global South: Capacity Building, Humanitarian Assistance and Post-Conflict Recovery



Group Photograph

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