

Report by Marshal Rathour, Deputy Director, Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce & Industry

The Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), a prestigious and well-recognized Indian think tank based in New Delhi, hosted the **India-Nepal Think Tank Summit 2025** from April 2 to 5, 2025. This event brought together leading experts and stakeholders from both nations to explore avenues of cooperation and deepen mutual understanding.

On behalf of Nepal, the delegation was led by the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA), a Kathmandu-based think tank. The Nepali team comprised representatives from the energy, trade, media sectors, and Chamber of Commerce representatives.



It was a privilege of participating in this Summit as a representative of the Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce & Industry (NICCI). The experience offered valuable insights into how bilateral dialogues are structured, with participation from high-level Indian government officials, former diplomats, scholars, academicians, sectoral experts, and private sector leaders.

The summit embodied what is known as *Track 1.5 diplomacy*, combining official and non-official actors to promote open, informed discussions on regional relations.

Key Discussion Areas:

The Summit focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation between Nepal and India, particularly in the following sectors:

- Trade and investment
- Energy and power trade
- Tourism development
- Media collaboration
- Regional integration



Key Participants from VIF India Included:



Key Participants from India Included:

- Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF
- Mr. Gaurav Ahluwalia, Joint Secretary, National Security Council Secretariat, GoI
- Lt. Gen. R.K. Sawhney (Retd.)
- Ambassadors KV Rajan,
- Ambassador Jayant Sinha,
- Ambassador Ranjit Rae,
- Ambassador Prabhat P. Shukla,
- Ambassador Pankaj Saran
- Brig. Rahul Bhonsle
- Dr. Smruti S. Pattanaik, Regional Affairs Expert

Engagement with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII):

Another significant engagement was an interaction with members of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) at their headquarters in New Delhi. This marked NICCI's first official visit to CII HQ. The discussions were encouraging, with several members expressing interest in investing in Nepal, highlighting the importance of political stability and investment security—key concerns also reflected in our Business Climate Survey report.



Courtesy Call with H.E. Nepali Ambassador to India Dr. Shankar Prasad Sharma:

During the visit, the Nepali delegation paid a courtesy call to His Excellency Dr. Shankar Prasad Sharma, Ambassador of Nepal to India, at the Embassy Office on Barakhamba Road, New Delhi. We briefed the Ambassador on the outcomes of the Summit, which were overwhelmingly positive. The Indian counterparts expressed strong interest in continuing dialogue, especially in the areas of tourism, energy, and media cooperation.



As part of the visit, we presented two NICCI publications to H.E. Dr. Sharma:

- *Investing in Nepal: A Handbook for Indian Investors*
- *Business Climate Survey for Indian Companies in Nepal 2024*



Conclusion:

The India-Nepal Think Tank Summit 2025 proved to be a highly enriching experience. It provided a platform to understand Indian perspectives on bilateral relations, and it shed light on the dynamics of diplomacy—especially Track 1, 1.5, and Track 2 approaches.

The event successfully laid the groundwork for future collaborations in tourism, energy, and media, with an emphasis on fostering stronger, more transparent relations between our two nations.

I am grateful to the organizers from both Nepal and India for this opportunity to represent NICCI and contribute to this important dialogue.

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