



# DELHI POLICY GROUP

*Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power*



## DPG National Conference Reports, Vol. 2, Issue 3 National Conference on “Advancing the BBIN Sub-Regional Cooperation”

India Habitat Centre | New Delhi | May 4-5, 2017



**DPG National Conference on  
Advancing BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation  
New Delhi, 4-5 May 2017**

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*“Trade and Economic issues”*

**Presentation by Dr. Swarnim Wagle**

**Member, National Planning Commission, Govt. of Nepal**

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*“Transit and Transport Issues”*

**Presentation by Dr. Prabir De**

**India-ASEAN Chair, RIS-India**

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*“Energy, Hydropower and Water”*

**Presentation by Ambassador Lyonpo Om Pradhan**

**Former Ambassador of Bhutan to India**

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*“People-to-People Connectivity”*  
**Presentation by Mr. Sabyasachi Dutta**  
**Director, Asian Confluence, Meghalaya**

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**Day Two Summary Note**

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**Day 2 Special Address**  
**Presentation by Mr. Didar Singh**  
**Secretary General, FICCI**

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## Abstract of Proceedings

BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation should be called BBIN 'Regional' Cooperation since this framework is playing a standalone role in leading regional integration in the areas of Trade, Transit, Energy, Water and People-to-people connectivity. Delhi Policy Group and The Asia Foundation designed an outcome oriented format for the recent National Conference; where greater emphasis was laid on brainstorming sessions and carving out a plan of action to address some of the issues at hand and identify low hanging fruits that would be mutually beneficial for all the four countries. Additionally, in the process, a checklist of priorities to ensure implementation of some of the issues was sketched.

In the future, DPG plans to move beyond a one-shot conferencing focus into a method that yields concrete results downstream and gives pointers for policy makers on how to progress on collaborative efforts in the region. In the next steps of this series of meetings and discussions, efforts will be made to eventually expand the idea of BBIN and merge it with the Bay of Bengal community.

The first day of the BBIN National Conference comprised of breakout sessions where participants were divided into four groups- Trade; Transit; Energy and Water Management; and People-to-People Connectivity. The main objective of the breakout sessions was to list concrete recommendations in each of the thematic areas. The process of framing recommendations had begun during DPG's earlier discussions in Kolkata and the National Conference gave another opportunity to concretise the expert suggestions and make final recommendations. The National Conference also brought together participants from the past conferences and connected them at a personal level while ensuring continuity in the process by building on what has been previously accomplished. The goal was to eventually form Core Groups on each thematic areas; who can then forward the discussions and take it to the next phase. In order to encourage a structured discussion with efficient time management, all participants were given a concept note listing the major sub-themes and issues. A plan of action which can be implemented in the next two years was designed by each core group. This plan of action was then presented by the core group mentors, inviting inputs from members of other panels.

Day two of the national conference opened to a wider audience and welcomed other scholars and eminent persons to participate and present. The day was divided into four sessions: Trade, Transit, Energy and Water Management and People-to-People Connectivity. Additionally, it included two special addresses by Mrs. Sripriya Ranganathan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, and Mr Didar Singh, Secretary General, FICCI. Mrs. Sripriya Ranganathan highlighted recent advancements in BBIN Cooperation in energy, connectivity and people-to-people contact. Mr Didar Singh spoke of BBIN's greater potential to connect to ASEAN and RCEP. Each session was chaired by an eminent scholar on the topic, which allowed for structured discussions by elaborating on the topics and subtopic identified in the concept note. Sessions included presentations by persons knowledgeable of the intricacies of the particular field. These presentations included issues, like reducing non-tariff barriers for greater trade and improving infrastructure, that need to be addressed and recommendations for improving cooperation in the field. The floor was opened for Questions and Answers after each session, which provided impetus for

open discussions on the issues highlighted and helped in gaining some unique insights on how to go about addressing certain problems or implementing potential plans of action.

The national conference concluded on a note of optimism and progressed in identifying key issues and recognising practical solutions to solve these issues. Core group members were encouraged to stay connected, to strengthen the discussions and mould them into executable recommendations. It also culminated in tentative plans of action that would be made more concrete in future endeavours.

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**The Asia Foundation**

**DPG National Conference on Advancing BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation**

Venue: Juniper Hall, India Habitat Centre  
New Delhi, 4-5 May 2017

**Programme**

**Day I: Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

**Venue: Juniper Hall, India Habitat Centre**

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|----------------------|--|
| <b>09.00 - 09.30</b> | <b>Registration</b>  |
| <b>09.30 - 10.00</b> | <b>Opening Session</b>   |
| 09.30 - 09.40        | Welcome Address by Ambassador Hemant Krishan Singh, Director General, Delhi Policy Group (DPG) [10 minutes]                                  |
| 09.40 - 09.50        | Special Address by Mr. Sudhakar Dalela, Joint Secretary, North Division, MEA [10 minutes]  |
| 09.50 - 10.00        | Briefing on Breakout Sessions by Ambassador Biren Nanda, Senior Fellow, Delhi Policy Group   |
| <b>10.00 - 11.30</b> | <b>Breakout Session I: Participants will discuss the identified issues and themes and frame policy recommendations to address each issue</b> |
| <b>11.30 - 13.00</b> | <b>Breakout Session II: Consensus arrived from each policy recommendation will be discussed and put forth in a concrete plan of action</b>   |
| <i>13.00 - 14.00</i> | <i>Lunch Break</i>   |
| 14.00 - 16.30        | Presentation by Core Group Leaders [30 minutes]  |

Chair: Amb. Biren Nanda, Senior Fellow, Delhi Policy Group

1. Dr. Swarnim Wagle, Group Mentor, Trade and Economic Issues
2. Prof. Prabir De, Group Mentor, Transit and Transport Issues
3. Amb. Lyonpo Om Pradhan, Group Mentor, Water & Energy Issues
4. Mr. Sabyasachi Dutta, Group Mentor, People to People Connectivity



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**The Asia Foundation**

16.30 - 17.15                      Discussions/ Q&A [45 minutes]

**17.15 - 17.30                      Closing Session**



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**The Asia Foundation**

**Day II: Friday, 5th May 2017**

**Venue: Juniper Hall, India Habitat Centre**

- 09.00 - 09.30**            **Registration**
- 09.30 – 10.15**           **Opening Session**
- 09.30 - 09.35            Welcome Address by Ambassador Hemant Krishan Singh, Director General, DPG [5 minutes]
- 09.35 - 09.40            Welcome Remarks by Mr. Siddharth Shriram, Chairman and Managing Trustee, Delhi Policy Group [5 minutes]
- 09.40 - 09.50            Remarks by Special Guest: Dr. Kavita Sharma, President, South Asian University, New Delhi [10 minutes]
- 09.50 - 10.15            Keynote Remarks by Ambassador Lalit Mansingh, Former Foreign Secretary (India) [25 minutes]
- 10.15 - 10.30*            *Coffee/ Tea Break*
- 10.30 - 11.15*            **Session I: Economic Issues**  
[The session will deal with Non Tariff barriers/ measures, Customs and electronic data interchange, Banking, Border trade and border infrastructure, BBIN MVA, etc.]
- Chair: Ambassador Sanjay Singh, Chair* [5 minutes]
- Special Address: Ms. Sripriya Ranganathan, Joint Secretary, Bangladesh & Myanmar, Ministry of External Affairs [10 minutes]
- Speakers: [5 minutes each]
1. *Dr. Swarnim Wagle, Member, National Planning Commission of Nepal*
  2. *Dr. Selim Raihan, Professor, Department of Economics & Executive Director, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), Bangladesh*
  3. *Dr. Ajitava Raychaudhuri, Professor and Former Head, Jadavpur University, Kolkata*
  4. *Dr. Deigracia Nongkynrih, Assistant Professor/ Faculty, Economics, North Eastern Hill University*
- 11.15 - 11.30            Open Discussion and Q & A [15 minutes]



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11.30 - 12.15

**Session II: Transit and Multimodal Connectivity (Roadways, Waterways, Railways and Aviation)**

[The session will deal with ports and shipping, Aviation, Waterways, Road, Railways particularly container transportation]

*Chair: Mr. Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International, Jaipur*  
[5 minutes]

Special Address: Mr. Didar A Singh, Secretary General, FICCI [10 minutes]

Speakers: [5 minutes each]

1. *Dr. Pritam Banerjee, Senior Director, DHL India*
2. *Mr. Purushottam Ojha, Former Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, Government of Nepal*
3. *Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem, Research Director, Centre of Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh*
4. *Dr. Mahalaya Chatterjee, Professor and Director, Centre for Urban Economic Studies, Department of Economics, Calcutta University*

12.15 - 12.45

Discussion and Q & A [30 minutes]

12.45 - 13.45

*Lunch Break*

13.45 - 14.30

**Session III: Energy-hydropower and Water Resource Management**

[The session will deal with Hydropower, power sharing and transmission, Non-conventional energy, PPP and Energy investment.]

*Chair: Dr. Sagar Prasai, Country Representative-India, The Asia Foundation*  
[5 minutes]

Speakers: [5 minutes each]

1. *Dr. Govind Raj Pokharel, CEO, Nepal Reconstruction Authority*
2. *Lyonpo Om Pradhan, Former Ambassador of Bhutan to India & former Chairman, DRUK Holdings & Investments (DHI)*
3. *Dr. Shaheen Afroze, Director, Research, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies*
4. *Dr. Mohor Chakraborty, Assistant Professor in Political Science, South Calcutta Girls College (affiliated to University of Calcutta)*

14.30 - 15.00

Discussion and Q & A [30 minutes]

15.00 - 15.15

*Coffee/ Tea Break*



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**15.15 - 16.00**

**Session IV: People to People Connectivity through multi-sectoral Engagement**

[The session will deal with Tourism, Higher Education, Health, Cultural heritage, Media, etc]

*Chair: Professor Prabir De, Professor, RIS, and Coordinator, ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at RIS, New Delhi [5 minutes]*

Speakers: [5 minutes each]

- 1. Dr. Swarnim Wagle, Member National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal*
- 2. Mr. Pratim Bose, Bureau Chief, The Hindu- Business Line*
- 3. Lyonpo Om Pradhan, Former Ambassador of Bhutan to India & Director DRUK*
- 4. Dr. Shaheen Afroze, Director Research, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies*
- 5. Mr. Sabyasachi Dutta, Director, Asian Confluence, Shillong, Meghalaya*

**16.00 - 16.30**

Discussions and Q & A [30 minutes]

**16.30 - 16.45**

**Rapporteur Note/ Summary by Mr. Sanjay Pulipaka, Senior Consultant, ICRIER [15 minutes]**

**16.45 - 17.00**

**Concluding Remarks**

Ambassador Hemant Krishan Singh, Director General, Delhi Policy Group [10 minutes]

## **Summary Note for Day One**

## Summary Note of DPG National Conference of May 4<sup>th</sup> 2017

The first day of the conference comprised of breakout sessions where participants were divided into four groups- Trade; Transit; Energy and Water Management; and People-to-People Connectivity. The main objective of the breakout sessions was to list concrete recommendations in each of the thematic areas. The process of framing recommendations had begun during DPG's earlier discussions in Kolkata and the National Conference gave another opportunity to concretise the expert suggestions and make final recommendations. The National Conference also brought together participants from the past conferences and connected them at a personal level while ensuring continuity in the process by building on what has been previously accomplished. The goal was to eventually form Core Groups on each thematic area; who can then take the discussions forward to the next phase of implementation. In order to encourage a structured discussion with efficient time management, all participants were given a concept note listing the major sub-themes and issues. A plan of action which can be implemented in the next two years was designed by each core group. This plan of action was then presented by the core group leaders, inviting inputs from members of other panels.

### **Outcomes and Recommendations:**

#### Core Group 1: Trade and Economic Issues

[Participants: Dr. Swarnim Wagle (Nepal), Dr. Selim Raihan (Bangladesh), Dr. Ajitava Raychaudhuri (West Bengal, India), Ambassador Sanjay Singh (India), Mr. Biswajit Das (West Bengal, India) and Dr. Deigracia Nongkynrih (North East, India)]

The group re-articulated and expanded on the areas identified in the concept note. Additionally the team listed five major issues combining some older traditional trade issues as well as focused on some of the newer issues that have emerged in the trade literature of the recent decade. A plan of action was worked out to address each of the identified issues. In addition to focusing on efficiency, the experts in the team also addressed the issues of inequality, equity and social cohesion through the lens of job creation through trade and economic opportunities, as this is a crucial area that needs to be addressed.

1. Creation of regional production growth networks and value chains: The creation and development of regional value chains was considered crucial, as 80 percent of the total trade in the world today happens through global value chains.

Government campaign initiatives such as 'Make in India', 'Digital India' and 'Skill India' have put India in the forefront of initiating this process, however it was considered important for the smaller neighbouring countries around India to latch on to these emerging opportunities. Hence, creation of regional value chains that promote production and growth networks was strongly recommended. This would ensure efficient assembling and aggregation of end products after initial segregation of raw materials and production outputs into different clusters that can be then exported to the global markets. It was advised that The BBIN Policies must look at trade and investments as

complimentary factors. In order to attract investments, firstly a pool of potential investors needs to be identified and mechanisms to protect investments should be devised. In the case of commercial disputes the international arbitration laws should be followed. Dispute settlement could also be embedded in a regional investment treaty, however, it was established that dispute settlement mechanism requires predictability and transparency.

The team also advocated construction of economic zones or economic corridors earmarked for BBIN Nations. For example Ethiopia has dedicated 6-7 SEZs for China, where only Chinese firms locate and operate, the workers comprise of locals but everything else is managed by the investors directly. This was recognized to be a necessary condition to attract large investments. Additionally, identification of dynamic markets closer to the economic zones to be matched with potential investors was also acknowledged

2. Reduction of Trade Costs: The issue of cost reduction was broken down into traditional trade costs and infrastructure costs. The team advised Bangladesh and Nepal to reduce non-tariff barriers by reducing the number of items on the sensitive list. Harmonization and mutual recognition of standards throughout the region was another concern that the team highlighted. Formalization of border trade through expanding existing border haats and easing land border customs was considered a low hanging fruit. Lastly, creation of a BBIN Potential Project Inventory- that would help identification of existing and new infrastructure to augment speedy reduction of transit costs and overall regional development- was advised.
3. Acceleration of Trade in Services: This was considered important to promote quality human capital and cultural integration. Aviation linkages through open skies, on-spot visa availability, freer movement of passenger vehicles etc. were identified as important developments to promote tourism. To accelerate trade in health and medical services- portable insurance packages and an inter-governmental body to oversee regulations in trade were insightful suggestions that were proposed. Cross border investment in higher and technical education and mutual recognition of degrees were insisted as top priority to increase education exchanges. Finally, cross border trade in energy services was identified as an early harvest project with massive potential.
4. Augmenting of manufacturing productivity: It was assessed that the manufacturing sector has massive potential in terms of providing employment opportunities on a mass scale, through unconditional productivity conversions that is not constrained by the domestic market. Thus, pursuing the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) agreement was deemed imperative in order to augment manufacturing productivity in the region. The team advised on relevant sectors through which it could be taken up -Opening up accounting and logistics services, business services, reduction of telecom roaming charges and currency conversion losses etc.
5. Building up skills for gainful employment of the youth: It was deliberated that creation of skill maps that match demand and supply of the region, and deeper collaboration between skills and vocational institutes is indispensable for

imparting innovative employment opportunities for the youth. Work Permit Schemes were advised for certain investment areas for easier movement of labour in identified occupations.

Conception of BBIN Prosperity Fund as well as an organized BBIN secretariat was proposed for endorsing additional investment in skills institutes, shared infrastructure, assisting dislocated workers and industries etc. Government bodies both at the national and sub-national level; trade and business associations; investment boards; regional think tanks, universities and CSOs - were some of the critical drivers/ actors that were identified for effective implementation of such plans..

### Core Group 2: Transit and Transport Issues

[Participants: Dr. Prabir De (India), Dr. Mahalaya Chatterjee (West Bengal, India), Dr. Bipul Chatterjee (India), Mr. Arvind Kumar (India), Mr. Pratim Ranjan Bose (West Bengal, India), Mr. Purushottam Ojha (Nepal), Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem (Bangladesh)]

The group mainly focused on revisions in the MVA so as to interest Bhutan and expand the agreement to multimodal connectivity. Several suggestions were given by the group for the issues identified, and each issue was addressed in the larger context of promoting seamless connectivity by reducing transit time and costs.

1. Solutions for Bhutan: To address some of the Bhutanese concerns regarding environmental issue, review of Article 6, Clause 6 of the MVA was considered prudent. Keeping a cap on number of vehicles, reducing axle load of vehicles and vehicle emission levels were a few of the suggestions that was given as possible solution to the issue.. It was also stated that there needs to be mention of third country trade in MVA to interest Nepal and Bhutan.
2. Multimodal connectivity: Multimodal connectivity was considered important and it was recommended that the MVA be extended to include rail, air and water connectivity. It was suggested that each country follow India's module of their own/ individual National Multimodal Act to make the transition to a sub-regional agreement easier. Furthermore, it was assessed that reduction of transit fee to a minimum of zero can be achieved through coordinated endeavour amongst the BBIN nations. Lastly, analysis of other agreements like the ASEAN was suggested for better comprehension of existing resolutions of the same.
  - a. Air Connectivity: It was recommended to improve airport connectivity in smaller airports and increase the frequency of flights in strategic airports.
  - b. Rail Connectivity: It was also recommended to increase rail connectivity and create a new rail corridor connecting Kakkarbhitta, Siliguri, Banglabandha and Panchagarh. Harmonization of rail gauge was also raised as an issue of concern for easier connectivity.

- c. Water Connectivity: Waterways was identified to be a cheap mode of connectivity, especially in the inland ports of NE of India and Bangladesh.
- d. Port Connectivity: Land port connectivity was also considered important –a proposal for creation of a BBIN port network to formalize linkages and reduce transit time and cost was submitted.

A connectivity master plan was also advised to ensure minimum overlap of infrastructure development as part of different regional treaties. Additionally, increasing e-commerce linkages was identified as an easy way to reduce transit cost and increase business opportunities.

### Core Group 3: Water and Energy Issues

[Participants: Ambassador Lyonpo Om Pradhan (Bhutan), Dr. Sagar Prasai (New Delhi, India), Dr. Mohor Chakraborty (West Bengal, India), Dr. Shaheen Afroze (Bangladesh), Dr. Govind Raj Pokharel (Nepal), Lt. Gen. Aditya Singh (India), Ambassador Sudhir Vyas (India), Ambassador V P Haran (India)]

Seven core recommendations were identified by this group that were essential for adequate management of the Himalayan water resources for the benefit of the region as a whole. A plan of action was proposed to the same effect.

1. Clear Policy Objectives: It was recommended to have clear policy objectives so it is known by everyone how to proceed. Successful bilateral treaties needed to be contextualized in the regional dimension for successful agreements. Energy hydropower was identified to be the entry point to enhance immediate cooperation and thus build a level of trust and confidence amongst the BBIN countries.
2. Infrastructure development: Infrastructure and market institutions like smart grids need to be developed to integrate regional grids, for pricing guidance, supply insurance, energy mix etc.
3. Awareness and promotion programs: Educating and creating awareness amongst the population of the benefits of regional cooperation and protecting Himalayas as a common strategic resource was considered to be crucial, as many were not aware and the information gap would cause problems in policy implementation.
4. Scientific Study: A proposal for initiating scientific study of the linked issues of climate, water, agriculture, Himalayan ecology and how these can be pooled and utilized was put forward..
5. Feasibility Study: It was also advised to conduct a feasibility study on energy, hydropower and water resources management.
6. Basin wide management: It was proposed that the BBIN region agree to develop a basin wide management program.

7. Information sharing: It was recommended that countries share information on existing and planned power grids with a view to developing regional power transmission infrastructure.

The group covered the aspects in the concept note by adding a plan of action to address each issue.

#### Core Group 4: People-to-People Connectivity

[Participants: Mr. Sabyasachi Dutta (North East, India), Ambassador Biren Nanda (India), Ambassador V P Haran (India), Dr. Shreeradha Dutta (West Bengal, India), Ms Diya Nag (New Delhi, India), Dr. Joyeeta Bhattacharya (New Delhi, India), Dr. Shaheeh Afroze (Bangladesh)]

The group elaborated on the ideas given in the concept note alongwith some other recommendations for increasing people-to-people connectivity in the region. Key areas were identified and a plan of action was prepared for each.

1. Border Development: Developing mechanisms to facilitate cross border movement and effective management of border security and making it more vibrant was insinuated. This could be done by developing the border haats through easing land border customs to empower local communities and through development of people friendly border cities such as: Dawki, Raxaul and Jaigaon.
2. Tourism: Tourism was considered a low hanging fruit and it was recommended that there be a consolidated database of all tourist sites in the region to promote tourism of the region as a whole. Tourist packages like the Tea Circuit, Buddhism Circuit etc. were proposed for the same. Introduction of specific tourist packages through Tea Circuit, Buddhism Circuit modules was advocated to help promotion of local/regional BBIN tourism. These circuits could be operationalized including all stakeholders such as govt services visa services, consular services, transportation, hospitality etc. Movie shooting locales of each region could also be promoted to local and international filmmakers. Increasing the frequency of flights was also seen to be beneficial for more contact. Incentives for student groups was another recommendation.
3. Cultural integration: Cultural exchanges through festivals, dance, literature, theatre, art, national icons that have pan BBIN appeal etc. were seen to be easily implementable ways of promoting cultural integration. A BBIN Eminent Persons Group was proposed to celebrate icons in these fields. Sports was identified as another field through which integration could be made greater by way of sports camps, leagues etc.
4. Education: Another way to increase people-to-people contact was seen to be through curriculum development, by including information on the BBIN countries in school and college curriculum. Scholarships, student exchanges, internships etc. were seen to be ways to connect the youth of the nation. An

important suggestion was to allow local country rates for BBIN students in all BBIN countries, rather than foreign rates, to lower the cost of education.

5. Health and medical sector: A common medical emergency response system operationalized in PPP mode was proposed to promote medical tourism. Tie-ups with insurance companies and health providers was another suggestion to the same effect. Traditional medicine was identified as a USP of the BBIN region and it was proposed to set up a common platform for the practitioners, manufacturers and regulators for the same.
6. Role of Media: The media was identified to play a key role in shaping public perception and it was recommended to promote media exchanges for more responsible media and advertisement opportunities. The media needed to be roped in to promote regional integration.

A number of groups were proposed including a BBIN Centre for Skill Development for the creation of common skill standards, scholarships and to reward master craftsmen by showcasing their work; a BBIN Centre for Excellence to promote contact between young diplomats, bureaucrats and foreign service officers so they have greater understanding of the region's nuances; BBIN Consular services as an arrangement abroad for offering services where some countries cannot represent themselves; and a BBIN interactive Website to incorporate all of this and promote small business and tourism.

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## **Core Group Presentation on Trade**

**Trade and Economic Issues**  
**Delhi Policy Group, May 4, 2017**

	<b>Issue (What)</b>	<b>Case (Why)</b>	<b>Enablers (How)</b>	<b>Actors (Who)</b>
1.	Create regional production-growth networks and value chains	To tap a new source of growth in an era where production is fragmented and economies are integrating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Investment Treaty (to protect against expropriation, etc.)</li> <li>• Dispute Settlement Mechanism (for T&amp;I)</li> <li>• Earmarked BBIN investment within new or existing economic zones and corridors (to ease utilities, labor and land availability)</li> <li>• Facilitate intra-regional investment promotion (by sectors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governments</li> <li>• Trade and business associations and chambers of commerce (FICCI, CNI/FNCCI, FBCCI)</li> <li>• Investment Boards</li> <li>• Regional think tanks and universities</li> <li>• UGCs</li> <li>• BBIN Secretariat</li> </ul>
2.	Reduce trade costs	To widen consumption possibilities (greater variety at lower prices)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut tariffs/sensitive lists in a time bound/tiered manner</li> <li>• MRAs for certification and standards</li> <li>• Harmonization of SPS and TBT</li> <li>• Strengthen BBIN/SARSO platform</li> <li>• Formalize border trade (expand <i>haats</i> and simplify land custom stations)</li> <li>• Build green and resilient infrastructure (roads, rails, ports, ICPS)</li> <li>• BBIN Potential Project Inventory for Infrastructure</li> </ul>	
3.	Accelerate trade in services	To promote quality human capital and cultural integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote tourism through aviation linkages (Open Skies); spot visa; free movement of passenger vehicles</li> <li>• Permit trade in health/medical services (portability of insurance; inter-governmental coordinating body)</li> <li>• Trade in higher and technical education services (recognition of degrees; incentives)</li> <li>• Implement cross-border trade in energy services</li> </ul>	
4.	Augment manufacturing productivity	To enhance competitiveness and enlarge production possibilities (esp. in landlocked regions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue GATS-plus services agreement (using SATES as a baseline) for accounting, logistics, business services, etc.</li> <li>• Harmonize financing and insurance arrangements (L/Cs; reduce currency conversion losses)</li> <li>• Reduce telecom roaming charges (South Asia Satellite)</li> <li>• Operationalization of the motor vehicle agreement</li> </ul>	
5.	Build skills for gainful employment of the youth	To create decent jobs for equity and social cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skill Maps to be complementary to new investment areas; selective work permit regimes</li> <li>• Collaboration among skills/vocational institutes;</li> <li>• BBIN Prosperity Fund to make additional investment in infrastructure and skills institutes (through SPVs) and assist industrial dislocation</li> </ul>	

## Trade and Economic Issues

### Delhi Policy Group

May 4, 2017

<i>Issue (What)</i>	<i>Case (Why)</i>	<i>Enablers (How)</i>
<b>Create regional production-growth networks and value chains</b>	To tap a new source of growth in an era where production is fragmented and economies are integrating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regional Investment Treaty (to protect against expropriation, etc.)</li><li>• Dispute Settlement Mechanism (for trade and investment)</li><li>• Earmarked BBIN investment within new or existing economic zones and corridors (to ease utilities, labor and land availability)</li><li>• Facilitate intra-regional investment promotion (by sectors)</li></ul>

<b>Reduce trade costs</b>	To widen consumption possibilities (greater variety at lower prices)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cut tariffs/sensitive lists in a time bound/tiered manner</li><li>• MRAs for certification and standards</li><li>• Harmonization of SPS and TBT</li><li>• Strengthen BBIN/SARSO platform</li><li>• Formalize border trade (expand <i>haats</i> and simplify land custom stations)</li><li>• Build green and resilient infrastructure (roads, rails, ports, ICPS)</li><li>• BBIN Potential Project Inventory for Infrastructure</li></ul>
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<b>Accelerate trade in services</b>	To promote quality human capital and cultural integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote tourism through aviation linkages (Open Skies); spot visa; free movement of passenger vehicles</li><li>• Permit trade in health/medical services (portability of insurance; inter-governmental coordinating body)</li><li>• Trade in higher and technical education services (recognition of degrees; incentives)</li><li>• Implement cross-border trade in energy services</li></ul>
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<b>Augment manufacturing productivity</b>	To enhance competitiveness and enlarge production possibilities (esp. in landlocked regions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pursue GATS-plus services agreement (using SATES as a baseline) for accounting, logistics, business services, etc.</li><li>• Harmonize financing and insurance arrangements (L/Cs; reduce currency conversion losses)</li><li>• Reduce telecom roaming charges (South Asia Satellite)</li><li>• Operationalization of the motor vehicle agreement</li></ul>
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<b>Build skills for gainful employment of the youth</b>	To create decent jobs for equity and social cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skill Maps to be complementary to new investment areas; selective work permit regimes</li><li>• Collaboration among skills/vocational institutes;</li><li>• BBIN Prosperity Fund to make additional investment in infrastructure and skills institutes (through SPVs) and assist industrial dislocation</li></ul>
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## Actors (Who)

- National and Sub-national Governments
- Trade and business associations; and chambers of commerce (FICCI, CNI/FNCCI, FBCCI)
- Investment Boards
- UGCs
- Regional think tanks and universities
- BBIN Secretariat (Rotating)

## **Core Group Presentation on Transit**

# **BBIN**

## **Transit, Ports and Multimodal Transport**

### **Group Members**

Dr Mahalaya Chatterjee

Dr Bipul Chatterjee

Mr Arvind Kumar

Mr Pratim Ranjan Bose

Mr Purushotam Ojha

Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem

and

Dr Prabir De

# Bhutan's Presence in the BBIN MVA

- It is critically important to have Bhutan in the BBIN MVA.
- Concerns raised by Bhutan could be addressed through alternate mechanism.
- The group suggested to introduce specific clauses in the MVA agreement such as putting caps on number of vehicles, axle load of vehicles, emission level, etc.
- There is a scope to cover the concern of Bhutan under clause 6 of sub-article 6 of BBIN MVA.

# Allowing Third Country Trade and Multimodal Connectivity

- Existing agreement needs to be widened to allow third country trade under BBIN MVA.
- Extending the current MVA agreement to a multimodal connectivity agreement
- There is scope for widening the agreement in case of air, water and railway connectivity.
- BBIN member countries may consider to have national multimodal act

# Transit Fee

- According to the BBIN MVA (clause 3 of article 7), countries independently decide the fees and charges including transit fee.
- In case of transit fee, it is necessary to explore the practice in case of other MVAs and transit agreements in the world such as in South East Asia and East Asia.
- However, 'no transit fee' is sensitive for some countries.
- In this case, suggestions are to include all kinds of expenses under 'user charges'.

# Air Connectivity

- Extending the current MVA agreement to a multimodal connectivity agreement
- There is scope for widening the agreement in case of air, water and railway connectivity.
- Smaller airports in BBIN shall be connected both for cargo and passenger traffic
- Connecting airports would lead to encourage trade, value chain and tourism
- Airports in BBIN may be connected with direct flight such as between Guwahati and Dhaka
- More flights between airports such as Kolkata and Kathmandu

# Railway Connectivity

- Railway connectivity needs to be developed in BBIN
- Some new projects: New railway lines (e.g. Kakarvita—Siliguri-Banglabandh -- Panchagarh)
- It is also important to develop broad gauge railway in Bangladesh and connecting with Indian railway system.
- It is important to identify railway corridor. In that case, countries could consider Trans Asian Railway network.
- BBIN Railway Agreement
- Training and capacity building

# Waterways connectivity

- BBIN countries should explore new waterways corridors for trade transportation
- Waterways infrastructure in Bangladesh need improvement
- BBIN waterways plan

# Telecom services

- Call rates in BBIN are relatively expensive. BBIN countries should reduce the intra-subregional call rates
- Roaming charges should be reduced

# Port connectivity

- BBIN countries should strengthen port connectivity and shipping networks
- Focus should be put in place to smaller ports
- New transit ports in the subregion (e.g. Vizag, Mongla, Dharma, etc.)
- Set up BBIN port networks

# Cooperation with Other Organisations

- More coordination with other initiatives such as BIMSTEC MVA, ASEAN, etc.

# Promoting Services Network / Value Chain

- High scope of developing service related value chains
- There is potentiality to develop service related value chains within the subregion (e.g. Guwahati as 'medical hub').
- Promoting e-commerce across the subregion
- Considering the scope of promoting e-commerce within the subregion, countries could develop e-commerce-related rules in order to facilitate e-commerce.

# Develop a BBIN Connectivity Master Plan 2030

- BBIN sub-regional economic cooperation could develop a connectivity master plan for 2030 taking the four priority areas in consideration.

Thanks.

**Core Group Presentation on Energy,  
Hydropower and Water Management**

## **Energy, Hydropower and Water Management**

### Team members

- (i) Ambassador V.P. Haran
- (ii) Ambassador Sudhir Vyas
- (iii) Lt. Gen. Aditya Singh
- (iv) Dr. Govind Raj Pokharel
- (v) Dr. Sagar Parsai
- (vi) Dr. Mohor Chakravarty
- (vii) Dr. Shaheen Afroze

### **Policy objectives**

1. Build on the successes achieved at the **bilateral** level, and contextualize it within a regional dimension thus broadening the benefits across the region. This would enable all the members to benefit in the social and economic advancement of the others.
2. Energy hydropower would be the **entry point** and a driver to enhance immediate positive impact on cooperation and thus building trust and confidence.

### **In pursuance thereof we recommend the following:**

- (i) Infrastructure and market institutions including smart grids needed to integrate the regional grid, wheeling arrangements, pricing guidance, supply assurance and energy mix, etc.
- (ii) Educating and creating awareness of our population (youth, policy makers, planners, civil society, private sector etc) of the benefits of regional cooperation and protecting the Himalayas as a common strategic asset for the region.

(iii) Scientific study of linked issues – climate, water, agriculture, and Himalayan ecology. In order to accomplish this, institutional research capacities could be pooled and utilized.

(iv) Conduct feasibility studies on energy, hydropower and water resource management

(v) BBIN region to agree to develop basin-wise/basin-wide water management program

(vi) Exchanging information on existing and planned power grids with a view to developing regional power transmission infrastructure.

(vii) Learning from best practices in other areas in the world like in the Nordic countries.

**Core Group Presentation on  
People-to-People Connectivity**

**BBIN**

# **People to People Cooperation**

Recommendations and Action Plan

# Development of Border zones

- Developing Smarter Border Haats
  - Empowering the local community
- Developing People Friendly Border Zones
  - Eg:
    - Dawki
    - Raxaul
    - Jaigaon
  - Balancing Security concerns with ease of access
  - Encompass a wide range of facilities and services
    - Health, education, skills, handcrafts, local products, arts
  - A study of mechanisms and best practices around the world need to be made

# Tourism

- A database of heritage sites /places of pilgrimage across the BBIN region to be developed
- Special Airfare fare packages for BBIN tourism on the lines of Udaan
- Tourism sites to be developed to increase range of activities to engage tourists for a longer period
- Incentives to promote movie shooting locales across the region to promote tourism by popularizing the local strengths.
- Specific circuits to be identified and operationalized with all private stakeholders as well as government
- Special incentives for operators who facilitate BBIN tourism
- BBIN tourism incentives for student groups
- Festival Tourism
  - Tagore Festival
  - River Festival
- Religious and pilgrimage tourism
- River Cruises
- Tea Trails
- Wildlife Tourism
- Car Rallies

# Curriculum Development

- BBIN Students pay local country rates in BBIN region.
- School Curriculum should include focus on BBIN
  - Students exchange programs
  - Internships
  - School trips and study tours to BBIN countries
  - Popularizing BBIN through Quizzes, debates, and essay competitions
  - Establishing School partnerships
  - Could be funded through CSR activities
  - BBIN youth parliament
    - Study issues related to regional cooperation

# Medical Engagements

- Common Emergency medical response system in PPP mode
- Medical Tourism through tie ups with insurance companies and healthcare providers
- Rationalize use of medical facilities across the BBIN region

# BBIN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Create a common cooperation platform for BBIN countries to come together on traditional medicines

Create networks of

- 1) providers
- 2) manufacturers
- 3) Regulators

# BBIN MEDIA FORUM

- Promote Media Exchanges
- Use Public Broadcasters to spread public awareness of region
- Focus on positive stories and achievements
- Recognize achievers
- Advertise opportunities for scholarships and academic positions
- Discuss issues and promote regional integration

# CULTURAL EXCHANGES

- Cultural exhibitions Spanning
  - Literature
  - Theatre
  - Dance
  - Art
  - Music
  - Films ( features and documentaries)
  - National Icons with a pan BBIN appeal

# BBIN Eminent Persons Group

- Prepare a Roadmap for regional integration covering the following topics:
  - 1) review of relations and integration within BBIN
  - 2) make proposals for progress in the following areas
    - Political
    - Economic
    - Security
    - Cultural and People to people

# Skill Development

- Creation of BBIN center of Excellence in Skill Development.
- Reward and recognize master craftsmen of highly skill intensive handicraft products
- Creation of Common Skill Standards across BBIN to create greater labor mobility
- Scholarships for skill development

# Sports

- Creation of BBIN Sporting Leagues
  - Rope in sports bodies and private sector
- Major Sports Tournaments
- BBIN sports camps
- Focus on sports like
  - Cricket
  - Soccer
  - Archery

# Others

- BBIN Center of Excellence
  - Special forums for exchange of young bureaucrats/diplomats
- BBIN Consular Services
  - BBIN countries should offer consular services for each other in capitals or cities where other BBIN countries are not represented.
- BBIN website
  - Interactive website
  - Promote business, tourism

## **Summary Note for Day Two**

## Summary Note of DPG National Conference of May 5<sup>th</sup> 2017

Day 2 of the BBIN National Conference included panel discussions on each of the four thematic areas; panellists discussed and deliberated upon the relevant issues, in order to further BBIN cooperation. The four panels were on Trade, Transit, Energy and People-to-People Connectivity. The opening session started with a summation of the recommendations arrived at the previous BBIN roundtables and during the brainstorming sessions of the National Conference. The need for implementation of policies was emphasized in order to forward the BBIN sub-regional cooperation. There was renewed optimism that this cooperation would be successful as compared to other sub-regional cooperation platforms in South Asia. The need for building human resource capital was addressed and the disparities in the sectors of health and education were discussed.

### Session 1: Trade and Economic Issues

The BBIN session on Economic issues covered topics of BBIN Trade, Investment and Finance, which included issues of Non-Tariff Barriers, banking, border trade and border infrastructure, value chains and production networks etc. Experts highlighted main concerns and ideas to advance economic cooperation and trade in the sub-region. The potential for BBIN Trade was estimated to be a total of \$50 billion p.a.

Mrs. Sripriya Ranganathan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, during her special address, reiterated India's commitment to the cause of regional integration and progress of the region as a whole. It was clarified that contrary to media reports, Bhutan had graciously allowed the other three countries to go ahead with the implementation of MVA, while it waits to be ratified.

The Joint Secretary highlighted some of the recent achievements under the BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation. In the power sector, progress has been made through a trilateral MOU between India, Bhutan and Bangladesh for jointly investing in a hydropower project in Bhutan. The broader principles of bringing out transparency and predictability in power sharing agreements, developing secure and stable inter-grid connections and sub-regional transmission networks of cooperation were also being worked out. There is a proposition of replicating the BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement in the rail sector as well. It was highlighted that great achievements in power and rail sectors were made between India and Bangladesh, with the visit of the Bangladeshi Prime Minister to India. In terms of People-to-People connectivity, the Phulbari–Banglabandha check-post that was developed was brought to light and had received healthy cross-border movement. The MOU with Bangladesh on allowing passenger vehicles to use protocol routes was discussed. The bilateral protocol on use of waterways and trade and the Bilateral Trade Agreement had already been tweaked to enable transit of goods from Bangladesh through India to Bhutan and Nepal and vice versa. It was also said that there was ongoing discussion to build an e-knowledge network for the BBIN region.

Presentations by other panelists covered recommendations on various aspects, from value chains and production networks, trade in services, augmenting manufacturing productivity to skill development and employment opportunities in the region.

1. Creation of regional production growth networks and value chains: A regional investment treaty and trade facilitation body was needed to further trade. A well-articulated, unambiguous Dispute Settlement Mechanism should be put in place, created independently, or embedded in the treaty. It was suggested by the experts, that BBIN should consider developing an economic corridor designed to suit the needs of the local people, which can lead to skill development and greater employment opportunities for them. It was recommended that investment go to dynamic sectors identified by government trade bodies. Comprehension and management of general apprehensions and perception in this regard cannot be ignored and have to be efficiently looked at to maintain the overall goodwill and relations between the four nations. “Make in India” was identified as the anchor for growing value chains- dynamic sectors in each country could be identified for the same.
2. Reduction of Trade Costs: It was suggested that Bangladesh and Nepal should cut down the tariffs on shielded products on the sensitive list. Although, it was reflected that Nepal and Bangladesh couldn't cut tariffs down immediately only for BBIN, as under the current framework it needs official recognition from WTO to cut tariffs. A consensus was arrived at that BBIN would need to find its own mechanism for harmonization/standardization, depending on the product. Formalization of Border Trade through expansion of Haats, and easing land customs and transport facilitation, was deemed extremely important. A speaker recognized this to be of utmost importance to the North East of India, as most trade in the region happens across borders. The speaker also recognized that promotion and protection of North East was needed for BBIN and the region's growth. One of the dignitaries also pointed out that potential trade costs would decrease for Nepali tea exporters if borders were opened and made more transparent.

Green and resilient infrastructure was considered necessary and a potential project inventory to record ongoing infrastructure projects was proposed. It was recalled that 30 transport corridors within the BBIN region have already been identified to increase border infrastructure and soft infrastructure, hence only a small push is required to take this to the next level.

3. Accelerating Trade in Services: Open skies, on the spot visa availability and freer movement of passenger vehicles are needed to facilitate tourism in the region. Portable Insurances and an inter-governmental coordinating body were needed to accelerate trade in healthcare and medical services. Mutual recognition of degrees by Universities in the BBIN Countries was deemed crucial for higher and technical education services. Trade in energy services was identified to be an early harvest project, after tangible results were seen.

This was considered important, as these successes will build trust amongst citizens and will encourage them to participate in the BBIN Agenda.

4. Augmenting Manufacturing Services: Manufacturing was recognized as an important sector for growth and employment opportunities. Thus it was advised to build on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Some immediate solutions suggested were harmonizing financing and insurance arrangements, cross-border e-payment platforms, letters of credit, reducing currency conversion losses and telecom roaming charges etc.
5. Building of skills for gainful employment of youth: This was considered important for the agenda of equity, inclusion and social cohesion. Greater collaboration between skills and vocational institutes were needed. Skill mapping is important for easier movement of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour.

The idea of BBIN Prosperity Fund was put forward to make additional investments in infrastructure, skills institutes and to assist industrial dislocation, if any.

#### Session 2: Transit and Transport Issues:

The transit session covered discussions on travel and infrastructure within the BBIN countries to facilitate greater connectivity and movement of goods, trade and people. The buzzword of the session was multimodal connectivity. Everyone agreed that there was greater need for multimodal connectivity in the region to ensure seamless transit.

The Special Address by Mr. Didar Singh, Secretary General, FICCI, covered quite a few relevant points. The greater connectivity potential through BBIN to RCEP and ASEAN was emphasized upon. It was advocated that BBIN be looked at in the greater context of the above two and connectivity in the region should be developed in the same context. On infrastructure, road projects in the NE were discussed and the new coastal shipping route as well as the improved road and rail connectivity between Bangladesh and India were highlighted as the biggest priorities. Experts advocated making trade and business as easy as possible while standardizing procedures to minimize bottlenecks. For the same purpose, off-border checkpoints and customs guarantee mechanism was recommended. On the topic of People-to-People connectivity, ratification of the Land Boundary Agreement, a MOU between BSNL and BSCCL and MOUs between universities were highlighted. It was reiterated that the external connectivity agenda should be aligned with the internal connectivity agenda of India. The speaker also brought to light that GST has set up a task force for seamless internal connectivity.

Recommendations and issues raised by other speakers covered topics including road, rail, waterways connectivity and other hard and soft infrastructure facilities.

1. Road/MVA: It was recognized that road infrastructure needed to be improved, especially in Bangladesh. Improvements in the infrastructure sector are cost-intensive, thus part of the investment can be procured through transit fee/user charges, which needed to be worked out. To address Bhutan's reservations regarding the MVA, existing mechanisms under Article 6, Sub-Clause 6 were identified. This article allows putting a cap on the number of vehicles allowed to enter the country, and other such mechanisms. It was also suggested that there should be clear mention in the MVA allowing third-country trade. Participants were cautioned that there may be short-term trade diversion effects due to MVA, but the long-term benefits should be taken into consideration. Road was identified as the most important form of connectivity to enhance People-to-People relations and connectivity.
2. Rail: A new railway line between Kakarbhitta, Siliguri, Banglabandha and Panchagarh could be developed to increase connectivity from Nepal to Bangladesh through India.
3. Waterways: It was recognized that water transit channels needed to be revived for cheap and green transportation. It was recommended that old abandoned routes and new routes be explored for transit.
4. Other infrastructure and facilities: Off-border checking and clearance points were seen as an immediate necessity. The delegate from Nepal pointed that the country could offer its excellent existing facilities to the BBIN Transit plan; Nepal currently has 2 existing Integrated Check Points and is developing 2 more in Bhairava and Birat Nagar; for seamless movement. GPS, E-lock etc. were identified to enable security with ease and minimal costs. It was recommended that a network of production centres be built around the Bay of Bengal region; shipping and other modes of connectivity were needed for the same. Intra-industry trade also needed to be developed in the region. Development of dedicated freight courier is needed. A need was identified to fill gaps in existing infrastructure that are either not functional or lack capacity to take the load required. Air connectivity in smaller ports of West Bengal and North East needed to be improved. 50000 MW power potential in North East was identified that could be transmitted only through Bangladesh. The agreement for the same was considered important.

Other points discussed were the necessity of the central government to motivate the state governments to take initiatives for BBIN cooperation. All dignitaries agreed that there was urgent need for implementation of BBIN Plans, without which it could end up losing steam. Infrastructural development in the West Bengal and NE region of India was considered vital for easy connectivity and to attract investment in the region for industrial development. Urgent need was expressed to reduce logistical costs through the above recommendations. Over concerns of India being dominant, it was agreed that it should not be looked at with trepidation, but as a fact that despite being the biggest player, India is willing to do asymmetrical things. It was even discussed how perception of Nepal

should change from a landlocked to land-linked country, as it was connected to India and China, two of the world's fastest growing economies. Bangladesh was recognized to be an important player, as market predictions show the country to be one of the fastest growing economies in the coming decades.

It was also felt that policies need to be framed looking at the positive/negative impact they will make on the ground level (to the local people in the border regions), like the Land Boundary Agreement and Border Haats. Job creation in the border areas and ease of migration of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour was also emphasized.

### Session 3: Energy, Hydropower and Water Issues

The session on Energy, Hydropower and Water issues mainly focussed on how cheap and green power could be generated in the region and how the power sharing agreement can be negotiated for the same. Water management was also a key issue that was discussed. Speakers provided perspectives and prospects of the country they represented apart from adding personal viewpoints on certain issues. Key points covered were:

1. Hydropower potential and sharing: Hydropower was identified as an entry point to BBIN cooperation. The representative from Bhutan reiterated that Bhutan has a potential of 30000MW of electricity generation from hydropower, which would result in a surplus as per current energy consumptions of Bhutan. Eastern Nepal is also estimated to have a hydropower potential of 20000MW. There was a prediction of a surplus in monsoon, due to which it was recommended that India and Bangladesh negotiate a MoU and acquire the surplus.

The future trilateral MOU between Bangladesh, Bhutan and India to invest in a hydropower plant in Bhutan was discussed and received with optimism]

The Chair of the session stated that an additional 5600 MW of electricity is planned to be generated from the upper Teesta Basin in India. This could be shared with Bangladesh via transmission units in Sikkim. This would help both sides, as Bangladesh would benefit from the electricity generated and West Bengal would get the water required for consumption, ending the apprehensions on water sharing agreements between the two sides.

2. Water management and sharing: The chair's comments were on how water-sharing agreements between countries are drafted and how they need to be more creative in including tradable benefits like navigation etc. Trilateral water sharing agreements were under discussion in academic circles, but India's policy is strictly to participate in bilateral negotiations, which can be another hindrance to establishing multilateral ties. Further, it was also recognized that these agreements are tricky and politically sensitive. For example, the Hooghli river agreement could be made trilateral, but it is a core concept which relates to expanding the tradable benefits of water- not only volume, but augmentation of flow- and requires storage in Nepal, which has environmental, social, humanitarian costs. So

Nepal's question is how to meet these costs and India's question is that it's a shared state river, and needs to include all stakeholders. Involving multiple countries and stakeholders make such matters complicated.

3. Electricity generation through other means: The representative from Bangladesh illustrated Bangladesh's power plans and its move to coal based generation from natural gas. The growing need for power in Bangladesh was recognized, on the lines of which, the power sharing agreements between Bangladesh and India were recalled. These included the 1320 MW from Rampal Coal power plant and 100MW from Tripura. It was reported that negotiations for diesel sharing were also going on.

The representative from India spoke of prospects of energy generation from coal based methane in West Bengal. She also mentioned other on-going projects from renewable sources of energy, like the wind power projects in Tamil Nadu, and hydropower projects modeled on the Jal Sahyog Scheme in Nagpur. It was recommended that zero tax rate status under GST be given to renewable energy so as to prevent adverse effects on agriculture, consumer use and industrial production. The issue of the proposed Asia Energy Pvt. Ltd. pipeline to transport natural gas from Contai, West Bengal, to Khulna, Bangladesh was raised and it was recommended that it be fulfilled soon.

The MBI (Myanmar- Bangladesh- India) project, which proposed a joint gas pipeline from Myanmar through Bangladesh to India, was also recalled. It was recommended that the deal be signed immediately. A gas corridor from other regions into BBIN was also proposed along with a BBIN Energy reserves to meet energy deficiency.

4. Energy market and trade: An integrated energy market was proposed to foster trade and should have required energy infrastructure facilities to harness power-generating capacities of each nation. Signing a sub-regional Energy Charter to address fear about possible undesirable repercussions and as confidence building measures and safeguards to ensure long-term investment was also proposed.

There was consensus that framing power and water sharing agreements was difficult because energy was linked to water, and there was political and environmental sensitivity regarding the issue. In this case, there was need felt to contextualize bilateral agreements in the regional framework along with operationalization and implementation of existing agreements. India was appealed to take the lead on the same. The need was also expressed for development of human resources and capacity through the above measures. Further, a study on the ecological benefits lower riparian areas get was proposed. Concerns were also raised about dolomite pollution from Bhutan adversely affecting West Bengal, to which the representative from Bhutan responded that Bhutan was open to dialogue and full cooperation to settle these issues.

#### Session 4: People-to-People Connectivity

The People to People Connectivity Session focused on civilizational links and multi-sectorial engagements in the areas of, but not limited to, Tourism, higher Education, Health, Cultural Heritage and Media. Discussions were held on how there could be more inter-cultural engagement so as to familiarize the general public with BBIN and build their trust on the benefits of sub-regional cooperation. Following this line, there were talks of greater engagement in the areas of music, sports, social media, food etc. There was consensus on all the broader topics of cultural engagement, while each speaker added their unique perspectives, especially in the discussion that followed. Key Points covered were:

1. Tourism: Budget Tourism for population younger than 25 and older than 60 was recommended. This could include discounted rail tickets and religious pilgrimage for the elderly. Branding and promotion of tourist sites and a common database of these was considered necessary. It was recommended that a network of museums be created to preserve and promote diversity of BBIN countries. Visa issues (between Bangladesh and India), stringent customs and immigration and lacking infrastructure were identified to be undermining tourism. It was felt that more connectivity was needed. An esteemed speaker identified Calcutta as a pivot point for increasing connectivity and engagement for the same. Joint marketing to promote tourism within the region, as a whole, for outsiders as well as population of member countries, was needed.
2. Education and employment: Mutual recognition of degrees was recognized to be important. Student exchanges, Summer School and Semester programs, Joint research institutes, Scholarships etc. were recognized as opportunities to capture the youth demographic. This would help them carry forward positive BBIN Agenda. There was also a suggestion for implementing short-term work permits on an experimental basis.
3. Cultural engagement: Food festivals, Music festivals, literary festivals, separate leagues for each sport etc. were suggested to further inter-cultural engagement. An esteemed guest extended support for these and handicraft trade activities through platforms like the Delhi Haat.
4. Perception Management and Media: The mistrust and suspicion (trust deficit) amongst people regarding regional integration was identified. This was caused by information gap and biased reporting. Since public consensus was considered paramount to BBIN success, role of media and image management was identified to be important. Speakers felt that negative issues were over-emphasized in media, without due attention to the positives. Thus, the need for an East-West Centre like body was felt for media exchange. There could be short-term and long-term fellowships. There should also be structured exchange programs. The media exchange centre could be headquartered in one country with chapters in the

other three. It could also hold symposiums for exchange. There could be a BBIN Media School to train upcoming journalists and provide interning opportunities. New media/ social media and smartphone platforms need to be harnessed. An esteemed speaker also recognized the greater role India has to play, owing to its dominance in the region.

5. Security: A Joint Intelligence Cell could be created to address security concerns.

The representative from Bhutan put forth their concerns regarding increased People-to-People Connectivity. Owing to Bhutan's distinct culture compared to the other BBIN Countries and its small population, there was an inherent fear of being overwhelmed and losing its cultural background. Yet, recognizing the need for cooperation within this region, it has now done away with Dollar based tourism and reduced rates for South Asian tourists. Bangladeshi and Indian tourists do not also require a visa. Similar concerns were also seen to exist in the North East region of India.

The day concluded with a vote of thanks by Ambassador Biren Nanda who acknowledged the work put in by everyone involved. Mr Sanjay Pulipaka provided a comprehensive rapporteur's note. He also raised pertinent questions regarding the need for jointly implementing integrated and disaggregated approaches, asymmetric power relationships in the region and how Nepal and Bhutan have will have a more prominent role in energy politics due to huge hydropower potential. He also questioned impact on river agreements if water transit channels are revived, and raised the need for a BBIN Secretariat.

Concluding remarks by Ambassador H K Singh, Director General, Delhi Policy Group were marked with a tone of optimism. It was recognized that BBIN today is set in a complex global context where countries that were founders of the global liberal order are today debating between nativism and globalism, while this region is the strongest supporter of it. It shows in the region's actions, polity and in the enthusiasm of people. He remarked that this doubt was directed towards relevance of leadership to national purpose and well-being. The more leadership was distracted from the purpose of serving the economic and security well being, the more the doubt will continue. This would carry on for the next decade.

The young countries in this region, which according to IMF statistics, were the fastest growing economies, overtaking East Asia, according to him did not understand the meaning of national and subnational purpose, national and subnational identity, national and subnational identities, diversities and common purpose of the nation. In this context, according to him, it was owed to the civil society to consolidate thinking and common purpose as nations and then with the advantage of the fact of how extensively our historical contexts have been interconnected or intermeshed, progress into new steps of cross border cooperation. He cautioned against mega instruments and instead advocated consolidating nation-hoods, becoming self-assured, more prosperous with more open economies.

He also commented on the sophistication of the DPG BBIN conference format and how it now allowed making pointed discussions, outcomes and advances, including implementation. He recommended forwarding the report to the Government of India for consideration.

Government of India's efforts to integrate the North East through connectivity were much appreciated, as they play a key role in shaping BBIN relations. India's relations with Bangladesh were also identified to be a key factor along with its excellent relations with Bhutan. The effervescence in relations with Nepal needed to be improved and the hydropower agreement between the two countries was sought to be resolved.

He ended on a note of optimism and suggesting that there be a way to keep core group members connected for future engagements.

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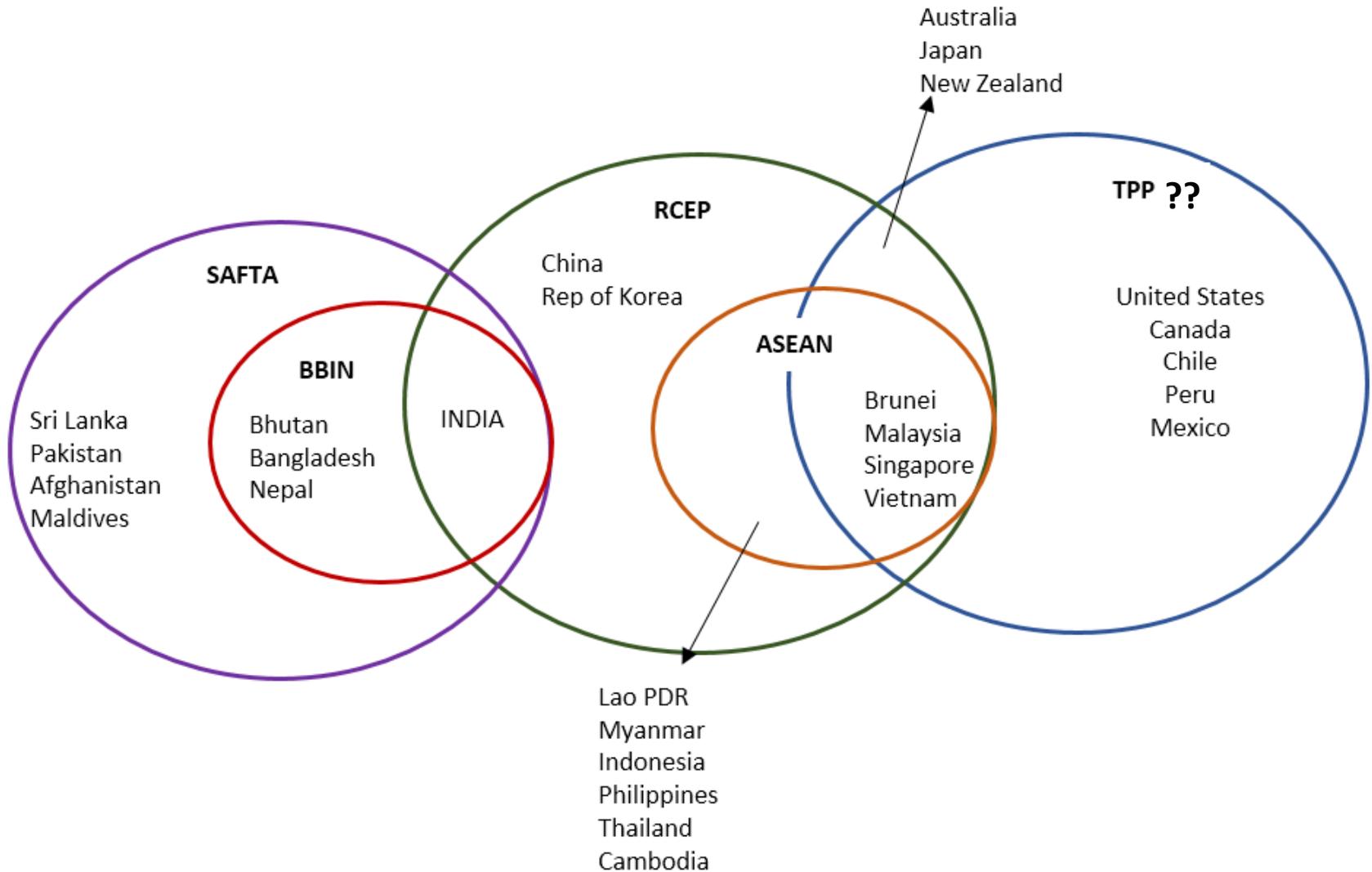
**Address by Dr. A. Didar Singh,  
Secretary General, FICCI**

***BBIN Connectivity:  
Recent developments, hurdles  
& possible solutions***

## **BBIN Region in recent times**

- Considerable political traction and alignment at highest political level
- Strategic shifts by India – Look East to Act East
- Major investments in infrastructure related to multi-modal connectivity
- Number of bilateral and multilateral agreements inked in the region
- Greater action on people-to-people connectivity
- Bhutan's exit from Motor vehicles Agreement already ratified by BIN (Bangladesh, Nepal and India)

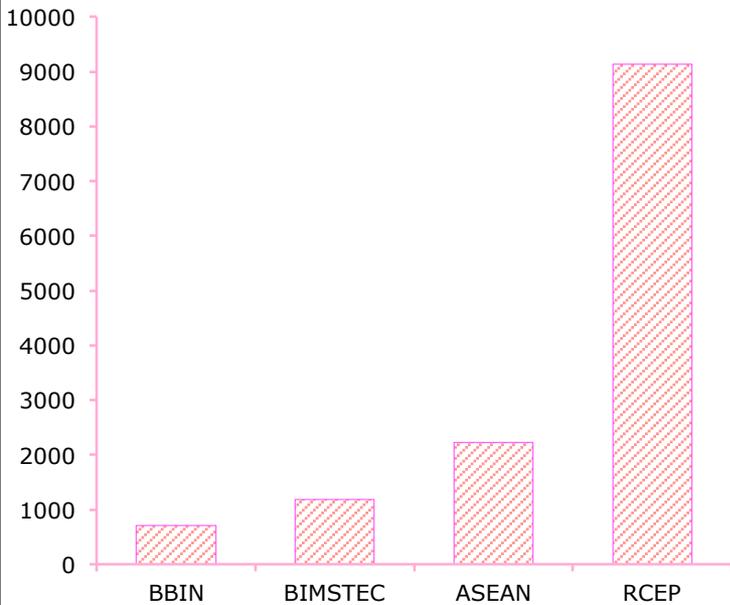
# ***Landscape of Select Regional and Sub-Regional Formations***



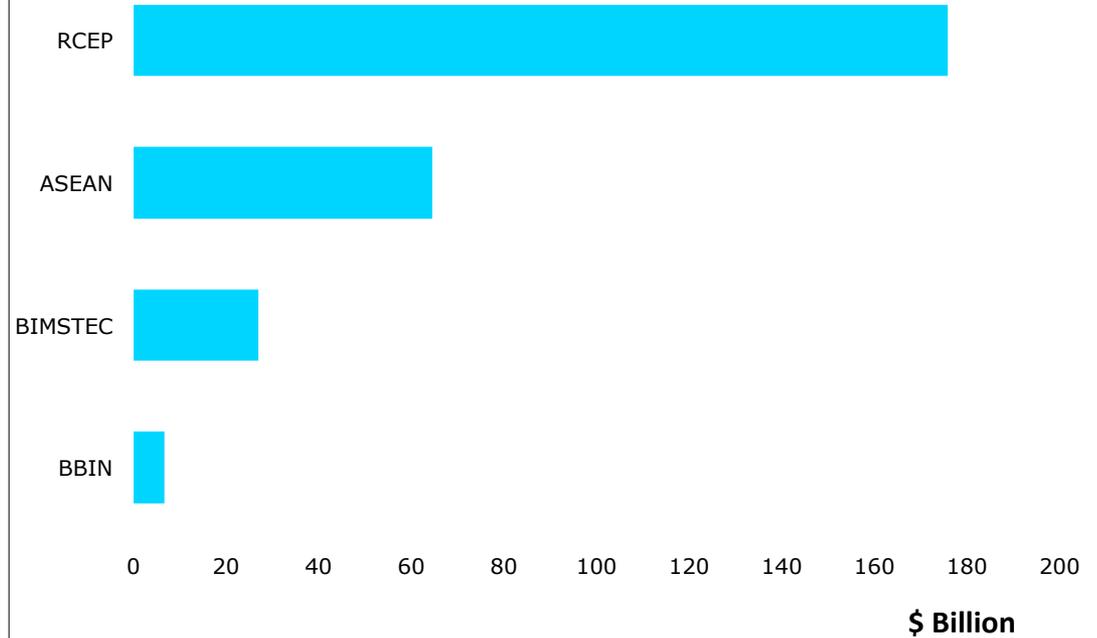
# Select Regional and Sub-Regional Formations: Value of Total Trade and Trade with India

## VALUE OF TOTAL TRADE (2016)

\$ Billion



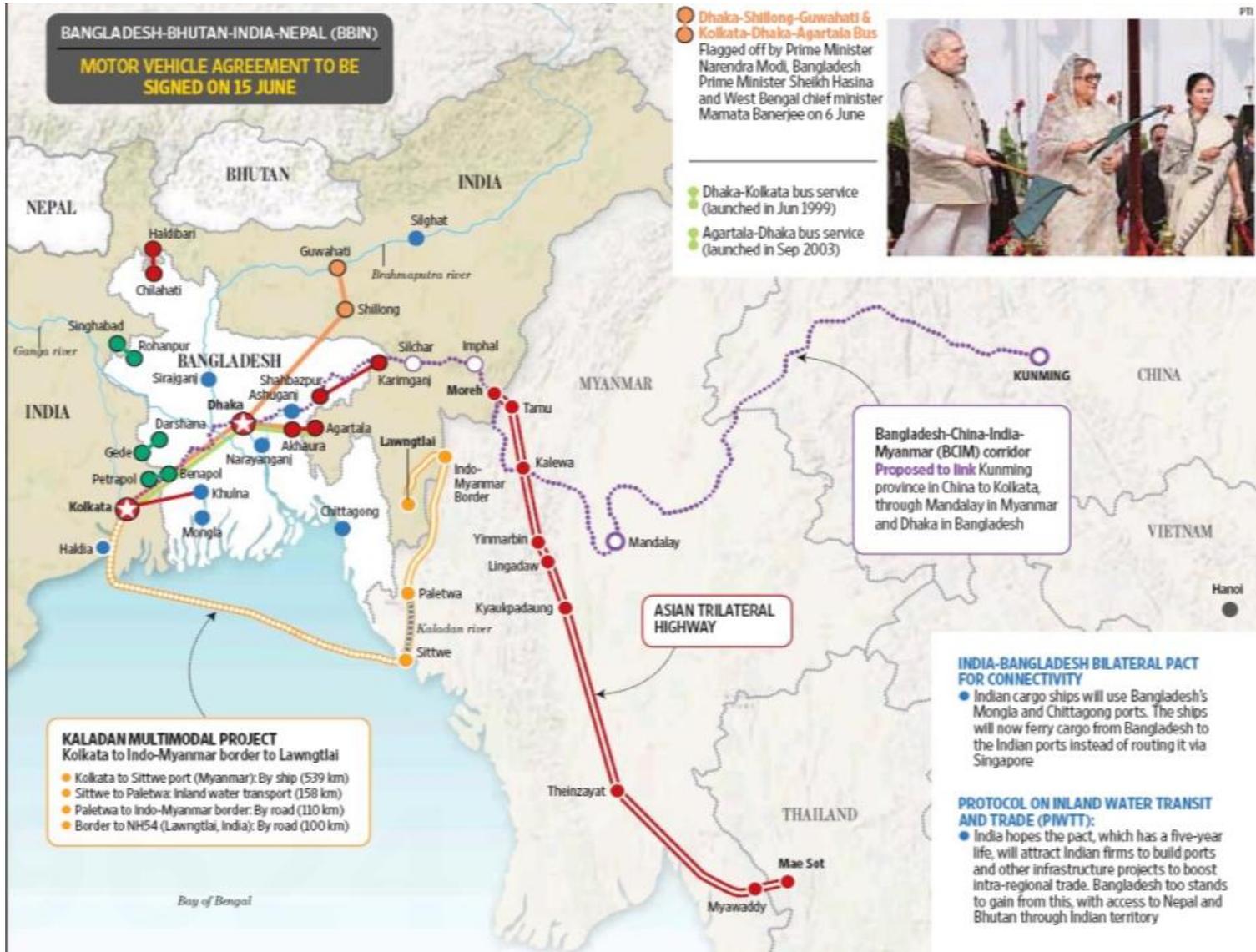
## Value of Trade with India (2016)



## *Positive Impacts of MVA / BBIN*

- Going to reduce trade costs and facilitate trade
- Potentially increase intraregional trade within South Asia by almost 60%
- **Gains not limited to trade alone; will have significant development effects and help in –**
  - ✓ **Improving connectivity**
  - ✓ **Setting-up of economic corridors**
  - ✓ **Exploring the possibility of Value Chains**
  - ✓ **Expanding people-to-people contact**
  - ✓ **Promoting tourism**
- May unlock Investment Opportunities within the region

# Larger connectivity initiatives: Roadways



## **Recent positive developments in** **Roadways connectivity**

- BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement signed on June 15, 2015
- Trial runs from Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala and Dhaka-Kolkata-New Delhi have already been done
- Letters of Exchange between Nepal and India for transit between Nepal and Bangladesh through Kakarbitta-Banglabandh corridor
- Protocols for passenger vehicles agreed upon and protocols for cargo vehicles being finalised
- Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project expected to be completed in 2016
- Rs. 20,000 crore road projects declared by the Indian Government in the North-East

# Coastal Shipping Routes



## **Recent developments in Rail connectivity**

- Letters of Exchange between Nepal and India on Rail Transport: (i) Rail transport to/ from Vishakhapatnam and (ii) Rail transit facility through Singhabad for Nepal's trade with and through Bangladesh
- In addition to Dhaka-Kolkata, a second railway line between Khulna and Kolkata has been planned
- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) Railway Agreement, being explored
- Indian Government investing INR 7,000 crores in rail projects in North East to connect all seven NE states with 18 already ongoing projects in the region covering 2,254 km and likely completion between 2016-17 to 2019-2020
- India also working on Jiribam-Moreh and Tamu-Kaley rail links, which will connect India to Myanmar, respectively, and will also be part of the Trans-Asia Railway network
- Bangladesh Railway is looking to revive five routes to India. The routes are Benapole-Bangaon, Birol-Radhikapur, Akhaura-Agartala, Banglabandha-Shiliguri-Nepal and Khulna-Kolkata

# **Recent developments in people-to-people connectivity and cooperation**

- Ratification of the Land Boundary Agreement on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2015
- MoU and mode of operation of Border Haats with Bangladesh for setting up Border Haats on India-Bangladesh Border. 4 Border Haats are already operational
- MoU between India and Bangladesh on the prevention of human trafficking
- MoU between Jamia Milia Islamia, India and University of Rajshahi of Bangladesh to develop academic and cultural exchange in education, research and other related areas
- Agreement between the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Limited (BSCCL) to boost the signal strength of Internet available in the North-East of India
- MoU between Nepal Academy of Music and Drama & Sangeet Natak Academy

# **Recommendations**

- Harmonisation of procedures or mutual recognition of custom controls at border crossing, create the required infrastructure, transit facilitation, education of drivers and transport operators regarding traffic regulations, put in place the system of dual driver operation system to facilitate smooth cargo movement among countries in the BBIN region.
- Promoting off-border as opposed to on-border customs clearance. This will need creation of Integrated Container Depots (ICDs) near markets/ trade hubs, where bulk of the procedures could be undertaken rather than at the borders.
- Developing robust customs guarantee mechanism. Countries in the region could accede to international conventions like TIR to act as a catalyst towards implementation of the BBIN MVA. On the flip side, it is important to consider the economics of acceding to International Conventions since it will require huge investments which might be difficult to get

# **Recommendations**

- Employing a GPS tracking system for monitoring cargo movement and containerisation of cargo.
- Issuing multiple entry and exit visas to the drivers and allow movement of courier by trucks across borders.
- Training custom officials on the various aspects of the MVA so that the whole process can be made smoother.
- Align domestic standards with international norms and also build capacity of institutions to be able to face global competition.
- Stakeholder awareness on standards, regulations and institutions need to be enhanced



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## DPG National Conference on Advancing BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation

Venue: Juniper Hall, India Habitat Centre  
New Delhi, 4-5 May 2017

### Profiles



#### **Ambassador Hemant Krishan Singh**

Director General, Delhi Policy Group

Ambassador Hemant Krishan Singh served in the Indian Foreign Service from 1974-2010 and is a distinguished former career diplomat with extensive experience of geo-strategic and geo-economic issues as well as multilateral institutions, which underpin international law and commerce.

He has been India's longest serving Ambassador to Japan (2006-2010), Ambassador to Indonesia and Timor Leste (2003-2006), Ambassador to Colombia, Ecuador and Costa Rica (1999-2002), and India's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva (1995-1999). He has held several significant assignments during his career, dealing with the United States, West Europe and the European Union and India's immediate neighbours.

Ambassador Singh has contributed to the forging of the India-Japan strategic and global partnership, the intensification of India's relations with Indonesia and ASEAN, the evolution of India's revitalised Look East Policy and the shaping of India's policy towards key neighbours and strategic partners.

From 2011-2016, Ambassador Singh was Professor for Strategic Studies at ICRIER, a leading think tank in New Delhi, and has been associated with several public policy initiatives and Track II / Track 1.5 strategic dialogues involving major Think Tanks of India, Japan, Asia and the US. He has written and worked extensively on the ongoing transformation of India's relations with the United States and Japan and their growing convergences in shaping Asia's emerging economic and security architecture. He serves on statutory and advisory corporate boards and has been Senior Advisor at Dua Consulting since 2013.

In June 2016, Ambassador Singh assumed responsibilities as Director General, Delhi Policy Group, which is among India's oldest independent think tanks focused on strategic issues of critical national interest.

An alumnus of St. Stephen's College, Delhi, where he studied (1967-72) and later taught (1972-74), Ambassador Singh holds an



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M.A. degree from the University of Delhi. His varied interests include civilisation and culture, the natural environment and sports.



**Mr. Sagar Prasai**

Country Representative, India  
The Asia Foundation

Sagar Prasai is The Asia Foundation's country representative in India. He was formerly the deputy country representative in Nepal. His current work involves regional cooperation in South Asia with a particular focus on water, trade, and migration; transnational political economy; urban governance and women's security.

Prasai has worked with governmental as well as multilateral organizations on urban management, local governance, conflict, and political processes. He previously served as a programming advisor to the National Planning Commission of Nepal, and as a district development advisor to the United Nations Development Program in Nepal.

He has led several political economy analysis studies for The Asia Foundation including Drivers of Legitimacy in Nepal (2007), Political Economy of Local Governance in Nepal (2012), and Political Economy Analysis and Stakeholder Mapping of the Teesta Basin (2012). His articles have appeared in South Asian and global journals, portals and blogs. He is the author of the book Revisiting Transnational Migration-Development Nexus: Using Capability Approach in Migration Research.

Education: Bachelor's degree in Architecture from Nagpur University; master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Hawaii; and doctor of philosophy degree in Regional Planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



**Ambassador Biren Nanda**

Senior Fellow, Delhi Policy Group

Ambassador Biren Nanda served in the Indian Foreign Service from 1978 to 2015 and is a distinguished former career diplomat with extensive experience of working in East Asia.

He has been India's High Commissioner to Australia (2012-2015); Ambassador to Indonesia, Timor Leste and the ASEAN (2008-12); India's Deputy Chief of Mission in Tokyo (2000-2004) and Consul General in Shanghai (1996-2000). Ambassador Nanda has also



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served in Indian Missions in Beijing, Washington DC and Singapore. He spent a total of ten years in China during his three terms as a diplomat in that country. His entire career as a diplomat was spent in East Asia with the sole exception of his Washington posting.

During 2004-2008 Ambassador Nanda was posted in the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi as Joint Secretary (South) and was responsible for India's relations with Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Ambassador Nanda contributed to the strengthening of the strategic partnership between India and Indonesia, the strengthening and diversification of India's relations with Australia and helped reinvigorate India's Look East Policy and the intensification of India's ties with ASEAN and Pacific countries.

Ambassador Nanda retired from the Indian Foreign Service in January 2015. He has since participated in a number of Track 2 dialogues involving major Think Tanks of Japan, Australia and China.

In July 2016, he joined the Delhi Policy Group as a Senior Fellow. The Delhi Policy Group is amongst India's oldest independent think tanks focussed on strategic issues of critical national interest.

He is currently the co-Chair of the India Indonesia Eminent Person's Group which is to draw up a Vision Statement 2025 for the Strategic Partnership between the two countries.

An alumnus of the St Stephen's College, New Delhi, (1971-74) Ambassador Nanda holds an MA degree from the Delhi School of Economics (1974-76). His interests include travel, listening to Indian Classical Music and reading.



**Ms. Diya Nag**

Senior Program Officer, India  
The Asia Foundation

Diya Nag came to The Asia Foundation in 2009 as a junior associate with the Governance, Law, and Civil Society Program in San Francisco, and then joined as a program officer in the India office in 2012, working on regional trade, and managing grants in the areas of women's security and open and accountable governance. She rejoined the Foundation once again in 2015, focusing more deeply on women's security and regional trade.



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Prior to this, Diya worked with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), engaging closely with the Department of Justice in India, on strengthening justice delivery and access to justice for marginalized groups. She has also spent three years working with the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), an international human rights organization based in New Delhi. Her work at CHRI involved advocating for police reforms and increased police accountability in South Asia. Before relocating to India, Diya practiced consumer law in New York City.

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in Human Rights and Sociology from Barnard College, Columbia University; Juris Doctor with a specialization in Global Law and Practice from the Syracuse University College of Law. Diya is a member of the New York Bar, First Appellate Division.



**Ms. Tanzoom Ahmed**

Research Associate, Delhi Policy Group

Tanzoom Ahmed holds a Master's in Public Policy with a concentration in International Governance and Institutions from George Mason University, Washington DC and a Bachelor's from Clarion University of Pennsylvania. She previously worked as the Political and Economic Officer at the Consulate General of Singapore, Mumbai. She also headed the membership team at a Mumbai based foreign policy think tank named Gateway House. In the past, she interned with several organizations including the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at University of Maryland, the National Women's Law Center in Washington D.C. and the Entrepreneur Magazine (Network18) in New Delhi. Tanzoom is an US State Department Alumni and a FulbrightFellow.



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**Day I: Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017**  
**Venue: Juniper Hall, India Habitat Centre**

### **Special Address**

**Mr. Sudhakar Dalela** , Joint Secretary, North Division, Ministry of External Affairs

### **Core Group Members**

#### **Trade and Economic Issues**



**Professor (Dr.) Amita Batra**

Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Professor (Dr.) Amita Batra is Professor of Economics in the Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. She was earlier Senior Fellow at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi and prior to that Reader in the University of Delhi. Prof. Batra has been the first holder of the ICCR Professorial Chair in Contemporary Indian Studies at the Centre for South Asian Studies & Edinburgh-India Institute, University of Edinburgh during January - May 2013. In 2008, Prof. Batra was visiting professor at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM)-Ahmedabad where she taught a course on ‘International Economic and Political Environment’.

She has worked extensively in the area of regional trade and economic integration with a special focus on Asia. Her most recent Book on the subject is titled ‘Regional Economic Integration in South Asia: Trapped in Conflict?’ (London: Routledge, 2013). She also has to her credit two other books – Preferential Trading Agreements in Asia: Towards an Asian Economic Community (ed), 2008 and India and the Asian Corridor (Co-authored, 2007) and several research papers published in national and international refereed and other journals, books etc. She has also worked as consultant on research assignments including for The Sigur Centre for Asian Studies, George Washington University, Washington DC, Samsung Economic Research Institute, Seoul, Korea and the World Bank’s New Delhi Office among others. Prof. Batra holds an M.A., M.Phil., Ph. D. in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, India.



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**Mr. Biswajit Das**

General Secretary

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**Dr. (Ms.) Deigracia. Nongkynrih**

**Assistant Prof, Labour economics, North East Hill University (NEHU)**

Dr. (Ms.) Deigracia. Nongkynrih did her M.A. and Ph.D. from NEHU, Shillong. She joined the Department in December, 2006. Presently, she is Assistant Professor of Economics in the Department.

She is teaching Labour Economics.



**Dr. Selim Raihan**

Professor, University of Dhaka

Dr. Selim Raihan is Professor at the Department of Economics, University of Dhaka and the Executive Director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM). He holds a PhD from the University of Manchester, UK.

Dr. Raihan possesses vast expertise in research on international trade and trade policy issues related to the WTO, regional trading agreements and domestic trade policies. He has worked quite extensively on applied economics, especially assessing impacts of trade and economic policies, using country specific Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) models, GTAP models, Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) techniques, WITS/SMART partial equilibrium models, and dynamic stochastic general equilibrium (DSGE) model.

He has the experience in research on poverty and labour market dynamics using household survey data and micro- and macro-econometric modeling and estimation techniques. His research interests also include analysis of economic growth and political economy analysis of growth and development. He has a long experience in teaching international trade, economic modeling, quantitative economics, econometrics, development economics and poverty dynamics at the Dhaka University. Dr. Raihan has worked for several national and international organizations including the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCAP, UNCTAD, IFPRI, the Commonwealth Secretariat, FAO, European Commission,



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ILO, IDRC, DFID.



**Dr. Ajitava Raychaudhuri**

Professor and Former Head, Jadavpur University, Kolkata

Teaching since 1981 at Jadavpur University. Acted as Head of the department during 2002-04. Visiting Faculty to ISI (Calcutta), Calcutta University and IIFT (Kolkata). Also, Fulbright Senior Scholar, Economic Growth center, Yale University, USA during 1996-97. Currently, Coordinator for Centre for Advanced Study in the department of economics, Jadavpur University. Also, joint coordinator for Social Science programme for the University with Potential for Excellence, Phase II, JU. In addition, focal point for ARTNeT programme, UNESCAP at Department of Economics, JU.



**Ambassador Sanjay Singh**

Senior Adjunct Fellow, Delhi Policy Group  
Coordinator, DPG's BBIN Project

Sanjay Singh is an alumnus of Delhi University, from where he obtained a Masters in Physics. He joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1976 and served in Indian Missions in Mexico, Germany, Ghana and France and in the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi. He was Director in the Office of the External Affairs Minister and Joint Secretary and Head of Division dealing with Latin American Countries. From October 1997 to June 2001, he was India's Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City and from July 2001 to August 2004, Deputy Chief of Mission in Paris. He held charge in the Ministry as Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary (Gulf) from March 2005 to March 2009. He was India's Ambassador to Iran from March 2009 to March 2011. He took over as Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs in March 2011 and retired in April 2013.



**Dr. Swarnim Wagle**

Member, National Planning Commission  
Government of Nepal  
(Group Mentor)

Dr. Swarnim Wagle is a Member of the National Planning Commission (NPC) in the Government of Nepal, ranked at par with an assistant minister. He served earlier in the same position between May 2014 and November 2015. In his portfolio covering macroeconomics, trade and industry, he advised on the formulation of national policies and



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strategies. In the aftermath of the Great Nepal Earthquake 2015, Waglé co-led the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) and helped garner billions (US\$) in pledges. He also led Nepal's ministerial delegation to the landmark Third UN Conference on Financing for Development in Addis.

Waglé has worked as an international development professional for more than 15 years on policy assignments in over 20 countries, most recently as Senior Economist at The World Bank in Washington, D.C. Earlier at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), he co-authored the flagship 2013 Human Development Report titled "The Rise of the South," and co-led from 2002 to 2007 the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Initiative. Having been the South Asia editor of Harvard Asia Quarterly (1999-2000) and a regular broadcaster on BBC Nepali Service, he maintains an interest in current affairs.

Waglé holds a PhD in Economics from the Australian National University, an MPA in International Development (MPA/ID) from Harvard University, and a BSc (Econ) from the London School of Economics. He was born in Bungkot, Gorkha.

## **Transit and Transport Issues**

**Dr. Pritam Banerjee,**  
Senior Director, DHL India

**Mr. Pratim Ranjan Bose**  
Deputy Editor and Chief of Bureau-Kolkata, The Hindu Business Line



Mr. Bose is Senior Writer on energy, infrastructure and logistics, an Expert in socio-politico-economic affairs on East and North Eastern India & the neighboring economies - like Bangladesh, Nepal Myanmar. He has comprehensive knowledge on Bangladesh and Nepal and the economic opportunities in creation through regional cooperation. He regularly writes on geopolitics in Asia.

He was the Principal Correspondent, The Hindu, Kolkata area for 9 years (April 1995- July 2004).

Mr. Bose has a Masters in Economics from Jadavpur University.



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**Mr. Bipul Chattopadhyay**

Executive Director, CUTS International

Mr. Bipul Chattopadhyay is Executive Director, CUTS International, a leading non-governmental group on economic policy research, advocacy and networking with its headquarters in Jaipur, India and centres in Geneva, Hanoi, Nairobi, Lusaka and Accra. He has done M.A. (Economics) from Delhi School of Economics, and B.Sc. (Economics) from University of Calcutta.

He has published/edited several books and papers on political economy of trade and development. Recently he has co-edited with Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International an anthology titled “Growth and Poverty: The Great Debate”; with Joseph George, Research Associate, CUTS International a book titled “The Doha Round and South Asia: Need for Better Coordination”; and with Kishan S. Rana, a former Indian diplomat, another book titled “Economic Diplomacy: India’s Experience”.

Bipul is representing the organisation at various fora, including presenting papers, conducting training workshops, particularly of civil society organisations on policy as well as practice aspects of economic reforms. Other than managing trade-related projects, his responsibilities include fundraising, human resource development and knowledge management. He was a Member of the Planning Commission of India’s Working Group on Boosting Manufacturing Exports during the 12th Plan, 2012-17. His current area of interest is boosting sub-regional trade and economic integration among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal.



**Dr. Mahalaya Chatterjee**

Professor at Centre for Urban Economic Studies, Calcutta University, Kolkata

Dr. Chatterjee is Head, Department of Economics, Calcutta University (from February 2012). She specializes in Urban Economics, Urban Planning, Managerial Economics, and Development. She has written Economics of Urban Land Use: A study of Calcutta Metropolis, VDM Verlag (March, 2010) and Environmental Management in India- A Study of Industrial Pollution Control in Kolkata Metropolis, VDM Verlag, Dr. Muller, (August 2010). She is Life member of Indian Association for Research in National Income and Wealth, Life Member of Indian Society for Environmental and Ecological Economics, and Member of Urban Economics Association, USA



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She holds a PhD (economics) from Calcutta University. She has done MSc (Economics) from Calcutta University and BSc (Honours in Economics) from St. Xavier's College, Calcutta University.



**Prof. Prabir De**

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)  
*(Group Mentor)*

Prabir De is a Professor at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi. He is also the Coordinator of ASEAN-India Centre (AIC). De works in the field of international economics and has research interests in international trade and development. He was a Visiting Fellow of the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), Tokyo; and Visiting Senior Fellow of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Bangkok. He has been conducting policy research for the Government of India and several international organisations. De has a PhD in Economics from the Jadavpur University, Calcutta. He has contributed several research papers in international journals and written books on trade and development. His recent publications as an editor and author include "ASEAN-India Development and Cooperation Report 2015" (Routledge, New Delhi, 2015) and "Celebrating the Third Decade and Beyond: New Challenges to ASEAN-India Economic Partnership" (Knowoledge World, New Delhi, 2016). He is also the Editor of the South Asia Economic Journal, published by Sage.

**Mr. Arvind Kumar**

Advisor, The Energy Resources Institute (TERI), India

Mr. Arvind Kumar was a bureaucrat in Indian Economic Service (November 1977-August,1992) and retired in August 2012. Currently he holds the position of Advisor, The Energy Resources Institute (TERI), India. His last assignment was Senior Adviser (Transport Research) in the rank of Additional Secretary to the Government of India to the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways & Ministry of Shipping, Government of India and; Member, Tariff Authority for Major Ports, Mumbai (May 2007 to August 2012).

He has served as Chairperson and Member of a number of Working Groups constituted by both Ministry of Shipping & Road Transport & Highways, Government of India. He has served as a Convener of the Working Groups on Roads and Shipping respectively set up under National Transport Development Policy Committee, Government of India, Planning Commission. He has also served on the various technical committees set up by the Government of India to investigate, and analyze road accidents in India and suggest policy measures to curb



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rising trends in road accidents in India. He has been consultant to the Asian Development Bank (November 2012 to February, 2013).

He was born on August 21, 1952. He has done an Advanced Studies Certificate (1993) in International Economic Policy Research from Kiel Institute of World Economics, Kiel, Germany. He holds a MA (Development Economics) from University of Sussex, UK (1987) and MA Economics from Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi (1976). He has done BA (Honours) Economics from University of Delhi (1974).



**Mr. Purushottam Ojha**

Former Joint Secretary,  
Government of Nepal

Mr. Purushottam Ojha started his career in the Nepal Administration Service of the Government of Nepal since November 1979 as Section Officer and gradually moved up the career ladder as Under Secretary in December 1989; Joint Secretary in March 1997; Acting Secretary in April 2007 and to the position of Permanent Secretary in October 2007. During the early period of his career, Mr. Ojha served as the Local Development Officer/Project Coordinator for an Integrated Rural Development (IRD) Project in Dhading District of Nepal.

Mr. Ojha has worked for more than 14 years in the Ministry of Commerce in the senior positions of Joint Secretary and Secretary till end February 2012. He has contributed as well as guided the national team in formulation of Trade Policy-2009 and the international and national team in preparation of Nepal Trade Integration Strategy-2010. Mr. Ojha also led the Nepalese negotiating team in the bilateral negotiations with his counterparts from India, Bangladesh, China and United States of America. He has contributed in finalizing the bilateral trade and transit agreements with India and the preferential trade agreements with China and Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with USA. As the Secretary, Mr. Ojha contributed in preparing HR development and training plan for the staffs working within the ministry. Similarly, he led the Nepalese delegations in the Committee of Expert (COE) meetings to negotiate the SAFTA agreement during 2000-04 and in the Trade Negotiation Committee (TNC) meeting of BIMCTEC FTA during 2004-06.

Mr. Ojha holds Master's Degree in Public Administration from Tribhuvan University of Nepal. He has participated in several international training courses and discussion forums related with trade and transport including the Trade Policy course at Harvard Kennedy School, at Boston. Mr. Ojha is also a prolific writer on the economic



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issues, particularly on trade, transit, transport and investment and has authored numerous Articles and Research Papers published in the local Journal and Newspapers as well as in the international journals.

After his retirement from the government service, Mr. Ojha is working as a free lancing consultant in the areas of trade, transit, investment, private sector and institutional development. He is also working as Senior Consultant to South Asian Watch on Trade Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) Nepal, a research institution and think tank based in Kathmandu. He has carried out study in agricultural trade in South Asia and the impact of Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) in way of enhancing intra-regional trade in South Asia.

Mr. Ojha occasionally contributes as resource person (trainer) in the areas of international trade, transit, rights of landlocked countries and trade negotiation in the training programs organized by the Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC) and other training institutions based in Kathmandu.

## **Water and Energy Issues**



### **Dr. Shaheen Afroze**

Research Director

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)

Dr. Shaheen Afroze, Ph. D is Research Director and Head, Non-Traditional Security Studies Division at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS). She has an M.A degree in Contemporary History from the University of Dhaka. She did her Ph.D in International Relations from the University of Glasgow, UK under Commonwealth Scholarship. She is one of the Editors of the BISS Journal. Her major areas of interests are foreign policy and security of small states, non-traditional security studies including human security, terrorism, counter terrorism and counter radicalization. She has edited a number of books and published a large number of articles in academic journals and books and also presented a number of research papers in academic forums at home and abroad.



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**Dr. Mohor Chakrabarty**

Assistant Professor in Political Science South Calcutta Girls' College (affiliated to University of Calcutta)

Dr. Mohor Chakraborty is Assistant Professor in Political Science, South Calcutta Girls' College, Kolkata, India. She has been awarded M. Phil and Ph. D. Degrees from the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. She has keen interest in international affairs, Indian foreign policy, conflict resolution and Area Studies, with particular focus on South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific regions. She is a regular contributor to scholarly journals and edited books related to her interest areas. Among other contributions, her article, "Multilateral Economic Cooperation and the Emergence of Regional Organizations in South Asia: An Assessment", was published in Sagarika Dutt and Alok Bansal (eds.), South Asian Security: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Discourses, Routledge Contemporary South Asia Series, Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group), London and New York, 2012. She may be reached at [mohor\\_5@yahoo.co.in](mailto:mohor_5@yahoo.co.in)



**Ambassador Rajeet Mitter**

Rajeet Mitter was educated at the Universities of Calcutta and Cambridge, and joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1977. His early career included postings in the Indian diplomatic missions in Iraq, UK, Yugoslavia and Singapore. He also served as Director, Department of Economic Affairs, Joint Secretary (Gulf), Ministry of External Affairs and Joint Secretary (Trade Policy), Department of Commerce. He was appointed High Commissioner to Botswana in 1998, Ambassador to the Philippines in 2006 and High Commissioner to Bangladesh in 2009. He retired from the IFS in 2011 and now lives in Delhi.



**Mr. Sagar Prasai**

Country Representative, India  
Asia Foundation

Sagar Prasai is The Asia Foundation's country representative in India. He was formerly the deputy country representative in Nepal. His current work involves regional cooperation in South Asia with a particular focus on water, trade, and migration; transnational political economy; urban governance and women's security.

Prasai has worked with governmental as well as multilateral



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organizations on urban management, local governance, conflict, and political processes. He previously served as a programming advisor to the National Planning Commission of Nepal, and as a district development advisor to the United Nations Development Program in Nepal.

He has led several political economy analysis studies for The Asia Foundation including Drivers of Legitimacy in Nepal (2007), Political Economy of Local Governance in Nepal (2012), and Political Economy Analysis and Stakeholder Mapping of the Teesta Basin (2012). His articles have appeared in South Asian and global journals, portals and blogs. He is the author of the book Revisiting Transnational Migration-Development Nexus: Using Capability Approach in Migration Research.

Education: Bachelor's degree in Architecture from Nagpur University; master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Hawaii; and doctor of philosophy degree in Regional Planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



**Ambassador Lyonpo Om Pradhan**

Former minister of trade, industry and power of Royal Government of Bhutan

*(Group Mentor)*

Lyonpo Om Pradhan served the Royal Government of Bhutan for 34 years. He was a Deputy Minister and Cabinet Minister for Trade, Industry, Forests, Mines & Minerals, Tourism and Power (1985-1998). He was Bhutan's Permanent Representative at the United Nations, New York (1980-1984 & 1998-2003), and Ambassador to India, Nepal and the Maldives (1984-1985). He was Bhutan's first leader of delegation at the border talks with the People's Republic of China (1984, 1985, 1987). He has been a staff member at United Nations headquarters in New York (2003-2007). He was chairman of Druk Holding & Investments, the official investment arm of the Royal Government (2007-2014).

Lyonpo Om Pradhan was born in Neoly, Bhutan on 6 October 1946. His academic qualifications are: Senior Cambridge from North Point, Darjeeling, BA (Hons) from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, and Masters in Economics and a PhD from the United States.

He is the author of the book, "*Bhutan, The Roar of the Thunder Dragon*," (2012). He is also the author of another book: "*The Crown in Democracy*" (2016) which is awaiting publication.



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**Dr. Govind Raj Pokharel, Ph.D**

Professor,  
Institute of Engineering, Tribhuwan University, Nepal

Dr. Pokharel has over 20 years of professional experience in public policy, international development and academia, most recently briefly as CEO of Reconstruction Authority (Ranked at Par with Cabinet Minister) and as Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission (ranked at par with Minister of State), professor of industrial and mechanical engineering, and executive director of a large public institution for the promotion of renewable energy. He holds a PhD in energy economics and policy; MSc in Appropriate Rural Energy Technology and Extension Skills; and BE in Mechanical Engineering. As Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission, led the Government of Nepal's apex policy advisory body to guide annual and periodic development plans and programs, budgets, and sectoral policy reforms. In the aftermath of the Great Nepal Earthquake of 2015, led a post-earthquake recovery package and a rigorous Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) and helped generate over US\$4 billion in pledges from international development partners. He also served as Executive Director for two terms of the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPC), a national nodal agency for renewable energy and energy efficiency for about 5 years. He authored and co-authored numerous research papers on sustainable energy, climate change, technical aspects of renewable energy technologies, and financing, among others. He served internationally as Manager of SNV Netherlands Development Organization across South and Southeast Asian locations. Also Led numerous short-term assignments and projects, including the design and delivery of technical assistance to ministries, external development partners, civil society, public and private sector institutions. He ran high-profile, technically-oriented international programs and projects (supported by EU, DFID, KfW, ADB, World Bank, UNDP, Danida, Norad and others). He is highly versatile facilitator and hands-on mentor of teams in academia and civil society on social causes, public-private partnership and emergency response. Adept at defining strategic direction that incorporates a rights-based approach, community driven development, and good governance.

**Amb Sudhir Vyas**, Former Secretary West and Former Indian Ambassador to Bhutan, Germany and UAE.



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## People to People Connectivity



### **Joyeeta Bhattacharjee**

Joyeeta Bhattacharjee is a Fellow with ORF's Neighbourhood Regional Studies Initiative. She specialises in India's neighbourhood policy, especially the eastern arch; Bangladesh's domestic politics and foreign policy; border management; conflict and conflict resolution in India's northeast; and gender concerns.

Joyeeta has published many articles in various newspapers and reputed journals. Some of her recent publications include her papers titled "Bangladesh Army's Corporate Interest" (2010), "India-Bangladesh Border Management: The Challenge of Cattle Smuggling" (2013), and "India-Bangladesh Relations: Ten-point agenda," (August 2014).

In 2014 she participated in Water Future-II, a dialogue for young scholars and professionals of South Asia, simultaneously held in Kolkata and Dhaka and jointly organised by Jamia Milia Islamia University, New Delhi, and Dhaka University.

Joyeeta holds a PhD from Assam University, Silchar. The title of her thesis was "Conflict Resolution and Peace: New Dimensions in Applied Ethics." She completed her Master of Arts in Philosophy from the same university in 1999. She was awarded a Junior Research Fellowship by the Indian Council for Philosophical Research.

### **Mr. Sabyasachi Dutta,**

Director, Asian Influence, Shillong (*Group mentor*)

### **Dr. Sreeradha Dutta**

Director, MAKAIS

### **Ambassador V.P. Haran**

Ambassador V.P. Haran is a former diplomat who served as an ambassador to Bhutan and Syria. He holds a degree on Company Secretary ship from Institute of Company Secretaries of India and a degree on Cost Accountancy from Institute of Cost and Works Accountants of India, 1974. He also completed a B. Com from Loyola College Madras in 1973.

He served as an officer of INDIAN FOREIGN SERVICE from 1980 to 2014. His professional career included his service as the Ambassador to Bhutan in 2013-14 and Ambassador to Syria between 2009-12. He previously worked as the Joint Secretary (Administration), MEA from 2006-09; Dy. Chief of Mission, Kathmandu from 2003 to 2006; Dy.



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Permanent Representative to WTO, Geneva from 2000 to 2003; Director (BSM division), MEA from 1998 to 2000 and Director in Foreign Secretary's Office from 1996 to 1998.

Between 1980 & 1996, he worked in MEA in Europe West Division, and in Indian missions in Moscow, Kabul, Colombo and Brussels. Before joining IFS in Oct 1980, he had worked in the Finance Division of TELCO, presently, Tata Motors.

His interests include International relations in general, Relations with countries in the neighborhood, including the issues of border demarcation, cultural links and cross border movement of people, International trade, investment, share market, financial performance of companies etc.



**Ms. Diya Nag**

Senior Program Officer, India  
The Asia Foundation

Diya Nag came to The Asia Foundation in 2009 as a junior associate with the Governance, Law, and Civil Society Program in San Francisco, and then joined as a program officer in the India office in 2012, working on regional trade, and managing grants in the areas of women's security and open and accountable governance. She rejoined the Foundation once again in 2015, focusing more deeply on women's security and regional trade.

Prior to this, Diya worked with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), engaging closely with the Department of Justice in India, on strengthening justice delivery and access to justice for marginalized groups. She has also spent three years working with the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), an international human rights organization based in New Delhi. Her work at CHRI involved advocating for police reforms and increased police accountability in South Asia. Before relocating to India, Diya practiced consumer law in New York City.

Education: Bachelor's degree in Human Rights and Sociology from Barnard College, Columbia University; Juris Doctor with a specialization in Global Law and Practice from the Syracuse University College of Law. Diya is a member of the New York Bar, First Appellate Division.



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**Ambassador Biren Nanda**

Senior Fellow, Delhi Policy Group

Ambassador Biren Nanda served in the Indian Foreign Service from 1978 to 2015 and is a distinguished former career diplomat with extensive experience of working in East Asia.

He has been India's High Commissioner to Australia (2012-2015); Ambassador to Indonesia, Timor Leste and the ASEAN (2008-12); India's Deputy Chief of Mission in Tokyo (2000-2004) and Consul General in Shanghai (1996-2000). Ambassador Nanda has also served in Indian Missions in Beijing, Washington DC and Singapore. He spent a total of ten years in China during his three terms as a diplomat in that country. His entire career as a diplomat was spent in East Asia with the sole exception of his Washington posting.

During 2004-2008 Ambassador Nanda was posted in the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi as Joint Secretary (South) and was responsible for India's relations with Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Ambassador Nanda contributed to the strengthening of the strategic partnership between India and Indonesia, the strengthening and diversification of India's relations with Australia and helped reinvigorate India's Look East Policy and the intensification of India's ties with ASEAN and Pacific countries.

Ambassador Nanda retired from the Indian Foreign Service in January 2015. He has since participated in a number of Track 2 dialogues involving major Think Tanks of Japan, Australia and China.

In July 2016, he joined the Delhi Policy Group as a Senior Fellow. The Delhi Policy Group is amongst India's oldest independent think tanks focussed on strategic issues of critical national interest.

He is currently the co-Chair of the India Indonesia Eminent Person's Group which is to draw up a Vision Statement 2025 for the Strategic Partnership between the two countries.

An alumnus of the St Stephen's College, New Delhi, (1971-74) Ambassador Nanda holds an MA degree from the Delhi School of Economics (1974-76). His interests include travel, listening to Indian Classical Music and reading.



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### **Ambassador Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty**

Pinak Chakravarty is a Distinguished Fellow with ORF's Regional Studies Initiative, where he oversees the West Asia Initiative, Bangladesh and selected ASEAN-related issues. He joined the ORF in October 2014.

A former member of the Indian Foreign Service (1977 batch), he has served as a diplomat in Indian Diplomatic Missions in Cairo, Jeddah and London. Later, was Consul-General of India in Karachi, 1994-1995; Counsellor/Minister, DCM at the Indian Embassy in Tel Aviv, 1995-1999; and Deputy High Commissioner at Dhaka, 1999-2002. At the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), he served as Deputy Chief of Protocol, Deputy Secretary/Director in the Americas Division and as Director, SAARC Summit Secretariat, 1995. He was the Chief of Protocol from 2002 to 2006, after which he was nominated as Ambassador to the Philippines but later shifted to Bangladesh where he served as High Commissioner from 2007 to 2009. From 2010 to 2011 he served as Ambassador to Thailand. Returning to Delhi he served as Special Secretary (Public Diplomacy) before he was appointed Secretary (Economic Relations) in the MEA. He retired from service in September 2013. He is a regular contributor to newspapers, journals and books. His latest journal article is titled "Bangladesh-India Ties: Pragmatic Transformation," published in the *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*. One of his recent book chapters is titled "Bridging the Hiatus of History: India's Look East Policy" in *India's Asia-Pacific Engagement: Impulses and Imperatives* (Manohar 2015). He also participates in TV programmes on foreign policy and strategic affairs.

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