



DELHI POLICY GROUP

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

DPG Roundtable Reports, Vol. 2, Issue 6 Roundtable on 'Advancing the BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation'

BRAC Centre Inn | Dhaka | Bangladesh | October 15-16, 2017



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**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub- Regional
Cooperation Dhaka, Bangladesh, October 15-16, 2017**

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Abstract of Proceedings

The Delhi Policy Group (DPG) in partnership with The Asia Foundation organized a roundtable discussion on “Advancing BBIN Sub-Regional Cooperation” at the BRAC Centre Inn in Dhaka, Bangladesh on October 15-16, 2017. The ninth roundtable in a series hosted by the DPG included participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. The roundtable was thematically divided into four sessions, each dealing with a separate set of issues which included Trade & Economic Issues, Transit & Multimodal Connectivity (Roadways, Waterways, Railways and Aviation), Energy-hydropower & Water Resource Management and People to People Connectivity through multi-sectoral Engagement.

The first day of the roundtable focused on the success stories, challenges, failures and recommendations for progress in the four thematic areas that were discussed. A regional perspective was applied in addressing these issues. The second day was dedicated to two breakout sessions followed by a presentation and discussion in which participants identified three priority areas in each of the four thematic areas, the implementation processes and the likely challenges. The participants formulated a comprehensive two-year action plan based on the outcome of these discussions.

Day One of the roundtable discussion started with a welcome address by Ambassador H.K. Singh, Director General of the Delhi Policy Group. Amb. Singh observed that it was well recognised that despite a shared history and culture, South Asia was the least integrated region of the world in terms of economic activity and connectivity. Geopolitical factors limited the progress of SAARC and this had contributed to increased interest in BBIN sub-regionalism since 2015. Improved connectivity in the BBIN sub-region aligned well with India’s focus on infrastructure development in North-East India and its linkage to India’s Act East Policy. The impetus and momentum of BBIN integration has been further strengthened by the BIMSTEC process. At the 15th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting in Kathmandu on August 10-11, 2017, the grouping committed itself to a BIMSTEC Free Trade Area, a services and investment agreement and trade facilitation measures.

The India-Bangladesh Coastal Shipping Agreement signed in June 2015, as well as the extension of the bilateral Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade, have provided a strong basis for a potential BBIN regional integrated multimodal transport network which is under discussion. While welcoming this progress, we are conscious of the need to calibrate the speed and level of ambition in a manner acceptable to all BBIN partners. This necessitates recognition of heterogeneity in terms of economic size and economic development, national aspirations and security challenges.

In his special address the High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh H. E. Harsh Vardhan Shringla pointed to several initiatives in India-Bangladesh relations over the past few years. The chief among them were the Bangladesh-India Electrical Grid Interconnection Project, the addition of another passenger train from Kolkata to Khulna in Bangladesh, signature of the Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) among the BBIN countries and the improvements in the customs and immigration check points to facilitate smoother cross-border movements. Commenting on the reasons behind the successes in BBIN and particularly, Bangladesh-India relations, he stated that there is a political construct in place and all the associated nations are eager to get work done and move forward with policies that promote sub-regional integration. The High Commissioner singled out India’s Act East Policy and remarked how the BBIN

initiative allowed the country to fulfill that policy. At a political level and bilaterally too, all the nations shared an excellent understanding and it was now down to an operational level where that political construct needed to be realized.

Dr. Rahman elaborated upon the ambitious program of sub-regional cooperation and cross-border investment that has been envisioned through the BBIN initiative. He emphasized the need to have all necessary arrangements for strategic planning and coordination at a higher level. He was of the view that so far, the quest for sub-regional cooperation has only materialized at the operational level rather than the political level. The operational level does have a useful role in devising policies, but people in the top echelons of the government were also required to determine the correct way forward.

The first session of the conference was chaired by Professor Prabir De and it focused on the trade and economic issues within the BBIN. The session dealt with the non-tariff barriers and measures, customs and electronic data interchange, banking, border trade and border infrastructure, and the BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) among other issues. Obstacles for the BBIN regarding the high trade cost, trade diversion impacts, production networks and the energy-grid issue were recurring themes. Suggestions for the setting up of juxtaposed customs stations, a trade-investment nexus, paperless trade, and a focus on the services trade within the region were offered in the session.

Session two dealt with transit and the multimodal connectivity (roadways, waterways, railways and aviation) issues and capabilities for the BBIN region. It also focused on ports and shipping, aviation, coastal shipping, particularly container transportation among others. Dr. Selim Raihan, Executive Director of the SANEM chaired the session and the speakers included professors, editors and a former Commissioner of Benapole, Bangladesh. The participants urged the countries to make use of the digital technology at their disposal to enhance the multimodal connectivity in the region. Also, environmental concerns were taken into consideration and suggestions to use clean energy were offered. Overall, the session benefitted through each speaker's insight into the various issues within the transit and connectivity modes for the BBIN.

The next session was focused on shedding light into the energy-hydropower and water resource management techniques and viabilities as part of the sub-regional cooperation within the BBIN. Specifically, the session dealt with hydro-power sharing and transmission, non-conventional energy sources and the international energy investment into the region. It was chaired by Dr. Sajjad Zohir, Executive Director of the Economic Research Group, Bangladesh. Problems like the imbalance of energy capacity in the region, India-Bangladesh water disputes and a lack of connectivity in energy and water resources were highlighted throughout the session. Also, the hydro-electricity component and its relevance to the economic situation of the BBIN was stressed upon. Dr. Mohammad Tamim, the discussant of the session proposed the development of a repository which would store the aggregated information available to make use of it in the future. He also suggested that the participants consider the water irrigation potential and techniques among the BBIN nations in future discussions.

The last session chaired by Ambassador H.K. Singh focused on the people to people connectivity through multi-sectoral engagement within the BBIN region. Importance was given to specific areas like tourism, higher education, health, cultural heritage, media and film, performing arts, music and visual arts, etc. This session was considered the most

important in the sub-regional cooperation. The Chair opined that all other elements of the initiative ultimately led to the necessity of such a connectivity being in place. Visa issues, lack of quality education at the university level, the role of media in connecting the region and the need to change the mindset of the people about the region were some of the issues that were discussed during the session.

Ambassador Biren Nanda, Senior Fellow of the Delhi Policy Group began the proceedings for day two of the conference. He remarked that the second day was the most important part of the conference as policy recommendations in the form of two-year plan of action would be drawn out thus assuring solutions to the issues previously highlighted. Making observations about the BBIN initiative, Ambassador Nanda summarized five pointers which were pragmatic and would assist the participants in framing the policy recommendations.

First, he highlighted that the initiative could not be progressed in a single leap. Rather, a step-by-step progression which was comfortable to all must be adopted.

Second, good bilateral ties between the BBIN nations have made the cooperation possible and this shall remain the foundation of progression in the agreement. Hence, he urged the participants to continue working towards these bilateral relations and maintain positive ties.

Third, Ambassador Nanda highlighted that the BBIN has been working informally and at the government level there have been two joint working groups on trade connectivity & transit and on water management. He stressed on adopting a more open trade agreement and urged the countries to consider whether institutionalization of the BBIN and regulation under Article XXIV of the WTO would help. Article XXIV of the World Trade Organization allows countries to form custom unions (CUs) or Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). Recognizing that there have been certain trade barriers from some of the partners in BBIN, Ambassador Nanda suggested that a freer trade area may help the BBIN countries to “surmount the domestic obstacles”.

Fourth, he remarked that the BBIN is rich in natural resources like natural gas, coal, hydropower and oil and urged the nations to harness these resources in a manner which promotes regional integration. He recognized that the issue of looking at resources and energy in a holistic manner was also discussed on the previous day and opined that it was important to look at the regional scope of harnessing these resources rather than only looking at it from a national perspective.

Lastly, he was of the view that the countries should be creative in their attempts to gather resources for the BBIN projects. Apart from national funding or PPP arrangements with the private sector, there are multilateral sources of funding at work such as SASEC, ADB, and the World Bank. He noted that since 2001, the ADB has approved \$4.7 billion in the form of loans and grants to SASEC governments and these governments have themselves contributed more than \$1.7 billion in transport, trade facilitation, energy and ICT. Hence, there was a lot happening in multilateral funding and Ambassador Nanda urged the countries to take advantage of this source for further sub-regional integration.

Following Ambassador Nanda’s opening remarks, Professor Prabir De, Research and Information System (RIS) delivered an insightful special address in which he highlighted the strategic importance of Northeast India in advancing the sub-regional cooperation. He began by recognizing the positive change in perceptions of the people towards the BBIN. Commenting on the importance of Northeast India, he remarked that it served as the pivot of

cooperation as it had strong links with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal. He also highlighted the importance of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) towards fulfilling the aspirations of sub-regional cooperation. Finally, he concluded by thanking the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) for focusing on the BBIN initiative as the ministries of the associated nations were looking for “out-of-the-box solutions” and the platform laid out by DPG would provide would pave way for such solutions.

This was succeeded by two breakout sessions in which the participants discussed the identified issues and framed policy recommendations to address each issue. The day concluded with deliberations within core groups on the priorities and action plans in each of the four thematic areas. This was followed by presentations by the four core group mentors within their specialized thematic area.



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DPG Round Table Discussion on Advancing BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation

Venue: BRAC Centre Inn, Dhaka, Bangladesh

15th-16th October 2017

Programme

Day I: Sunday, 15th October 2017

Venue: BRAC Centre Inn

09.00 - 09.30 **Registration**

09.30 - 10.10 **Opening Session**

09.30 - 09.40 Welcome Address by Ambassador H. K. Singh, Director General, DPG
[10 minutes]

09.40 - 09.55 Special Address by High Commissioner of India His Excellency Harsh
Vardhan Shringla
[15 minutes]

09.55 - 10.10 Special Address by Hon'ble Dr. Mashiur Rahman, Economic Advisor to the
Prime Minister of Bangladesh
[15 minutes]

10.10 - 10.30 *Coffee/ Tea Break*

10.30 - 11.30 **Session I: Trade and 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: Prof. Prabir De, Research and Information System for Developing Countries
[12 minutes]

Speakers: [12 minutes each]

1. Mr. Purushottam Ojha, Former Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, Nepal



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2. *Dr. Selim Raihan, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka & Executive Director, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), Bangladesh*
3. *Mr. Ali Ahmed, CEO, Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute*
4. *Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem, Research Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue*

11.30 – 12.00 Comments by Discussants followed by Q & A [30 minutes]

12.00 – 13:00 Session II: Transit and Multimodal Connectivity (Roadways, Waterways, Railways and Aviation)

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

Chair: Dr. Selim Raihan, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka & Executive Director, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), Bangladesh
[12 minutes]

Speakers: [8 minutes each]

1. *Mr. R.B. Rauniar, Managing Director, Interstate Multinational Transport, Nepal*
2. *Mr. Chandan Kumar Dey, Joint Secretary, Road Transport and Highways Division, Ministry of Road, Transport and Bridges, Bangladesh Secretariat*
3. *Prof. Prabir De, Research and Information System for Developing Countries*
4. *Dr. Lailufar Yasmeen, Professor, Dept. of International Relations, University of Dhaka and Deputy director (Research), Bangladesh Institute of Law and International affair (BILIA)*
5. *Mr. Pratim Ranjan Bose, Deputy Editor and Chief of Bureau, Hindu Business Line*
6. *Mr. Nasir Uddin, former Commissioner, Benapole, Bangladesh*

13:00 – 13:30 Discussion and Q & A [30 minutes]

13.30 - 14.15 *Lunch Break*



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14.15 - 15.30

Session III: Energy-hydropower and Water Resource Management

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

Chair: Dr. Sajjad Zohir, Executive Director, Economic Research Group, Bangladesh

[15 minutes]

Speakers: [10 minutes each]

1. *Mr. Abu Salah Yousuf, Senior Research Fellow, BIISS*
2. *Dr. Chandan Mahanta, Professor, Dept. of Civil Engineering, IIT, Guwahati*
3. *Dr. Enamul Haque, Professor, East West University, Dhaka*
4. *Dr. Shahab Enam Khan, Former Chairman, Dept. of International Relations, Jahangir Nagar University Savar, Dhaka*
5. *Mr. Sheikh Rokon, Secretary General, Riverine People*
6. *Dr. Mahfuzul Haque, Former Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*

15.30 – 16.00

Comments by Discussants followed by Q & A [30 minutes]

Discussants [5 minutes each]:

1. *Dr. M. Nurul Islam, Former Professor, Chemical Engineering Department and Institute of Appropriate Technology, BUET*
2. *Dr. Mohammad Tamim, Professor, PMRE Department and Former Special Assistant to the Chief Advisor, Department of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Engineering*

16.00 - 16.20

Coffee/ Tea Break

16.20 – 17.30

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

[The session will deal with Tourism, Higher Education, Health, Cultural heritage, Media, Film, performing arts, music and visual arts, etc]

Chair: Ambassador H. K. Singh, Director General, Delhi Policy Group
[10 minutes]



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Special Address by **Mr. Akhtaruz Zaman Khan**, *Chairman, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation* [10 minutes]

Speakers: [10 minutes each]

1. *Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed, Professor, Dept. of International Relations, University of Dhaka*
2. *Dr. Sreeradha Datta, former Director, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of South Asian Studies (MAKAIAS)*
3. *Mr. Pratim Ranjan Bose, Deputy Editor and Chief of Bureau, Hindu Business Line*
4. *Mr. Shyamal Dutta, Editor, The Daily Bhorer Kagoj*
5. *Mr. Gopilal Acharya, Independent journalist, Journalist Association of Bhutan*

17.30 - 18.00

Comments by Discussants followed by Q & A [30 minutes]

Discussant: *Mr. Enamul Haque Shamim, News Editor, Radio Today*

18.00 – 18.10

Concluding Remarks by **Ambassador Biren Nanda**, Senior Fellow, Delhi Policy Group [10 minutes]



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Day II: Monday, 16th October 2017

Venue: BRAC Centre INN

09.00 - 09.30	Registration
09.30 - 10.00	Opening Session
09.30 - 09.45	Welcome Remarks by Ambassador Biren Nanda, Senior Fellow, DPG [15 minutes]
09.45 - 10.00	Special Address Prof. Prabir De, Research and Information System for Developing countries [15 minutes]
10.00 - 11.30	Breakout Session I: Participants will discuss the identified issues and themes and frame policy recommendations to address each issue
11.30 - 13.00	Breakout Session II: Consensus arrived from each policy recommendation will be discussed and put forth in a concrete plan of action
<i>13.00 - 14.00</i>	<i>Lunch Break</i>
14.00 - 16.00	<i>Deliberations within Core Groups on the Priorities and Action Plans in each of the Four Thematic areas.</i>
16.00 - 16.30	Presentation by Core Group Mentors [30 minutes]

GROUP MENTORS

- 1. Group Mentor: Trade and Economic Issues**
*Mr. Purushottam Ojha, Former Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and
Supplies, Nepal*
- 2. Group Mentor: Transit and Multimodal Connectivity**
*Mr. Pratim Ranjan Bose, Deputy Editor and Chief of Bureau, Hindu
Business Line*
- 3. Group Mentor: Energy-hydropower and Water Resource
Management**
Dr. Sagar Prasai, Country Representative, India, Asia Foundation



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4. **Group Mentor: People to People Connectivity through Multi-Sectoral Engagement**
Dr. Sreeradha Datta, former Director, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of South Asian Studies (MAKAIS)

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

17.15 - 17.30 **Closing Session**

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing
BBIN Sub Regional Cooperation, Dhaka,
October 15-16, 2017**

Summary Note of Recommendations
from Break Out Sessions

Day II: Sunday, 15th October 2017

Breakout Session: Trade and Economic Issues

Recognized 4 priority issues –

- I. Mutual Recognition of Standards.
- II. CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement) amongst BBIN countries.
- III. Creation of BBIN Development Fund.
- IV. Creation of a functioning BBIN Secretariat.

1st Issue Plan of Action for 2 Years (Mutual Recognition of Standards)

1. The development and harmonization of the standards for BBIN member countries, to bring them at a standard level.
2. Development of testing and certification facilities, where required.
3. Lastly, the group focused on the need to conclude a BBIN Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA).

Implementation Process

- a. Formation of Joint Working Groups among the member countries.
- b. Holding meetings of Standards Organizations which are facilitated by the joint working groups.
- c. Drafting and negotiating Mutual Recognition Agreements.

Challenges to Implementation

- Political will/commitment to proceed ahead was a common challenge highlighted in the breakout session.
- The standards organization meetings and the formation of the joint working group would require funding from government organisations.

2nd Issue Plan of Action for 2 Years (CEPA among BBIN countries)

1. Carry out joint study which must be carried out by an expert group which must include think tanks, economists and trade groups.
2. Formation of Joint Working Group at the political level consisting trade ministries and the ministry of external affairs.

Implementation Process

- a. There must be an identification and mobilization of funds for study.
- b. Also, identification of organizations for study must be done within the next two years.

Challenges to Implementation

- Political will/commitment.
- Besides political commitment, the challenge is to complete the study in time.

3rd Issue Plan of Action for 2 Years (Creation of BBIN Development Fund)

1. Call for a meeting of BBIN Finance Ministers to ensure commitment towards the BBIN Development Fund.
2. Also, a seed fund can be started, initially in a small manner but with the possibility of further expansion.

Implementation Process

- a. Organize a meeting of Finance Ministers.
- b. Before organizing the meeting of the Finance Ministers, a conference of Central Bank Governors and Finance Secretaries must be completed because they work at the technical level.

Challenges to Implementation

- Political will/commitment.
- In addition to the above, there must be a commitment to the necessary funds required.

4th Issue Plan of Action for 2 Years (Creation of a functioning BBIN Secretariat)

1. We should be having an inter-governmental agreement for the creation of the secretariat.
2. Funding for the programme – for the running of the secretariat and for the developmental activities must be arranged.
3. Appointment and designation of the officials and staff in the secretariat must be ensured.

Implementation Process

- a. Sharing the Draft Agreement among the member countries.
- b. To create the secretariat, a BBIN Summit must happen. Further, the heads of Governments must reach a consensus in signing the agreement.
- c. Also, an adequate level of power must be provided to the Secretary General of the BBIN.

Challenges to Implementation

- Political will/commitment.
- Getting Consensus among BBIN member countries to provide authority to the Secretary General is a challenge.

Day II: Sunday, 15th October 2017

Breakout Session: Transit and Multimodal Connectivity

Recognized 3 priority issues –

- I. Capacity building of ports, IWT and Rail networks
- II. Efficient road transport
- III. Improving air connectivity

1st Issue Plan of Action for 2 Years (Capacity building of ports, IWT and Rail networks)

1. The priority point is containerization.
2. New seaports on the Indian east coast for BBIN use must be added.
3. Thirdly, the plan must be to improve the existing port facilities.
4. Also, all BBIN countries must be allowed to use each other's ports.
5. A plan to add new river ports in India and Bangladesh for the BBIN network.
6. Lastly, direct rail connectivity must be in the two years' plan of action.

Implementation Process

- a. Rail freight trains.
- b. Turnaround time for IWT must be reduced.
- c. Private players must be encouraged in operationalization.

Challenges to Implementation

- Due to one-way routes, the freight traffic is very high.
- Creation of a critical mass for the viability of IWT and rail cargo is also a challenge.
- Lastly, the availability of containers is an issue.

2nd Issue Plan of Action for 2 Years (Efficient road transport)

1. Containerization, as highlighted in the first issue plan of action, is a must.
2. There must be harmonization of axle-load.
3. Lastly, the building transshipment hubs must be prioritized.

Implementation Process

- a. Private investment is required in containerization.
- b. Bangladesh needs to harmonize to 10.2 tonnes like India, Nepal and Bhutan.
- c. Transshipment hub in Siliguri is pragmatic since it is within 50 kilometers of the three boundaries.

Challenges to Implementation

- Resistance from the existing stakeholders including truckers is the biggest challenge.
- Resistance to harmonization of axle-load in Bangladesh is also a challenge.

- Lastly, there is an issue of non-availability of container trucks.

3rd Issue Plan of Action for 2 Years (Improving Air Connectivity)

1. Identify and connect Southern Nepal, Bangladesh and Northeast India by a BBIN air network.
2. Low cost carriers must be prioritized.

Implementation Process

- a. There is a possibility of having smaller aircraft services.
- b. The connection of the following places must be a priority:
 - Birgunj, Biratnagar, Bhairawa in Nepal.
 - Sayedpur and Jessore in Bangladesh-Bhutan.
 - Kolkata, Siliguri, Patna, Lucknow, Varanasi, Guwahati and other northeastern airports in India.

Challenges to Implementation

- The one challenge to implementation is the lack of a common regulatory framework.

Note: The Team working on transit and multimodal connectivity focused on following important areas:

- A) Containerization to help multimodal transport
- B) India should open an efficient East coast deep-sea port preferably Dhamra in Odisha for use of BBIN countries including Bangladesh. This should also help allay the controversy in Bangladesh about giving NE India (which is not landlocked as per nomenclature) access to Chittagong port.

Day II: Sunday, 15th October 2017

Breakout Session: Energy and Water Issues

Recognized 3 priority issues –

- I. Navigation, Flood and Erosion
- II. Sustainable Energy Security
- III. Environmental Protection and People centricity

1st Issue Plan of Action for 2 Years (Navigation, Flood and Erosion)

1. Strengthening knowledge and data sharing arrangements. The data shared is incomplete, and in an age of communications, it will benefit all countries if BBIN can share data among themselves.
2. The second plan of action is to increase formal institutional linkages.

Implementation Process

- a. Begin to promote MOUs from different sectors, starting from civil society organisations.
- b. Second is the incorporation of BBIN Projects in national budgets of the member countries.
- c. Lastly, the private sector has been so far ignored. Hence, engagement of the private sector in regional forums is important.

Challenges to Implementation

- Bilateral imperatives are a challenge. For example, floods due to a common river affect more than one country every year and this is unavoidable.
- The government to government platforms are very thin. There are joint commissions but very few connect which each other.
- The joint commissions are all at the bilateral level and this proves to be a challenge.

2nd Issue Plan of Action for 2 Years (Sustainable Energy Security)

1. Plan to have differential and seasonal energy requirements. The energy commitments must be assessed at a regional level.
2. A fully integrated energy market must be developed. Among this, electricity must be separated from other kinds of energy.

Implementation Process

- a. Contextualizing environment protocols, conventions and best practices for policy development.
- b. Articulate domestic commitments to regional and international practices.
- c. Increase regional investments in environmental research and development.

Challenges to Implementation

- On environmental issues, there is no domestic consensus at the political level. Also, the consensus varies across countries.
- Reconciliation of the national versus regional energy security concerns is a major challenge.

3rd Issue Plan of Action for 2 Years (Environment and People centricity)

1. The need to move to a more thoughtful instrument called life-cycle impact assessment because precipitation levels change and hydro-power plants are in trouble because their life-cycle needs haven't been thought of.
2. There is a need to understand the trans-boundary impacts of projects.
3. Lastly, there needs to be a focus on water quality rather than quantity.

Implementation Process

- a. There is a need to emphasize the joint management of resources and bio-diversity.
- b. Drawing private sector commitments is also very important.
- c. The need to think about harmonizing regulations.

Challenges to Implementation

- There are regional and country-wise pressures and stresses owing to differences and diversity.
- There is also a long-standing under-investment in institutions in all countries, especially the environmental departments.

Day II: Sunday, 15th October 2017

Breakout Session: People to People Connectivity

Recognized 3 priority issues –

- I. Happiness and Wellbeing
- II. Cross border Linkages
- III. Tourism Packages

1st Issue Plan of Action for 2 Years (Happiness and Wellbeing)

1. The need to establish common parameters of wellbeing and happiness.
2. The second plan of action is the formation of a BBIN group to discuss and develop a BBIN happiness index.

Implementation Process

- a. The BBIN wellbeing group must have a brainstorming session.
- b. Comprehensive parameters can be drawn up through the uses of information and communication technology.
- c. Bhutan must lead the way, owing to its high ranking in the area.

Challenges to Implementation

- The creation of awareness, sensitization and conviction is a new concept and this might prove to be a challenge.
- Another challenge is the harmonization of socio-economic parameters (examples: equitable distribution of income, Psychological evaluation, and optimum time usage, etc.)

2nd Issue Plan of Action for 2 years (Cross border Linkages)

1. Develop the BBIN website and social media pages for data and information sharing.
2. Also, develop BBIN centers of excellence across different sectors.
3. Emphasis must be laid on cultural and educational sectors.

Implementation Process

- a. There is a need to identify institutional partners.
- b. Private sector can lead the initiative in cross border linkages.
- c. The creation of multi-layered interactions must be made a priority.
- d. Government and non-government actors must be connected.

Challenges to Implementation

- Mobilization of partners is a challenge to the plan of action.
- Another challenge is the political will to precede the process.
- The movement of the process from non-government sectors to government sectors is challenging.

3rd Issue Plan of Action for 2 years (Tourism Packages)

1. Tourism packages on common themes. Examples: Buddhist Circuits, River Cruises, etc.
2. Connect tour operators through common platforms.

Implementation Process

- a. BBIN travel and tourism fair must be organised.
- b. Create platform for travel writers, media and potential investors.
- c. BBIN tour operators' MOU must be formulated.
- d. E-visa and visa on arrival facilities needs to be implemented.

Challenges to Implementation

- The physical connectivity of the region is a major challenge that needs to be addressed.
- Establishment of a Quality Tourism Standards (QTS) is another challenge.
- Incentivize tourists, example, roots tourism
- Lower cost packages is also a priority.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Special Address by High Commissioner of India
His Excellency Harsh Vardhan Shringla**

Special Address by High Commissioner of India His Excellency Harsh Vardhan Shringla

The special address by His Excellency Harsh Vardhan Shringla began by recognizing the improvement in the numerous initiatives in India-Bangladesh relations over the past few years. The chief among them are the Bangladesh-India Electrical Grid Interconnection Project, the addition of another passenger train from Kolkata to Khulna in Bangladesh, implementation of the Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) among the BBIN nations and the improvements on the customs and immigration check points to facilitate smoother cross-border movements.

Commenting on the reasons behind the successes in BBIN and particularly, Bangladesh-India relations, he stated that there is a political construct in place and all the associated nations are eager to get work done and move forward with policies. The High Commissioner singled out India's Act East Policy and remarked how the BBIN initiative allowed the country to fulfill that policy. At a political level and bilaterally too, all the nations shared an excellent understanding and it is now down to an operational level where that political construct needs to be realized.

Greater Integration

While speaking of the greater integration that is taking place in the BBIN region, he cited the inauguration of the Phulbari and the Banglabandha customs point as examples. The added advantage of these customs points was that they also helped facilitate trade to Bhutan and Nepal and hence, they served as an important strategic point. Banglabandha provides a crossroad to trade, commerce, industry and people to people connectivity for all four countries and has become the acknowledged protocol route for goods from Bhutan and Nepal.

Greater integration within people to people communications was also mentioned. High Commissioner Shringla stated that in the last two years, extensive work has been done on the visa systems that would facilitate travel for Bangladeshi citizens into India. The issue of transit has also been closely monitored and improved in order to ensure that neither of the countries are left in isolation.

Under the India-Bangladesh framework, he explained that there is a formula for financial sharing in areas where maintenance dredging needs to be done to keep the protocol routes open. Bangladesh has been doing a similar kind of dredging and High Commissioner Shringla urged both countries to have a greater level of integration through which they can coordinate and have a basin-wide approach which would save time and money.

Success Stories

The success stories of BBIN – primarily the MVA and the hydro-electricity agreements were also touched upon. Regarding the MVA, HC Shringla explained that the temporary inability of Bhutan to join the initiative was not a major setback and the MVA would nevertheless go through with Bhutan joining in the due course. There was also a successful trial run from Dhaka to Delhi as the cargo truck travelled through the states of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, UP, Haryana and Delhi in India, thus covering over 1850 kilometers to reach the Customs Depot in Parpatganj in New Delhi.

A second success story was of the hydro-electricity agreements among the BBIN nations. There is an agreement among all the countries on the framework within which to operate and it is only a matter of time before the framework is put into place. HC Shringla opined that the framework should be signed as soon as the respective heads of states came together for a

meeting. The agreement entails Bangladesh, Bhutan and India to jointly harness the hydro-electric potential in the region.

Areas of Improvement

Like any other initiative, the BBIN also has areas it could improve upon. One area which could be improved upon is the Petrapole – Benapole border in which there is a gap in the customs stations between India and Bangladesh. On the Indian side, the station has been developed with a state-of-the-art technology but there is a lack of facilities on the Bangladesh side of the border, thus causing inconvenience to the people crossing the border. Also, commenting on the highway that connects the border, he remarked that India had a four-lane highway on its side while Bangladesh had only two-lane roads. Similarly, the warehousing on the Indian side does not open into similar warehousing on the other side, hence creating bottlenecks and procedural delays.

Suggestions

After the potential areas of improvement were identified, some suggestions on how to go about it were also offered. Talking about the imbalance in the border facilities between India and Bangladesh, HC. Shringla proposed having only one facility which straddled the international boundary between India and Bangladesh. That would lead to greater integration and a better synergy between the neighbors as well as provide an easy commute to the people travelling to either side of the border.

Secondly, providing Maitree Express, the international train between Kolkata and Dhaka as an example and the improvements it is undergoing, a suggestion to have similar transport medium for Bhutan and Nepal was offered.

The High Commissioner was also of the view that the development of infrastructure is of paramount importance. Three lines of credit worth 8 billion dollars were extended to Bangladesh from India and HC. Shringla observed that this amounted to one-third of India's total global aid commitment. The suggestion was to keep the aid levels high and possibly extend it to the other two nations.

Conclusion

The enmeshed bilateral and sub-regional success stories, failures and suggestions were well received by all the participants. To conclude, the High Commissioner urged the participants to further explore the possibilities of initiatives which would help facilitate greater movement in all the areas. Overall, the High Commissioner aptly summarized every aspect of the BBIN grid which is currently in the making and did it in a very promising manner as a lot of the benchmarks have already been put in place and many goals been realized.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Special Address by the Hon'ble Dr:
Mashiur Rahman, Economic Advisor to the Prime
Minister of Bangladesh**

Special Address by Hon'ble Dr. Mashiur Rahman, Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh

The Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Hon'ble Dr. Mashiur Rahman began his speech by recognizing the framework agreement for cooperation which was signed by PM Shiekh Hasina of Bangladesh and the then PM of India, Shri Manmohan Singh in January 2010. He was optimistic that the cooperation between the two countries has only deepened and expanded since then.

Better Coordination

Dr. Rahman elaborated upon the ambitious programme of sub-regional cooperation and cross-border investment that has been envisioned through the BBIN initiative by laying emphasis on the need to have all necessary arrangements for strategic planning and coordination at a higher level. He was of the view that the ambitions have only materialized at the operational level rather than the political level. The operational level does have a useful role in finding out the integrities of the policies and placing them where necessary, but people in the top echelons of the government were also required to determine the correct way forward.

Thus, he called for a more efficient coordination between the political level and the operational level in implementing policies. Citing the example of the Ganges Barrage Project to hold back rain water of the monsoon season because of the periodic drying up of the Ganges River in Bangladesh due to the Farraka Barrage, Dr. Rahman remarked that a fruitful and productive consultation between India and Bangladesh has been going on for at least two years at the technical level. However, the talks are yet to materialize at the political level.

Impasse

Any initiative of this magnitude is bound to have difficulties in planning & implementation and BBIN is no different. In the field of electricity transmission, India and Bangladesh seemed to have reached an impasse.

India has developed a hydro-power project in the North-East and offered Bangladesh equity in the project. Bangladesh rejected it on the grounds that hydro-electricity is expensive and the country could not afford investing in it. Instead, Bangladesh has an agreement with Bhutan in place which requires transmission from Bhutan to pass through India. Dr. Rahman recognized that there needs to be an agreement with India to facilitate smooth transmission of power in that agreement.

Commenting on the North-East project in which India needed to transmit power across Bangladesh, Dr. Rahman observed that both countries had reached an impasse as they could block the transmission to the other side.

Joint Investment

Dr. Rahman also underlined the need for a cross-border joint investment plan into projects that were mutually beneficial. He recognized that the Bangladesh Bank had permitted some companies to invest internationally and was also aware of the Bangladeshi private investments in India. However, he highlighted that investments from India to Bangladesh should also be made a priority.

Permitting institutional regulations and satisfaction of all existing laws, he urged the countries to put into use the existing physical infrastructure and echoed the High Commissioner

Harsh Vardhan Shringla on the need to harmonize the customs procedures and laws of both India and Bangladesh.

Advancing Sub-Regional Cooperation

Dr. Rahman opined that a greater cooperation with the neighboring countries was required as it was logically more sensible for a country like Bangladesh to have cooperation with the countries of the sub-continent rather than countries like Turkey or Uzbekistan.

Elaborating on the logic, he referred to the issue of transportation as being the primary hindrance to conduct trade with countries who do not share a common border. On the contrary, while conducting trade within the subcontinent, it would be easier to transport the goods from one place to another.

Advancing to the complications of waterways, he spoke of the 1997 UN Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses. The UN Watercourses Convention is an international treaty, pertaining to the uses and conservation of all waters that cross international boundaries. The document was drafted to help conserve and manage water resources for present and future generations. However, Dr. Rahman referred to the countries of the subcontinent including India not voting in favour of the convention save Bangladesh and Nepal. He opined that a better coordination was required if the countries were to facilitate trade, transport and other mutually beneficial subjects.

The Motor Vehicle Agreement

Commenting on the Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA), the landmark agreement in the BBIN initiative, Dr. Rahman stressed on the inability of Bhutan to continue with the agreement. He termed the act as a “casual attitude” towards the initiative and recognized that the other three countries needed to carry Bhutan along with them. However, at the same time, he understood that it was not a long term or even an ideal solution to the problem as the internal political scenario in Bhutan prevented them from joining the agreement they had previously ratified.

He also called for a greater discussion on the specific details of the agreement and ensure that there is no gray area in the landmark consensus among all the four countries. Specifically, he highlighted the need to reach an agreement on the Bangladeshi front with India, Nepal and Bhutan individually on how the cargo was to move seamlessly.

Multi-modal Transport

Besides the MVA, Dr. Rahman also expressed his views on the potential of multi-modal transport via the initiative. He particularly introduced the option of air-cargo lifting and urged the participants to explore possibilities in that area. The Mangla port facility in Bangladesh has prospects of air-cargo and it can be particularly useful in transporting goods to Bhutan and Nepal.

For transportation through railways, there are only single line railway tracks in Bangladesh and the line towards the Benapole-Petrapole areas is beginning to get congested. He also spoke of the Khan Jahan Ali airport and remarked that the project for the airport would take some time as it was based on the Public-private partnership (PPP) modality which would undergo competitive bidding.

Relationship between Trade and Transit

Dr. Rahman recognized the existence of a relationship between trade and transit. He remarked that the trade agreements between Bangladesh and India have been the vehicle for the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT) and is automatically renewed every five years. This would imply that the transit agreements between the countries would also be automatically renewed. However, that was not the case. Every five years, both the countries need to go back to the drawing table to come up with new agreements regarding transit and this creates complications.

Dr. Rahman argued in favour of automatic renewal of the transit agreements along with the trade agreements owing to their inseparability. Also, until there was no automatic renewal, the multi-modal transport that has been envisioned would not be possible as no financial institution would support the construction of new roads and railway lines until the projects were seen to be viable for at least 30-40 years. A short-term viability of 5 years would not attract potential investors.

Pricing

Two types of pricing – marginal cost-based pricing and strategic pricing are within the purview of BBIN trade. Marginal cost-based pricing is the practice of setting the price of a product such that the extra cost of producing an extra unit of output is equaled. Strategic pricing, on the other hand, sets the product's price based on the product's value to the customer, or on a competitive strategy rather than on the cost of production.

Dr. Rahman mentioned that there was always a possibility of negotiation between the kind of pricing required. However, he was of the view that strategic pricing would present an “unsuitable situation” as pricing a good based on the value to the customer could lead to inflation and other irregularities. On the contrary, marginal cost-based pricing would present an ideal situation to all parties involved as it would also not involve any “fruitless haggling”.

Conclusion

To conclude, he urged the participating governments and scholars to not only look ahead but also solve the ongoing problems that has been encountered. If the persisting problems were not solved, it would hold the countries back from making progress.

Ambassador H.K. Singh, Director General of the Delhi Policy Group said that Dr. Rahman's speech had given the conference enough food for thought to carry the ideas into future sessions. A huge range of practical as well as psychological ideas were laid out by Dr. Rahman and these ideas have the potential to bode well with the governments with respect to planning and implementation.

Session 1: Trade and Economic Issues

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Chair's remarks by Prof. Prabir De,
Research and Information System for Developing
Countries**

Session I – Trade and Economic Issues

Chair: Professor Prabir De, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)

The first session of the conference was on the trade and economic issues in the BBIN cooperation. It was chaired by Professor Prabir De who is a member of the RIS, a New Delhi-based autonomous policy research institute that specializes in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology.

Prof. De began by commenting on the insightful speeches by both the High Commissioner to India, His Excellency Harsh Vardhan Shringla and the Hon'ble Dr. Mashiur Rahman, the Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. He then introduced the four speakers of the session and invited them to share their views on trade and economic issues which plagued the BBIN initiative.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October
15-16, 2017**

**Paper by Mr. Purushottam Ojha, Former
Secretary, Minister of Commerce and Supplies,
Nepal**

Managing non-tariff issues as measures of enhancing BBIN Trade

Purushottam Ojha¹

Background

During the last BBIN Roundtable held in Kathmandu during the 4th week of July this year, I have discussed about some pertinent but vexing issues of non-tariff measures prevailing among the BBIN member countries. Being the largest economy in the region, India remains the major trading partner for rest of the countries. The export interest of the three countries are closely tied with the market access opportunities available in India and hence incidence of non-tariff barriers on Indian imports becomes the major concern of these countries.

As the least developed countries, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal are entitled to benefit from zero tariff preferences available in India under the latter's duty free tariff preferences (DFTP) schemes as well as the preferences under the SAFTA trade liberalization program. The SAFTA concessions offered by India is more liberal since it has relatively shorter negative lists, limited to 25 products under the six digit customs tariff heading. These products are related with tobacco and alcohol and rest of the products are entitled to get duty free market access.

Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan have concluded stand-alone bilateral trade treaties with India. Nepal-India Treaty of Trade-2009, Agreement on Trade, Commerce and Transit between India and Bhutan-2016 and Trade Agreement between India and Bangladesh- 2015 provide framework for carrying out trade of the three least developed countries with their next door neighbor-India. The agreement of India with Nepal and Bhutan is based on the principles of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) while the agreement between Bangladesh and India is considered to be the improved version of MFN agreement. Trade among Bhutan,

¹ Former Commerce Secretary, Government of Nepal. Views are personal.
Presented at the BBIN Roundtable, Dhaka, organized by DPG; 15-16 October 2017.

Nepal, and Bangladesh is done on MFN basis; the latter two are also the member countries of WTO.

The MFN tariffs are on the declining trend despite that Nepal and Bangladesh still maintain long sensitive list under SAFTA (Nepal 1036, and Bangladesh-993 products at six digit level of HS classification). These are intended to protect domestic products from external competition and also maintain the level of revenue collection. Bhutan has maintained 156 items in its sensitive list under SAFTA².

The incidence of non-tariff barrier are higher across all countries in the sub-region. But, the burden is heavy for the land-locked country like Nepal where the export is constrained due to numerous non-tariff barriers on one side and the hassles related with transit transportation at the other. Import from neighboring countries goes unabated as any restriction on import would entail to disruption in supply of goods and services, thus having a double whammy effect on trade balance.

Non-tariff barriers among BBIN countries

Non-tariff barriers have been recognized as one of the trade restrictive measures by the SAFTA and BIMSTEC free trade agreement. Article-6 has mentioned non-tariff measures as one of the four instruments of implementing SAFTA; the remaining three are-tariff, para-tariff and direct trade measures. Similarly, the framework agreement on BIMSTEC free trade area focuses on progressive elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers in substantially all trade in goods as one of the measures of implementing comprehensive FTA.³ But, not much work has been taken to address the non-tariff barriers/measures under SAFTA except some studies and collection of the NTMs by the Committee of Experts (COE). Implementation of the BIMSTEC FTA is far from realization since the negotiations under the framework agreement is still reeling without any substantive achievement. Bangladesh and India are the member of Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), formerly called the Bangkok Agreement and they

² As of the second round revision of Sensitive List done by SAFTA Committee of Expert in 2012.

³ Refer Article 2 (a) of the legal text of the Framework Agreement on BIMST-EC Free Trade Area.

exchange tariff concessions for the specified products under the agreement, but without interventions in non-tariff.

A study done by the Asian Development Bank and the UNCTAD in 2008 has indicated three main barriers of trade in the SAARC region. These are; incidence of high non-tariff barriers; mostly related with SPS, and TBT measures (86%), Tariff rate quota (9.8%), anti-dumping measures (7.4%) and licensing requirement (5.3%); second, governance issues (weak bureaucracy and governance, corruption, low ranking on ease of doing business, and logistics performance index); the third part is the infrastructural deficiency in maritime port, causing port inefficiency and delays, lack of border infrastructures, outdated domestic transportation system, lack of inter-modal competition and the lack of IT infrastructures⁴

Following are the salience of the NTMs applied by the BBIN countries in their imports;

Country	Measures	Issues with partnering countries
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Licensing requirement for 428 products at 8-digit level. (b) Import prohibition on 52 HS Lines; 33 products under State Trading (canalization). (c) Several type of certification required for the GM foods. (d) State level para-tariffs. (e) SPS and quality standards. (f) Use of anti-dumping, countervailing and safeguard measures. (g) Transit fee and exorbitant test and certification fees, long lead time for test and certification, education surcharge. (h) Verification of certificate of origin 	<p><u>Issues with Bangladesh</u> Port restrictions (yarn, milk powder, fish, sugar, potatoes) Ban on import of poultry bird by Bangladesh. Long sensitive lists under SAFTA Payment problems.</p> <p><u>Issues with Nepal</u> Heavy scrutiny of Indian vehicles at the borders. WHO-GMP certification required for Ayurveda drugs. Mis-declaration in COO for products like betel-nuts, ginger and textiles. Lack of border infrastructures, delay in development of integrated customs check-posts, existence of minor customs (<i>chhoti bhansar</i>), imposition of agriculture reform fee, and unauthorized export of</p>

⁴ Air and maritime ports are ranked as the less competitive in South Asia as compared to East Asia. While it takes two hour to clear a vessel in Singapore and Laem Chabang, Thailand, it takes 2-3 days in Chittagong.

		Vanaspati (vegetable fat) among others.
Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Importers need to register with the Ministry of Economic Affairs. b) All import consignment originated from any country other than India need a separate license. c) Used clothes and textile items prohibited for import. d) A 14 categories of items special permission for import. 	<p>Port restrictions imposed by Bangladesh.</p> <p>Requirements of fumigation, radioactivity and other health related issues in Bangladesh.</p> <p>State level para-tariffs in India.</p>
Nepal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Six categories of products; selected narcotics, beef, plastic material with less than 20 microns, incandescent light bulbs, harmful dyes banned for import. b) License required for excisable goods and/or permission c) License for arms and ammunition, wireless communication, wood and timber. d) Para-tariff in the form of environmental tax and agriculture reform fee. e) QR for paddy, rice, wheat and lentil. f) Ban on import of used vehicles and machinery. 	<p><u>Issues with India</u></p> <p>Special permit required for import of vegetables and, ginger, Long lead time for test and certification of MAP products.</p> <p>Anti-dumping duties on jute products.</p> <p>Transit permit and corresponding fee for MAPs.</p> <p>Verification of CO for products like garlic and ginger.</p> <p>Non acceptance of NBSM and DFTQC certificates.</p> <p>Tariff rate quota for four specified products, stringent rules of origin criteria, canalization of import of vanaspati,</p> <p><u>Issues with Bangladesh</u></p> <p>Radio-activity test for food items.</p> <p>Port restrictions.</p> <p>Pre-shipment inspection.</p> <p>Non-acceptance of SPS lab certificates.</p> <p><u>Issues with Bhutan</u></p> <p>Licensing requirements for importers.</p>
Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Restrictions on import of certain goods on the social, moral, security, religious and environmental grounds. b) Requirement of radio-activity test for food items 	<p><u>Issues with India</u></p> <p>Face port restrictions in entry of products.</p> <p>SPS restrictions and TBT restrictions,</p> <p>Anti-dumping duties on jutes.</p>

	<p>c) Port entry restrictions for specified items.</p> <p>d) Pre-registration is required for import of selected items such as iron scrap, used vehicle etc.</p>	<p>Special Additional Duties on textile and garments.</p> <p>Non-acceptance of BSTI certificates.</p> <p>Requirement of chemical testing for leather and melamine products.</p> <p>Labeling in the jute bags.</p> <p>Environmental related certifications for chemical fertilizer and lead acid batteries</p>
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Source: GIZ-SAARC Trade Promotion Network-2016.

The way forward.

There has been constant growth of non-tariff barriers as issues like labor standards, environment related measures, and enforcement of intellectual property rights entered into the arena of trade regulations. Private standards are also taking sway as the larger trading companies set their own standards and product quality. Connectivity and facilitation of transit movement of goods have remained as the deterring factors, particularly for the land-locked countries. In this backdrop, dealing with the growing maze of NTMs may require a three pronged interventions; first, enhancing the capacity of least developed countries in meeting the SPS and technical standards and conformity assessment required by the importing countries; second, enhancing negotiating capacity of these countries in dealing with the trade restrictive and unjustified non-tariff measures imposed by the importing countries and third, creating strong institutional and dialogue mechanism to enhance cooperation and collaboration among the trade partners. Specific actions to address the NTM related challenges are as followings;

A. Institutional issues

Establish NTM desk in each participating country supported by policy advocacy group: Dealing with NTM is not a one time job. Rather, it requires a continuous process right from the collection of the measures as they appear from time to time, evaluate their implications to trade and welfare loss, develop strategies to deal with the issues and carry out monitoring of efforts done to implement the strategies. Such a NTM desk may be established at the level of Commerce

ministry which may be supported by the Policy Advocacy Group (PAG) represented from various ministries/departments, think tanks and the business organizations. In case of the functioning National Trade Facilitation Committee, this task may be shouldered to the sub-committees of such committee.

Create an inter-governmental trade facilitation committee: In South Asia, SAFTA committee of expert has formed a sub-group for dealing with the NTM issues and this sub-group was able to collect and notify the type and number of non-tariff measures imposed by importing member countries. The South Asian Regional Standard Organization (SARSO) was established to develop the regional standard and enhance cooperation on conformity assessment. However, no substantial progress has been made to address the issues of non-tariff barriers on trade. The BBIN countries may consider in creating a sub-regional trade facilitation body that takes care of all facilitation measures on trade including the issues of non-tariff measures. The sub-regional trade facilitation body may also be assigned to encourage and assist the regional standard organization to expedite their tasks.

Expedite the works of SARSO on harmonization of standards and conformity assessment of test and certification: Besides the agreement on establishment of the SAARC Regional Standard Organization (SARSO) as the specialized body of the SAARC, two other agreements under SAARC namely the Agreement on Implementation of Regional Standard and Multilateral Arrangement on Recognition of Conformity Assessment have been signed and in operation within the SAFTA framework. It is important for the member countries to expedite the works under SARSO in order to deal with the issues of SPS and TBT through harmonization of standards and conformity assessment process for the member countries. The BBIN countries may also take initiatives to leverage the works of this regional body to enhance cooperation on SPS and TBT related barriers.

B. Infrastructure related issues

Consider creating common test and certification facilities at the borders: Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh share common border with India. Trade among these countries mostly takes place through the land route and goods are moved on

truckloads or by railway wagons. Test and certification of import and export is normally done on both sides of the borders. And this is time consuming, and creating hassles to the traders. With the adoption of similar standards and conformity assessment process, a single test and certification facility should suffice in clearance of import and export without the need of repeating the process at the other side of the border. This may require concluding the mutual recognition agreement among the four BBIN countries.

Bring the BBIN MVA into effect in order to facilitate cross border movement of goods and services: The Motor Vehicle Agreement signed in 2015 is yet waiting for implementation pending the finalization of Protocol and also ratification by one of the member countries. The objectives of the agreement is to facilitate the movement of goods and passenger traffic across the participating countries. This provision of the agreement may be leveraged to reduce the hassles relating to border crossing and transit transport operation. Steps should be taken to improve intra-regional railway connectivity and inland waterways transport that would help in increasing modal competition in transport and reduce the cost transit and transport.

C. Cooperation and coordination

Develop cooperation framework for strengthening the test and certification facilities of the least developed countries: The standards and the inspection, test and certification facilities of the four partnering countries are not at the same level and hence the requirement of bringing them at par level. The bilateral process for enhancing collaboration among the member countries is moving at a slow pace. The quality standard of the least developed countries and their test and certification facilities need upgrading with support of physical infrastructures (building, equipment, laboratories) and adequate human resources. Countries at the sub-regional level should develop a plan in order to bring these facilities at the same level so that mutual recognition of the inspection, test and certification could be achieved sooner than later.

Promote intra-industry trade: Connecting the industries and production centers of the BBIN countries would be of utmost importance for enhancing intra-

regional trade and achieving complementarities in production process. Specific products and services may be identified by the BBIN member countries to bring them under single regional value chain; from supply of raw materials, manufacturing of parts and process and production of final output. The share of intra-industry trade has gone up as high as 80 percent of the global trade, which is supported by the notion of *fragmentation of production and integration of markets*. The sub-regional countries may harness the opportunity of linking production units at each other's location in potential sectors like garment and apparel, jute goods, light manufacturing, processing of agricultural products and so on. Manufacturing units at each other countries may enter into long term contract with their counterparts as part of horizontal integration. Government should facilitate such initiatives by making the border crossing and transportation system easier, less expensive and efficient.

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**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Dr. Selim Raihan,
Professor, Department of Economics, University
of Dhaka**

Session I – Trade and Economic Issues

Dr. Selim Raihan, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka

The second speaker in the first session on Trade and Economic issues was Dr. Selim Raihan, Professor in the Dept. of Economics in the University of Dhaka. He began his speech by highlighting the need to exploit the potential of the regional value chains among the BBIN nations and integrating them to the global value chain in order to promote intra-regional trade among the four countries. He identified three major issues which required attention so that the inter-regional trade among the four countries could be improved.

The first issue was the trade cost which included tariff issues, non-tariff issues and a lack of trade facilitation. Dr. Raihan identified another problem within trade cost called the lack of regional political capital. Elaborating further, he stressed on a need to have a certain amount of agreement among the regional elite as well as the non-elite in order to draw a popular demand for regional integration.

The second area which could help strengthen the regional value chain among the BBIN nations was the establishment of a trade-investment nexus. Providing examples of Bangladesh and Nepal who had come up with the idea of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), Dr. Raihan stressed on the need to extend it to the BBIN level where certain areas of the BBIN countries could be identified as SEZs and then potential investors could be invited to invest in those zones.

Lastly, he also urged the participants to focus on the services trade than the traditional focus on the goods trade. He provided examples of the SAARC trade agreements which weren't functioning at that level due to various reasons and remarked that they could be implemented at the BBIN level. Just like the Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) has been brought about on the BBIN platform to escape the complications of SAARC, trade agreements like the SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS) could also be implemented at the BBIN level.

Concluding the speech, Dr. Raihan also identified a few operational issues and suggested that the BBIN could form a regional trading bloc to escape the nuances of the BBIN Sensitive List. Stressing on the need to address the non-tariff barriers, he concluded by hoping for some visible success at the BBIN level rather than only at the bilateral level among the four countries involved.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Mr. Ali Ahmed, CEO,
Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute**

Session I – Trade and Economic Issues

Mr. Ali Ahmed, CEO Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute

Mr. Ali Ahmed, the CEO of Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute began his speech by echoing Dr. Raihan on the importance of having not only bilateral agreements between the BBIN nations in place but also having agreements at the sub-regional level which included all four nations. Speaking of the disadvantages of being landlocked, he laid emphasis on India to be “softer” to Bhutan and Nepal, thus helping them contribute on a larger scale towards the BBIN.

He also urged India to set up juxtaposed customs stations instead of the Joints Customs Immigration Point, which only served one nation. Pointing out the other benefits of setting up a juxtaposed customs station like reduction in costs, enhancement of trade along with people to people communication, he stressed on the need to follow the revised KYOTO Protocol, which India is a signatory of.

Next, Mr. Ahmed spoke of the paperless trade framework that has been initiated by the UN and Bangladesh has been one of its first signatories. He asked the other nations of the BBIN to also sign the UN framework highlighting its benefits, the primary one being reduction in the use of paper in favour of alternate methods like the internet to facilitate trade.

Finally, he also laid emphasis on the fact that India should support the other three BBIN countries to set up roads among themselves as it would improve connectivity which in turn would enhance trade and hence boost the economy.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Dr. Khondaker
Golam Moazzem, Research Director, Centre for
Policy Dialogue**

Session I – Trade and Economic Issues

Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem, Research Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

Dr. Moazzem, a Research Director at the CPD began by acknowledging the speeches delivered by the High Commissioner of India, His Excellency Harsh Vardhan Shringla and the Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Hon'ble Dr. Mashiur Rahman in the opening session of the discussion. He remarked that a lot of initiatives have been undertaken in the last two decades, including the SAARC, BIMSTEC, BCIN and BBIN but not a lot has been achieved through these initiatives, particularly since the SAFTA agreement in 2005. Stressing on the need to differentiate between the success stories of the bilateral agreements and the sub-regional cooperation, he urged the participants not to merge the two as that would present an inaccurate picture of the shortfalls and the potentials of the region.

Throughout his speech, issues of high trade costs, the Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA), trade diversion impacts, production networks and the energy grid issue were focused upon.

Dr. Moazzem pointed out the high trade costs and the various dimensions to it, including the lack of connectivity and the low rate of growth of regional trade between these countries.

On the Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA), he urged the participants to rectify the inability of Bhutan to join the agreement. India needed to play a leading role to persuade Bhutan and all major Bhutanese concerns must be addressed. One of the concerns for Bhutan is the environmental hazard because of the increased flow of trucks in the region and Dr. Moazzem stressed that the solution to the environmental concern was the consideration of transshipments and the use of Bhutanese vehicles to transport the goods in and out of Bhutan.

He also predicted trade diversion impacts which may affect some countries adversely. Dr. Moazzem was of the view that these impacts will only be short term and that the diversion will ultimately benefit the supplying countries. Thus, he urged Bhutan and Nepal to be patient as it will ultimately benefit from the process in terms of pricing and greater flow of goods.

Regarding the production network, products which have the potential to be favorably traded among the four countries need to be identified. One suggestion offered was that the Indian and the Bangladeshi manufacturing base could be used for the goods produced by Nepal and Bhutan which are majorly agricultural commodities, minerals and other raw materials. Thus, such kinds of production networks can be promoted where some countries would supply the raw materials and other countries would manufacture it. The goods can then be exported within the region and also outside it.

Another factor which needed to be addressed was the energy grid issue. Dr. Moazzem urged the trading of energy from Bhutan and Nepal to Bangladesh as the former countries had surplus while Bangladesh was deficient.

He concluded by reminding participants that there were a lot of issues in the BBIN and all issues may not have the same priority for all countries. Dr. Moazzem suggested that regardless of personal preferences, the issues that required immediate attention must be addressed first.

**Session 2: Transit and Multimodal
Connectivity (Roadways, Waterways,
Railways and Aviation)**

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Mr. R.B. Rauniar,
Managing Director, Interstate Multinational
Transport, Nepal**

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

Mr. R.B. Rauniar, Managing Director, Interstate Multinational Transport, Nepal

Mr. Rauniar acknowledged India's influential role in the BBIN owing to the trade share of the other countries with India. India has been the focal point for trade as it also provides a route for the landlocked Bhutan and Nepal for third country global trade including Bangladesh.

However, these were through the bilateral treaties with India and Mr. Rauniar underlined the need to enter into a sub-regional agreement to ensure seamless multimodal connectivity for all four nations with each other.

Mr. Rauniar spoke of the digital age and urged the countries to take advantage of the Information Technology by facilitating control mechanisms, transaction data recording and controlling border management.

Talking about the progress that has already been made, he acknowledged the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in helping Nepal to modernize trade facilitation under the South Asia Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program. The ADB has approved the loan support to the Government of Nepal in an effort to simplify the country's trade processes and help promote and diversify export. Similarly, the ADB has also helped Bangladesh and India to improve connectivity by road.

Suggestions to examine the present trade routes and procedures being used were provided. Mr. Rauniar also highlighted the need to harmonize the customs points to enable a seamless and unhindered exchange of cross border formalities.

The standardization of visa requirements, transport equipment insurance, uniform emission requirements and advance use of technology and surveillance like the implementation of electronic tracking via GPS were also suggested to better the transit and multimodal connectivity among the BBIN nations.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Mr. Chandan Kr.
Dey, Joint Secretary, Road Transport &
Highways Division, Government of Bangladesh**

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

Mr. Chandan Kumar Dey, Joint Secretary, Road Transport & Highways Division, Ministry of Road Transport & Bridges, Govt. of Bangladesh

Mr. Dey highlighted some of the aspects of the BBIN MVA, including its current relevance. He also spoke on the infrastructure related projects in relation to the Nepal, Bhutan and North-East India.

Mr. Dey has been instrumental in the formation of the BBIN-MVA and hence, he was able to describe the true reality of the current state of the agreement. Speaking of one of the clauses which outlined the necessity of all four countries to be on board for the agreement to come into force, Mr. Dey remarked that they were eagerly waiting for Bhutan to sign the agreement.

Elaborating on the specifics of the MVA, Mr. Dey stressed on the need to draft the cargo protocol which was to be adopted by the BBIN. The passenger protocol has already been drafted and it is ready to be implemented pending Bhutan's ratification. However, the cargo protocol will require route surveys and other formalities to be completed before the parties can sign it.

Regarding infrastructure, Mr. Dey assured that negotiations to convert the highways into four lanes between Dhaka and Sylhet are going on. There is a blueprint in place for the infrastructure expansion in Bangladesh and it should be materialized in the next 2-3 years.

He concluded by commenting on the possibility of a BIMSTEC MVA and was also hopeful of an integration of the BBIN MVA with the BIMSTEC MVA.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract, Paper and Presentation by Prof. Prabir De,
Research and Information System for Developing
Countries**

Facilitating Cross-Border Paperless Trade in BBIN: A Proposal

Prabir De*

Abstract

Borders of BBIN countries are heavily congested and trade faces high transaction costs. Four BBIN countries have undertaken several national initiatives to facilitate paperless trade through automated customs systems, electronic single windows and other digital customs and trade facilitation initiatives. BBIN countries have been taking steps to establish a national policy framework for paperless trade. However, implementation of cross-border paperless trade is yet to happen in BBIN sub-region. When trade is growing fast in BBIN, adopting a cross-border paperless trade regime may not only speed up the growth of trade but also make the trade more secure and safe. This paper examines the scope of cross-border paperless trade in BBIN. The paper concludes, among others, BBIN countries may sign BBIN Paperless Trade Agreement (BBIN PTA) to promote cross-border paperless trade in the sub-region.

Keywords: BBIN, Trade, Paperless trade, Single Window, Customs, MVA

JEL codes: F10, F13, F15

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1. Introduction

Started between Bhutan, Bangladesh and India in late of the last decade, BBIN sub-regional cooperation received further impetus once Nepal joined the group. BBIN is the “Bridgehead” in the Bay of Bengal area, which links South Asia with greater Southeast Asia and vice versa. BBIN is a sub-region where Himalaya meets the Bay of Bengal.¹

India, Nepal and Bangladesh have ratified the BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA), while the same is still under consideration in case of Bhutan. Bhutan in its last communication in May 2016 to other BBIN countries has indicated that the country is not yet ready for the MVA. Bangladesh, India and Nepal have, therefore, agreed to complete the formalities required to implement the MVA. Successful demonstration run of passenger and cargo services have been organised. While the MVA aims to put in place a set of rules required for the movement of motor vehicles in the BBIN sub-region, another important trade arrangement such as the paperless trade is yet to be negotiated for the sub-region. In an UNESCAP Survey, it has been found that 30 of the 138 RTAs feature one or more Articles dedicated to “Paperless Trading” or “Paperless Trade Administration”, provisions related to more specific paperless trade measures are found in different chapters, including but not limited to chapters on Customs and trade facilitation as well as on e-commerce.²

Countries across the world are increasingly moving away from a paper-based document system to paperless information exchange. Private sector is also active partner in such transition. Paperless trade generally refers to the conduct of international trade transactions using electronic rather than paper-based data and documents.³ These paperless trade measures are rapidly becoming essential not only to maintain trade competitiveness, but also to address the trade control and logistics challenges associated with an increase in small shipments and cross-border e-commerce.

Paperless trade can significantly reduce the risk of global trade through less and better data and increase efficiency by reducing trade-transaction costs (ESCAP, 2017; UNECE, 2015). Potential annual export gains associated with moving from manual paper-based trade to paperless trade have been estimated at between US\$ 36 billion and US\$ 257 billion in Asia and the Pacific, depending on the extent of automation and dematerialization of procedures and documents (Shepherd and Duval, 2015).

According to UN (2017): “The global average implementation rate of “paperless trade” measures stands close to 50 percent. Measures such as Electronic/automated customs systems, Internet

¹ BBIN gained momentum in 2014 when SAARC leaders failed to reach consensus on regional connectivity projects. Refer, De (2015, 1016) for a detailed discussion on BBIN integration process.

² Refer, for example, ESCAP (2017)

³ Refer, for example, Duval and Mengjing (2017), Sung Heun Ha and Sang Won Lim (2014), etc.

connections fully available to Customs and other trade control agencies, and Electronic submission of Customs declarations have been either fully or partially implemented in most countries surveyed. However, implementation of more advanced paperless trade measures remains at a relatively early stage. For example, while nearly 60 percent of the economies have engaged to some extent in creating an electronic single window for processing trade documents, very few have fully operational systems in place.”⁴ However, the global average implementation level of “Cross-border paperless trade” (33 percent) is substantially lower than that of the other groups of measures considered. While the average implementation level of Laws and regulations for electronic transactions exceeds 60 percent, steps to enable the cross-border electronic exchange and recognition of regulatory documents, such as certificates of origin and sanitary and phytosanitary certificates, have been taken in less than 30 percent of the economies considered in the UN Report (UN, 2017).

Borders of BBIN countries are heavily congested and trade faces high transaction costs. Four BBIN countries have undertaken several national initiatives to facilitate paperless trade through automated customs systems, electronic single windows and other digital customs and trade facilitation initiatives. However, implementation of cross-border paperless trade is yet to happen in BBIN sub-region. For example, the interoperability of digital customs interfaces of BBIN countries or a BBIN single window of customs is yet to be formulated. When trade is growing fast in BBIN, adopting a cross-border paperless trade regime may not only speed up the growth of trade but also make the trade more secure and safe.

BBIN countries are yet to make much progress in terms of customs cooperation, paperless cross-border trade despite of ratification of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). However, achieving a cross-border paperless trade environment is not difficult for BBIN countries since the BBIN countries have following unique advantages: (i) all the four countries are Contracting Party of Revised Kyoto Convention on simplification and harmonization of customs procedures; and (ii) Bangladesh has signed the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific of UNESCAP.

In view of the above, the objective of this paper is to examine the scope of cross-border paperless trade and corresponding institutional framework in BBIN. Rest of the paper is arranged as follows. Section 2 presents the current status of cross-border paperless trade in BBIN. Section 3 discusses the broad outline of the BBIN PTA. Finally, conclusions are drawn in Section 4.

⁴ This Report presents the main findings of the Second Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation, jointly carried out in 2017 by the five United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRCs). The Survey covers 120 economies from 8 regions. It focuses on three main areas. The first area relates to the implementation of selected measures under the TFA. The second area is about the implementation of innovative, technology-driven measures aimed at enabling trade using electronic rather than paper-based data and documentation - otherwise referred to as “paperless trade”. The third area examines specific trade facilitation measures targeted at small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the agricultural sector and women.

2. Status of Paperless Cross-Border Trade in Regional Blocs

BBIN countries are relatively open economies, where, with the exception of Nepal, trade openness has increased during 1991 to 2016. BBIN countries have witnessed an increase in intra-regional trade in 2016, which was increased from US\$ 21.65 billion in 2015 to US\$ 23.52 billion in 2016.⁵ India contributes to over 90 per cent of this sub-regional trade⁶. In 2016, India's total export to BBIN was about US\$ 12.5 billion, of which US\$ 9.5 billion was export and rest was import. While trade has increased in BBIN subregion in recent years, trade procedures vary across the countries and so also the efficiency of trade system (ADB-ESCAP, 2015).

Table 1: Basics of BBIN in Comparisons with Other Subregional Initiatives

Particulars	BBIN	SASEC	BCIM	BIMSTEC	IMT-GT	BIMP-EAGA	GMS
Location	South Asia	South Asia	South - South East Asia	South – South East Asia	South East Asia	South East Asia	South East Asia
Members	4	7	4	7	3 ^s	4 ^s	6
Year established	2013	2001	1997	1997	1993	1994	1992
FTA in goods	No	No	No	Yes*	Yes ⁺	Yes ⁺	Yes ⁺⁺
Investment agreement	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Services trade agreement	No	No	No	Yes*	Yes ⁺	Yes ⁺	Yes ⁺⁺
Connectivity projects	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Energy exchange	Yes	Yes	No	Yes*	No	Yes*	Yes
Financial integration	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Customs cooperation	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ratified WTO TFA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Paperless trade measures (cross-border/regional)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Paperless trade measure (national)***	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Initiative type	Track 1	Track 1.5	Track 1.5	Track 1	Track 1	Track 1	Track 1
Secretariat	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Summit**	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: *Proposed. \$Involves sub-national units. +Part of ATIGA **Both political and business summits *** Measures adopted by one or more members

Source: Author

⁵ Based on ITC Trade Map

⁶ Based on IMF DOTS Online Database

BBIN countries have realised that narrowing the connectivity gaps among countries is must for facilitating regional trade. Not only trade, an improved connectivity is essential to provide cheaper access to goods and services, create more jobs including along trading corridors, and ultimately help reduce poverty at a faster pace. BBIN initiative has emphasised on building connectivity from its beginning. The shared vision of BBIN is to increase trade and cooperation within eastern South Asia, create linkages within and beyond, ensure faster movement of goods and people, sustainable development through water resource management and protection of climate, to mention a few. It is the BBIN MVA that has triggered the BBIN initiative. In a major bid to facilitate transportation and trade, BBIN countries signed the Motor Vehicle Agreement (BBIN MVA) for the ‘Regulation of Passenger, Personal and Cargo Vehicular Traffic’ on 15 June 2015. This is expected to significantly reduce trade transaction costs in the subregion. Illustrated in Table 1, BBIN’s prime focus is not only in the trade and investment but also in non-trade issues such as connectivity, energy, etc. However, none of the subregional initiatives, as noted in Table 1, has made any progress in adopting paperless cross-border trade.

While the BBIN MVA aims to fulfil the need to accelerate cross-border transportation and deepen regional integration through sub-regional measures, the sub-region is yet to introduce paperless cross-border trading system for the subregion. When it comes to paperless trade at national level, there has been relatively good progress, mainly driven by India. However, some recent developments between India and Nepal are certainly encouraging (see Box 1).

Box 1
India and Nepal to Pilot Electronic Tracking System to Ease Cross-border Movement of Goods

It is part of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program, which brings together Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The governments of India and Nepal are piloting an electronic tracking system for a trial period of at least 90 days starting later this year to facilitate cross-border movement of goods according to a release from the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The electronic tracking system uses satellite positioning systems, cellular communications, radio frequency identification, electronic seals, and monitoring software to ensure the security of cargo. It will not only help track cargo movement but also enable the detection of any unwanted incidences such as infiltration, pilferage, or deflection that may occur to cargo en route. The system is expected to help traders reduce the cost and time spent for clearing cargo at border crossings through simplified procedures.

Senior customs and trade officials from India and Nepal met in Mumbai last week to discuss ways to ease traffic-in-transit along the route from Kolkata to four major customs points of Nepal. India’s Customs Commissioner Sandeep Kumar and Nepal’s Commerce Ministry Joint Secretary Rabi Shanker Sainju signed a memorandum of intent (MoI) to pilot the system.

The tracking system will be piloted for Nepalese transit cargo by road and rail along Kolkata-Birgunj via Raxaul, Kolkata-the inland container depot (ICD) in Sirsiya via Raxaul, Kolkata-Biratnagar via Jogbani, and Kolkata-Bhairahawa via Sonauli corridors.

The electronic cargo tracking system initiative is part of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program, which brings together Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka in a project-based partnership with the aim of promoting regional prosperity, improving economic opportunities, and building a better quality of life for the people of the subregion. ADB, as SASEC secretariat, is supporting the piloting of the electronic tracking system. SASEC seeks to strengthen multimodal cross-border transport networks to boost intraregional trade. The program helps build modern and effective customs administration that speeds up the time and reduces the costs of moving goods, vehicles, and people across borders.

Source: Priyankar Bhunia, available at <http://opengovasia.com/articles/7690-india-and-nepal-to-pilot-electronic-tracking-system-to-ease-cross-border-movement-of-goods>

Table 2: Paperless Trade Measures included in the UNRC Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation 2015

Paperless trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic/Automated Customs System established (e.g., ASYCUDA) • Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies at border-crossings • Electronic Single Window System • Electronic submission of Customs declarations • Electronic Application and Issuance of Trade Licenses • Electronic Submission of Sea Cargo Manifests • Electronic Submission of Air Cargo Manifests • Electronic Application and Issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin • E-Payment of Customs Duties and Fees • Electronic Application for Customs Refunds
Cross-border paperless trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws and regulations for electronic transactions are in place (e.g. e-commerce law, e-transaction law) • Recognized certification authority issuing digital certificates to traders to conduct electronic transactions • Engagement of the country in trade-related cross-border electronic data exchange with other countries • Certificate of Origin electronically exchanged between your country and other countries • Sanitary and Phytosanitary Certificate electronically exchanged between your country and other countries • Banks and insurers in your country retrieving letters of credit electronically without lodging paper-based documents

Source: Duval and Mengjing (2017) based on Joint United Nations Regional Commissions Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation Survey 2015 Global Report

Illustrated in Table 2, paperless trade measures featured in the TFPI Survey include the establishment of electronic automated customs system and electronic single window system, electronic submission of trade-related documents including trade licenses, sea/air cargo manifests and customs declarations, and electronic application and issuance of trade licenses and preferential certificate of origin. Furthermore, there are six measures related to cross-border paperless trade in the TFPI Survey. Apart from the general measure “Engagement of the country in trade-related cross-border electronic data exchange with other countries”, the measures aiming at exchanging specific documents such as Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Certificates and Certificates of Origin (COO) electronically are included. In addition, two of the measures, namely, laws and regulations for electronic transactions and recognized certification authority issuing digital certificates to traders to conduct electronic transactions, are basic building blocks towards enabling the exchange and mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents among stakeholders within a country and also along the entire international supply chain.⁷

Among the BBIN countries, India has already established customs single window (known as SWIFT). Bangladesh and Nepal follow automated customs operation (e.g. ASYCUDA world). Bhutan uses its own customs digital interface. Bangladesh in particular has taken initiatives to establish a national single window, whereas Nepal and Bhutan have been discussing to set-up such facility.⁸

Measures on single window are most commonly found in chapters dedicated to customs procedures and trade facilitation, although at least one RTA mentions such measures in its e-commerce chapter⁹. In contrast, the WTO TFA features a dedicated “Single Window” Article, with members expected to endeavour to maintain such facility and use information technology to support it “to the extent possible and practicable”. Among all RTAs, intra-ASEAN agreements have a special emphasis on electronic single window. The Article 49 of the ATIGA indeed binds ASEAN members to take measures to establish not only a national but a regional single window, with specific implementation agreements and protocols providing details of what is to be done (see Box 2).

The number of paperless trade measures in regional trade agreement entered into force globally since 2005 essentially doubled, with a large majority of RTAs now featuring one more measures aiming to exchange trade-related data and information electronically. In many cases, recent RTAs are found to go further than the WTO TFA in promoting digital trade facilitation and the application of modern information and communication technologies to trade procedures.

⁷ Refer, Available at: <https://unnex.unescap.org/content/global-survey-trade-facilitation-and-paperless-tradeimplementation-2015>

⁸ Refer, for example, ADB-ESCAP (2017)

⁹ Refer, Duval and Mengjing (2017)

Box 2
Selected Articles Relating to Single Window

ASEAN Trade in Good Agreement

Article 49: Establishment of the ASEAN Single Window

Member States shall undertake necessary measures to establish and operate their respective National Single Windows and the ASEAN Single Window in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement to Establish and Implement the ASEAN Single Window and the Protocol to Establish and Implement the ASEAN Single Window.

WTO TFA

Article 10.4: Single Window

4.1 Members shall endeavour to establish or maintain a single window, enabling traders to submit documentation and/or data requirements for importation, exportation, or transit of goods through a single entry point to the participating authorities or agencies. After the examination by the participating authorities or agencies of the documentation and/or data, the results shall be notified to the applicants through the single window in a timely manner. [...]

4.4 Members shall, to the extent possible and practicable, use information technology to support the single window.

Source: Duval and Mengjing (2017)

Key barriers to the seamless electronic exchange of trade data and documents across borders include *inter alia* the use of different technical standards across paperless systems, the absence of mutual recognition mechanisms and/or of enabling legal frameworks, as well as limited human resource capacity and infrastructure. An Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in BBIN may help address some of these long-term challenges.

With the aim to facilitate trade, BBIN countries have been taking steps to establish a national policy framework for paperless trade. Time is ripe for BBIN countries to enter into an agreement to promote cross-border paperless trade – BBIN Paperless Trade Agreement (BBIN PTA).

Value chains offer immense opportunities for BBIN countries to strengthen the economic integration process. It is expected that BBIN PTA may facilitate formation of value chains in the subregion. A BBIN PTA can make a strong role in facilitating trade and also distribution of benefits, particularly among SMEs.

3. Broad Outline of the BBIN PTA: Some Thoughts

The objective of the BBIN PTA should be to promote cross-border paperless trade by enabling the exchange and mutual recognition of trade related data and documents in electronic form and

facilitating interoperability among national and sub-regional single windows and/or other paperless trade systems, for the purpose of making international trade transactions more efficient and transparent while improving regulatory compliance. The Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific of UNESCAP is the template, which offers important lessons for BBIN PTA. Here, “Interoperability” means the ability of two or more systems or components to exchange information and to use the information that has been exchanged.

The proposed Agreement may be guided by the following general principles:

- (a) Functional equivalence;
- (b) Non-discrimination of the use of electronic communications;
- (c) Technological neutrality;
- (d) Promotion of interoperability;
- (e) Improved trade facilitation and regulatory compliance;
- (f) Cooperation between the public and private sectors;
- (g) Improving transboundary trust environment.

BBIN countries shall agree that implementing national legislation and regulations that apply these principles to the exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form will establish common levels of trust and increase interoperability.

BBIN countries shall endeavour to facilitate cross-border paperless trade by enabling exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form, utilizing the existing systems in operation or creating new systems.

BBIN countries are encouraged to develop single-window systems and use them for cross-border paperless trade. In developing single-window systems or upgrading existing ones, the countries are encouraged to make them consistent with the general principles provided in the present Framework Agreement.

BBIN countries shall provide for mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form originating from other Parties on the basis of a substantially equivalent level of reliability.

This proposed BBIN PTA will help operationalize cross-border mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form, in a manner consistent with the principle of the transboundary trust environment and all the other general principles, provided that the provisions of these bilateral and multilateral arrangements do not contradict the proposed Agreement.

BBIN countries shall, for the purposes of the implementation of the BBIN PTA, establish BBIN Paperless Trade Council (BPTC).

BBIN countries shall endeavour to initiate and launch pilot projects on cross-border exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form, in particular among customs and other regulatory agencies. The countries shall collaborate on such pilot projects through the institutional arrangements to be established under the proposed Agreement.

The Parties may cooperate to provide technical support and assistance to each other in order to facilitate the implementation of the BBIN PTA.

Customs Modernization and Harmonization of Procedures

Customs should operate 24×7 in the BBIN sub-region. Petrapole and Benapole land ports have been operating 24x7. However, there are differences in working hours between customs of other LCSs. Full automation and link-up between customs will reduce transaction time and cost. Simple, harmonized and standardized trade and customs processes, procedures and related information flows are expected to reduce transaction costs in the region. This will enhance trade competitiveness and facilitate the regional integration¹⁰.

Another important measure could be jointly managing exports and imports at the border, which would lead to saving resources, time and costs. For example, border cargo scanners can be shared jointly. The One Stop Border Post (OSBP) principle allows neighbouring countries to coordinate import, export and transit processes.¹¹ This ensures that traders are not required to duplicate regulatory formalities on both sides of the same border. This system may be implemented along selected corridors in the sub-region.

BBIN countries may promote the use of Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) scheme complemented with post clearance audit. Automation, digitalization in monitoring the movement of vehicles or payment of duties and toll taxes, etc. will pave the way for faster clearances of goods at the border and also along the corridors. Faster movement of goods and services is contingent upon harmonization of rules and regulations of motor vehicles in the sub-region. Harmonization of procedures, documents, etc. can be achieved quickly through TIR Convention¹². Such a move would also be useful to secure the safety of goods in transit. India has recently acceded to TIR Convention. TIR system offers a single customs guarantee. At the

¹⁰ Also refer, CUTS workshop summary, available at http://www.cuts-international.org/BBINMVA/pdf/Launch_Event_report-BBINMVA_16-17_February2017.pdf

¹¹ According to JICA, the One-Stop Border Post (OSBP), a Japanese concept, aims to eliminate the daily border crossing nightmare with a sleek and efficient system embracing all border procedures, such as customs, immigration and vehicular clearance.

¹² TIR Convention brings enormous benefits to BBIN sub-region through BBIN MVA. Details are available at https://www.iru.org/system/files/BBIN%20media%20fact%20sheet_0.pdf

same time, implementation of Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) and implementation of WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) would also help BBIN countries to achieve simplification and harmonization of customs procedures. UNNEExT offers many good suggestions and templates on cross-border harmonization of customs procedures.

Similarly, harmonization of road standards should be another priority. For example, the parcel loads of Indian and Bangladeshi roads are different. Bangladeshi roads would not be able to carry fully-loaded Indian trucks or containers. It is suggested that BBIN countries may develop specially designed containers, which are adjustable with global standards for road and rail transportation. There is a difference between containerized goods and goods in container. The BBIN MVA talks about containerized goods, but there is no mention about the movement of containers in the sub-region. For safe and fast movement of goods, container movement should be encouraged, apart from multimodal transportation within the sub-region and also with rest of the world.

Effective Coordination

Effective coordination between countries and other stakeholders is vital to implement BBIN PTA in a timely fashion. While countries have recognized the BBIN MVA as a complementary to existing transport agreements or arrangements at bilateral levels, cross-border paperless trade would add further momentum to BBIN integration process. An effective coordination among the BBIN countries in implementing the BBIN PTA is required to minimize the wastage of resources and duplication of services.

The trend in intra-BBIN trade has been influenced by recent growth of the Indian economy and the India's unilateral removal of tariff and sensitive list items for the least developed countries (LDCs) in recent years. Since a large part of BBIN's trade is India-centric, any improvement of connectivity and trade facilitation in the sub-region would, therefore, will lead to improve the competitiveness of BBIN export, thereby providing higher market access to exports of Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal in India. It is quite justified that India may take the lead role in implementing the paperless trade in the subregion.

4. Concluding Remarks

BBIN countries are yet to connect each other through a comprehensive trade facilitation and connectivity measure. BBIN has a number of logistics handicaps. Trade in BBIN involves a relatively higher number of procedures and documents. To make trade transaction a friendly affair, this study draws following conclusions:

First, by making e-filing of documents mandatory, the documentary burden on the trade of goods along the BBIN corridors will be reduced undoubtedly. India's Single Window System (SWIFT) is a case in point, which offers important lessons to other BBIN countries to improve their electronic customs system. BBIN countries need to align customs procedures and trade services among themselves through interoperability of customs single windows till BBIN has its own sub-regional customs window.

Second, BBIN countries shall promote cross-border paperless trade by enabling the exchange and mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form and facilitating interoperability among national and subregional single windows and/or other paperless trade systems, for the purpose of making international trade transactions more efficient and transparent while improving regulatory compliance. As a next step, BBIN countries may undertake joint initiative to promote cross-border paperless trade. This can be done by forming an expert group which will design the project and an implementable action plan. See the illustration below.



Third, to meet the global and regional/sub-regional obligations, BBIN countries have to improve trade performance through enhanced trade facilitation measures, both soft and hard infrastructure. Customs must operate 24×7 in BBIN sub-region. Investments in the development of hard infrastructure such as roads, bridges, border infrastructures, etc., must be scaled up in BBIN countries, particularly in Bangladesh and Nepal. Although BBIN countries have identified US\$ 8 billion investment in 30 transport connectivity projects, implementation of projects in priority sectors should be done expeditiously.

Finally, the BBIN PTA is likely to generate economic dividends in the subregion, particularly for Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. This is true because the BBIN corridors would pass through relatively underdeveloped parts of the world that generate higher marginal returns from investment. No doubt, the Agreement would facilitate trade among subregional partners through faster and uninterrupted movement of goods and services.

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Facilitating paperless cross-border trade in BBIN: A proposal

Prabir De

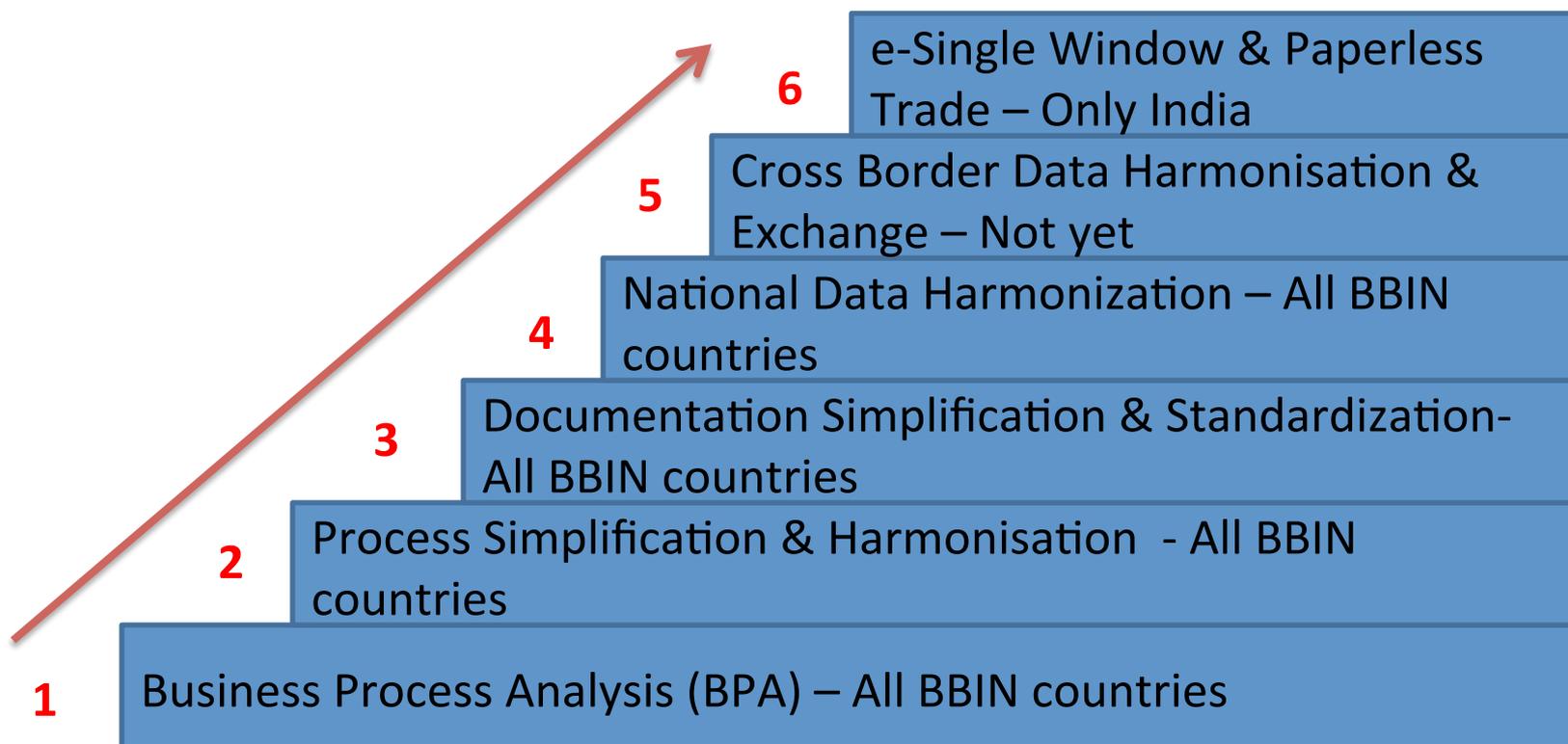
Why trade facilitation?

- Tariffs are (often) already low and getting lower
- Trade flows increasingly associated with regional/global production networks
 - Predictability / timeliness is essential
 - High import content of exports
- Supply chain security initiatives are making early submission of accurate information a must for developing countries
- Easier and cheaper trade procedures (for all) fully important for implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- WTO TFA as new baseline for TF

Global trend in paperless trade

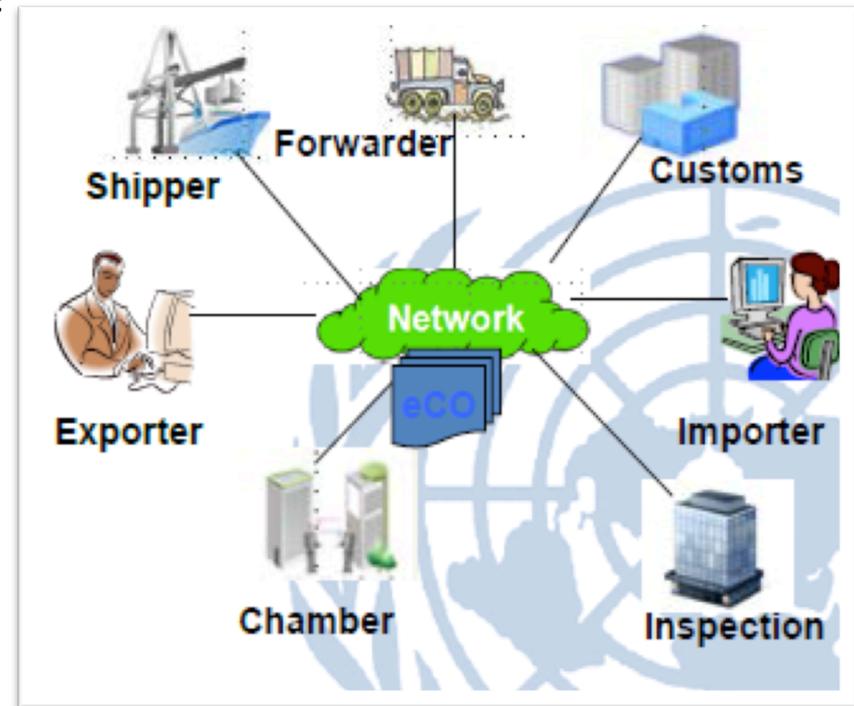
- Countries moving into paper-less trade environment from paper-based trade
- 30 of the 138 RTAs feature one or more Articles dedicated to “Paperless Trading” or “Paperless Trade Administration”, etc. (UNESCAP Survey, 2015)
- Potential annual export gains associated with moving from manual paper-based trade to paperless trade have been estimated at between US\$ 36 billion and US\$ 257 billion in Asia and the Pacific, depending on the extent of automation and dematerialization of procedures and documents (Shepherd and Duval, 2015).

Steps towards implementing single window and paperless trade environment

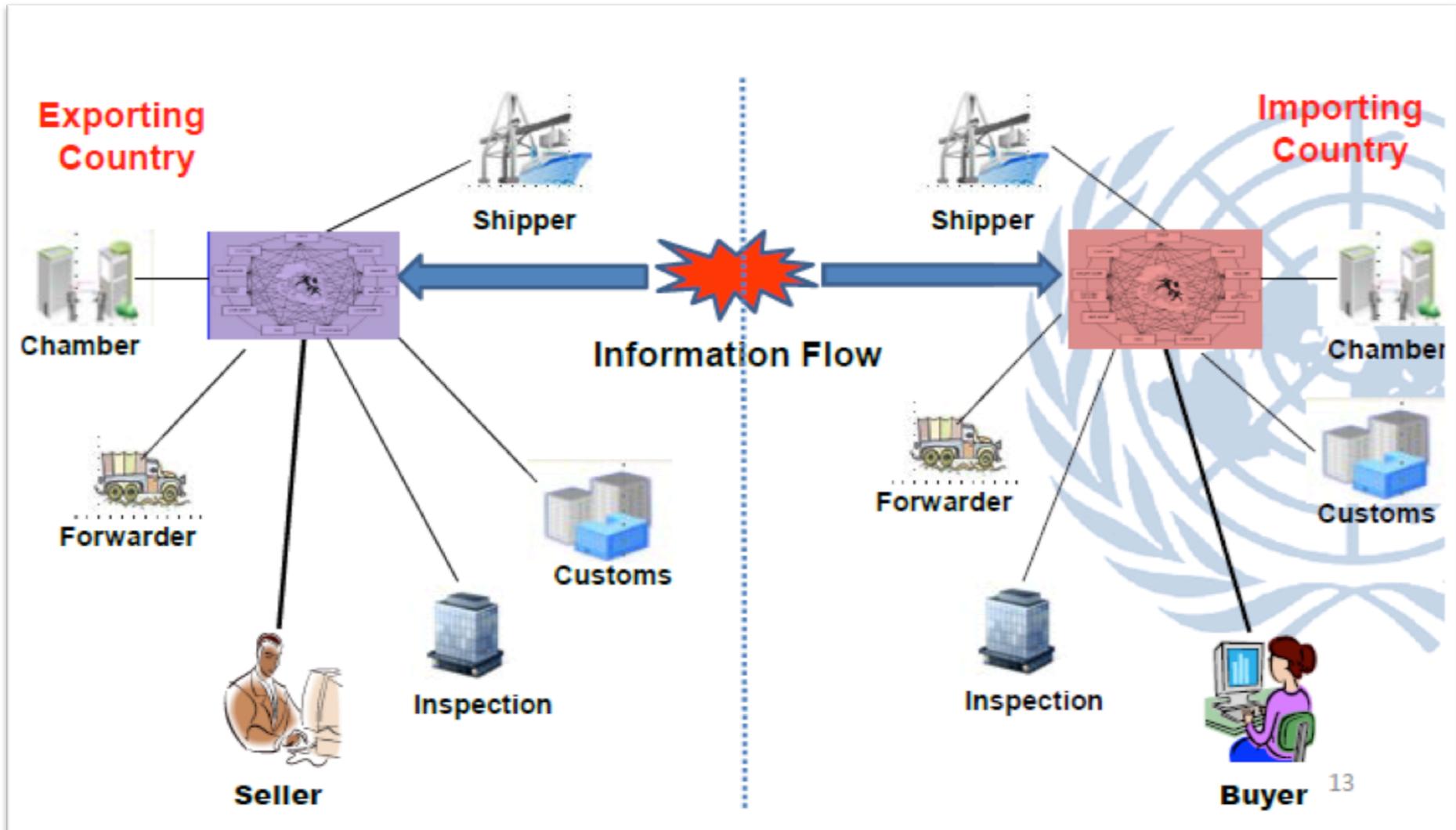


Paperless trade: a key to trade facilitation

- Paperless Trade
 - Conduct of trade activities on the basis of electronic rather than paper documents, *e.g. electronic Customs declaration, electronic cert. of origin* (application of e-commerce to international trade domain)
- Paperless Trade Systems
 - Legal/regulatory and technical frameworks in which paperless trade transactions take place *e.g. electronic Single Window facility, e-port management systems, Framework Act on Electronic Transaction (in Korea)*



Cross-border flow of information in need of further facilitation



Benefits of paperless trade

Governments	Private sector
Effective and efficient deployment of resources	Cutting cost through reducing delays
Correct revenue yield	Faster clearance and release
Improved trade compliance	Predictable application and explanation of rules
Enhanced security	Effective & efficient deployment of resources
Increased integrity & transparency	Increased transparency

Paperless trade measures

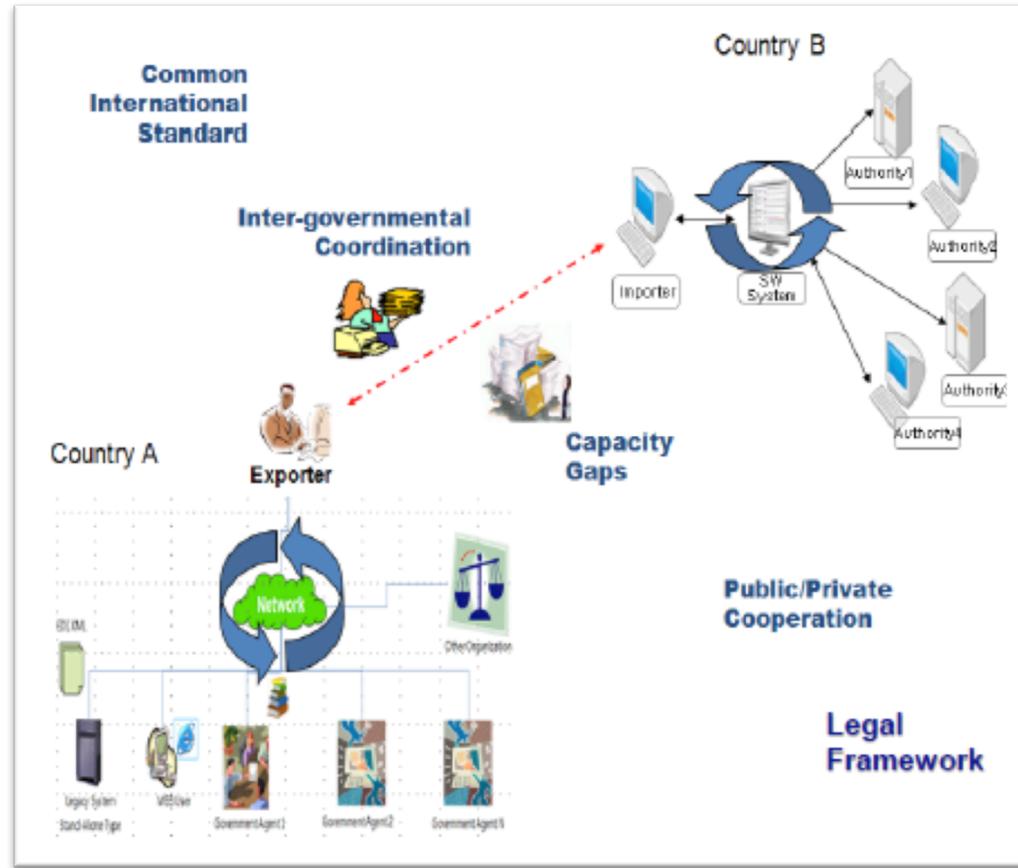
Paperless trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Electronic/Automated Customs System established (e.g., ASYCUDA)• Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies at border-crossings• Electronic Single Window System• Electronic submission of Customs declarations• Electronic Application and Issuance of Trade Licenses• Electronic Submission of Sea Cargo Manifests• Electronic Submission of Air Cargo Manifests• Electronic Application and Issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin• E-Payment of Customs Duties and Fees• Electronic Application for Customs Refunds
Cross-border paperless trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Laws and regulations for electronic transactions are in place (e.g. e-commerce law, e-transaction law)• Recognized certification authority issuing digital certificates to traders to conduct electronic transactions• Engagement of the country in trade-related cross-border electronic data exchange with other countries• Certificate of Origin electronically exchanged between your country and other countries• Sanitary and Phytosanitary Certificate electronically exchanged between your country and other countries• Banks and insurers in your country retrieving letters of credit electronically without lodging paper-based documents

Towards cross-border paperless trade: Review of initiatives

Type		Countries/Economies/Cases
National	Single Window (in Operation)	Azerbaijan, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, India,
	Single Window (under development)	All other ASEAN countries, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Turkey, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, China
	Other Paperless Trade Systems	Maldives e-customs
		China's e-ports
Bilateral Initiatives		Digital trade and transport network (DTNN) of Hong Kong
		Pakistan's web-based one customs (WeBOC)
		Electronic Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (e-SPS) exchange between Australia and New Zealand
Subregional Initiatives		Electronic exchange of preferential certificate of origin among ASEAN members
		Electronic certificate of origin between Korea and Taiwan
		ASEAN Single Window
		Pan Asian e-commerce alliance (PAA)
	SASEC Customs data exchange	
	Euroasian economic union	

Challenges to moving forward on cross-border paperless trade

- Adoption of common International Standards
- Harmonization of legal frameworks
- Capacity gaps among the parties (infrastructure & HR)
- Cooperation between public and private sectors
- Lack of intergovernmental coordination mechanism



Why BBIN paperless cross-border trade?

- Rising intra-BBIN trade
- Each BBIN countries fully/partly has introduced national single window or customs automation
- Two LLDCs depend on India for 3rd country trade
- High export gain in terms of time savings and costs reduction
- Interoperability of digital interfaces of BBIN countries needed
- BBIN countries have been taking steps to establish a national policy framework for paperless trade.
- Bangladesh signed UN Framework Agreement of Paperless Trade
- BBIN countries may enter into an agreement to promote paperless cross-border trade – **BBIN Paperless Trade Agreement (BBIN PTA)**

BBIN PTA

- *Objective:* to promote cross-border paperless trade by enabling the exchange and mutual recognition of trade related data and documents in electronic form and facilitating interoperability among national and sub-regional single windows and/or other paperless trade systems, for the purpose of making international trade transactions more efficient and transparent while improving regulatory compliance.

BBIN PTA – an outline

- Functional equivalence
- Non-discrimination of the use of electronic communications
- Technological neutrality
- Promotion of interoperability
- Improved trade facilitation and regulatory compliance
- Cooperation between the public and private sectors
- Improving trans-boundary trust environment
- Cross-border mutual recognition
- Capacity building
- Dispute settlement
- Institutional arrangements
- Action plan
- Pilot project and sharing of lessons learned

Next steps

- Share the background paper to coordinating ministry (MEA)
- Agenda in the next round of BBIN JWG meeting
- Draft Framework Agreement of BBIN PTA to be circulated among member countries
- Negotiation
- Signature
- Ratification
- Establishment of BBIN Paperless Council or continue with existing NTFC

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Dr. Lailufar
Yasmeen, Professor, Department of
International Relations, University of Dhaka**

Session II – Transport and Multimodal Connectivity (Roadways, Railways, Waterways, Railways and Aviation)

Dr. Lailufar Yasmeen, Professor, Dept. of International Relations, University of Dhaka and Deputy Director (Research), Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILLA)

Dr. Yasmeen presented her speech through the lens of an international relations scholar. Before talking about the sub-regional initiatives, she recognised the need to deal with the concerns of individual countries and the sensitivities of international issues that arise. She remarked that mistrust among countries in South Asia was very high and thus, the ability for the countries to cooperate becomes difficult. Thus, Dr. Yasmeen was of the view that the roundtable discussions should not only include bureaucrats and officials, but people affected by such decisions should also be included.

Stressing upon the importance of connectivity, she highlighted the fact that connectivity has become the “mantra of the decade”. Connectivity will take place at a rapid scale just like the arms race of the 20th century. With connectivity, there was the also the issue of imbalance between India and Bangladesh because of size, topology and geography among others.

Dr. Yasmeen also urged the countries to modify and put in place existing agreements before drafting new ones. For instance, she spoke on need to revive the highway agreements in place among the SAARC members rather than drafting new ones. She also stressed upon the prospects of sustainable development and explained how it would benefit the entire region.

Two challenges highlighted by Dr. Yasmeen were the scarcity of resources and the bureaucratic challenges in the initiative. She was of the view that the political wing has the vision but the bureaucratic wing has failed in cooperating to implement the agreements.

She concluded by posing a question as to how could the countries of the region re-establish trust. A lack of cooperation is the primary obstacle and a lot of initiatives have been identified but have not materialized due to the lack of trust.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Paper and Presentation by Mr. Pratim Ranjan Bose,
Deputy Editor and Chief of Bureau, Hindu Business Line**

Need for taking a fresh look at BBIN transport agreements with focus on multimodal transport and containerisation

Pratim Ranjan Bose¹

Introduction:

In a globalised economy, connectivity is key to economic prosperity. On a cross-border scale, connectivity enhances scope of trade of goods and services, helping create economic value chain and wider marketplace.

Connectivity is not the only way to growth. But there is little argument that time and cost-efficient logistics, aimed at serving specific economic needs, opens up opportunities for growth. Cheaper and better air connectivity, for example, is an attribute to India's thriving medical tourism sector that has grown by more than 200 per cent between 2013 and 2016. With an estimated annual traffic of 5.4 million, growing by 25% a year, Indians are one of the world's largest high-spending outbound tourist class² but connectivity, or lack of it, plays a role in deciding why Indian tourists should go to Bangkok and bypass Yangon.

The context gets more complex and when it comes to goods trade. Except for very high value commodities or products, air has little or no role to play here. The available options for the trade are sea, road, rail and in the case of BBIN countries – which share common boundary with India - inland waterways (IWT). All studies indicate, IWT is the cheapest mode of transport on per km-tonne basis, followed by sea, rail, and road. There is, however, a difference in their functionality. The road transport, for example, offers door-to-door services while the rest three are line-haul solutions, transporting goods between terminals, which should be connected by other logistics options like rail, road or IWT.

In BBIN perspective, Bhutan and Nepal are landlocked. They don't have railways and, IWT potential is low due to geography. However, two largest BBIN economies - India and Bangladesh - have all options open before them.

Yet, the nearly \$6 billion India-Bangladesh trade is largely road-based and non-containerised. The advantage of container lies in easy transshipment. According to Indian customs authorities, not a single container crossed the Petrapole-Benapole land border - which alone handles more than 50 per cent of the bi-lateral trade - in September 2017.

Lack of containerisation coupled with absence of motor-vehicles pact, for allowing seamless traffic, lead to loading and unloading of goods at the border gates. This in turn, contributes to congestion, higher turnaround time for vehicles servicing trade and higher costs. How costly is this arrangement? One report³ points out that the border congestion alone costs approximately 2% of the average road consignment value of Rs 1 crore at Petrapole-Benapole border.

The cost of road transportation keeps rising inside Bangladesh as the country restricts axel-load for trucks at 8.2 tonne as against 10 tonne in India, Nepal and Bhutan.

There are at least three regional transport studies by the World Bank⁴, SAARC⁵ and BIMSTEC⁶ and all of which are unanimous that the trade demands cheaper and better logistics options to grow. BIMSTEC study pointed out that rail movement of the cargo from India's Western coast to Bangladesh could have been 35% cheaper when compared to the sea freight via-Singapore or

¹ Pratim Ranjan Bose is a senior journalist and the Chief of Kolkata bureau of *The Hindu Business Line*, in India.

² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/edfuller/2017/03/14/ignore-india-at-your-peril/#f294af942258>

³ <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/at-this-indobangla-border-gate-free-trade-flows-24x7/article9799224.ece>

⁴ Forging Subregional links in Transportation and Logistics in South Asia, 2001.

⁵ SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study (SRMTS), 2006.

⁶ Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS), 2008.

Colombo. (The cost comparisons might have change after India and Bangladesh started direct maritime trade in 2016⁷.)

What is true for Bangladesh is partly true for Nepal and Bhutan. Barring third-country imports through Indian ports of Kolkata, Haldia and Visakhapatnam; there is very little container traffic and, road movement dominates trade. However, Nepal and Bhutan have existing treaties with India to allow movement of vehicles inside each other territories under some conditions. Indian Rail also carries cargo to Birgunj dry-port on the Nepalese side. Bhutan is not connected by Rail and is entirely dependent on road cargo for both bilateral trade with India or transshipment through India.

India and Bangladesh run passenger train services. However, in the absence of a rail protocol, and mismatch in gauge and rolling stock, coupled with load restrictions on Jamuna Bridge (over Padma river) that connects the Eastern and Western Bangladesh; there is no direct freight train service between the two nations. Officially bi-lateral rail cargo moves through three interchange points (Gede-Darshana, Singhabad-Rohanpur and Petrapole-Benapole) of which Gede-Darshana is the largest in terms of traffic. But the quantum of rail cargo is a fraction of the total trade⁸.

The 2008 BIMSTEC study found approximately 10% of total trade moving by rail riding on primarily Bangladesh's rice imports from India. The share of rail cargo declined in the following years as Bangladesh had cut down on rice imports since 2012; bilateral trade doubled between 2006-07 and 2015-16 and; the Bangladesh Railway went on losing cargo to road. Currently rail is used mostly for carrying stones (used in construction) and other mined commodities and, limited quantity of petroleum products exported from India. There is no return traffic from Bangladesh.

India and Bangladesh do have an inland water transport and transit treaty. In 2012 the Bangladesh government withdrew the monthly renewal restriction on the protocol to give it a relatively long term status. Further the scope of transit was expanded by including Ashugunj port near Tripura. But neither the transit nor bi-lateral trade through IWT has picked up due to long travelling time and rudimentary facilities. The Inland waters are now mostly used for exporting fly-ash (a thermal power generation residue) from India to Bangladesh (Mongla Port) for possible use in land-filling.

Part-A

BBIN Rail protocol

Given this background BBIN nations are now looking for road, rail and IWT pacts following the SAARC template.

Of the three, BBIN motor vehicles agreement (MVA) was drafted as early as in 2015 to ensure seamless movement of traffic. However, it could not be translated into an agreement so far due to last minute pullout of Bhutan from the deal.

Next in line is the railway protocol. Unlike the MVA, the rail protocol will largely be an affair involving India and Bangladesh and is expected to undergo less complexity.

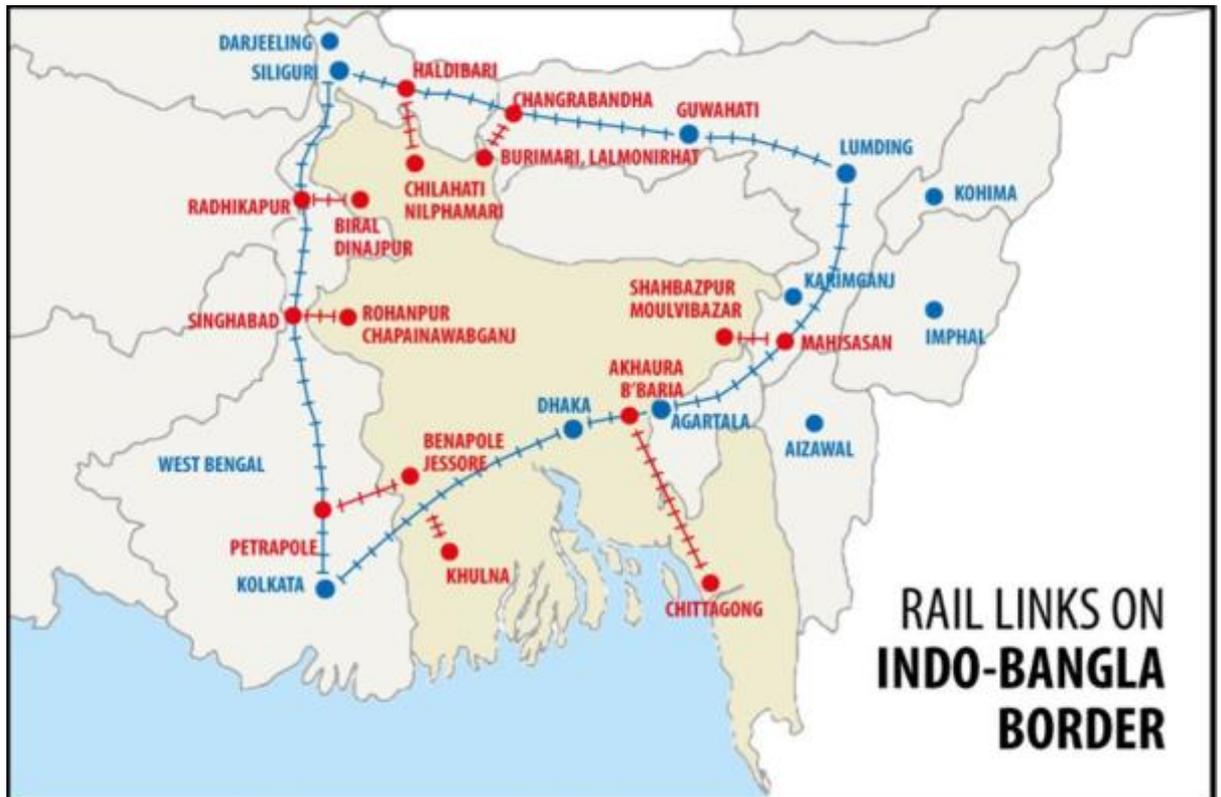
Keeping in tune with the Trans-Asian Railway Network proposed by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP); the SAARC negotiations and; the bilateral dialogue between India and Bangladesh; six rail connections are proposed between India and Bangladesh. Of the total three are operational and work is initiated on the rest.

The existing Singhabad-Rohanpur rail-link is identified for transit traffic (through India) from Bangladeshi ports to Nepal. The line will connect Nepal at Birgunj and Biratnagar, by Indian Railways, and can be used either for Nepal-Bangladesh bilateral trade or Nepal's third country imports using Bangladeshi ports (Mongla and Chittagong). The Chilahati-Haldibari link will help connect Bhutan, as

⁷ <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/first-direct-box-vessel-to-bangladesh-sets-sail-from-krishnapatnam-port/article8406188.ece>

⁸ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/eye-on-more-goods-export-to-bdesh/articleshow/58136617.cms>

and when India builds the proposed rail connectivity to Bhutan. An Indian Railway project is pending in this regard.



(Map Source: Dhaka Tribune, Bangladesh)

A line connecting Akhaura in Bangladesh will pass through Sabroom in Tripura to Chittagong Port in Bangladesh. It will help North Eastern States of India to access the Chittagong port. The Gede-Darshana route will connect Eastern and North Eastern India through Dhaka and should act as the primary route for bilateral trade by rail. The connection through Petrapole will lead to Mongla, where Bangladesh is building an SEZ to host potential Indian FDI (foreign direct investment). According to the World Bank study, Mongla is the lowest draft (4 metre, 7.5 metre at the anchorage) river port in the region. Naturally India has little reason to use it. The line will therefore help meet the potential industrial demands of the region and export cargo from Bangladesh to India, if any.

It is expected that typical to the draft-MVA, the Railway Agreement would not allow cabotage and will restrict port connectivity to third-country import needs of Nepal and Bhutan and India's North Eastern States. Ideally, the BBIN treaty should have offered Bangladesh access to Indian ports on the East coast - especially the efficient deep-sea ports like Dhamra and Paradip in Odisha, barely 500 km from Kolkata – to boost industrial activities in the Western and Northern Bangladesh which currently enjoy limited connectivity with the Southern and the Eastern parts of the country. However, Bangladesh is yet to place any such demand.

The question is: Should the BBIN rail connectivity agreement be enough to reduce trade costs and expand the scope of cross-country value chain?

Even if signed, there are some serious question marks over the on-ground success of BBIN MVA in the face of opposition from truckers lobby. The Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) which took pioneering effort in this direction in South Asia is still struggling to solve this puzzle.

Ideally, rail is a solution to decongest road traffic. However, considering the slow progress of various rail connectivity projects (including those constructed under Indian development cooperation), should the Rail agreement bring any reprieve to trade in the immediate future? Entering into a comprehensive multimodal deal is theoretically a better option than signing the

piecemeal agreements. But will it be a success in the current status of infrastructure gaps especially in Bangladesh?

More importantly, despite availability of rail, the bilateral trade between India and Nepal is still dominated by road. Bangladeshi trade is now fully geared to bulk movement by road. What is the surety that they will move to rail and, how can we make it happen?

The next part of the paper, will analyse these questions from the perspective of reducing logistics costs on a priority basis. The focus will be on goods movement between India and Bangladesh as this is the backbone of the BBIN trade.

PART-B

Need for a comprehensive plan to lower trade costs in the short and medium term

As the biggest economy and a net exporter to the sub-region, India has maximum interest in reducing trade costs with neighbours. The pioneering initiative was taken by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government (1998-2004) in early 2001. The rail link of Petrapole-Benapole border (2001) and rail connection to the Nepalese gate of Birgunj (2006) - aided with Inland Container Depot (ICD) and dry-port facilities - are some of the positive outcomes of these move.

Of the two, the Birgunj facility is the most important, as it paved way for direct rail transfer of containers and bulk cargo to Nepal by Indian Railways. Bangladesh didn't agree to this arrangement. Accordingly, Indian Railway takes rakes to the Indian side of the Petrapole-Benapole border from where wagons are handed over to Bangladesh. A decade later, Petrapole rail-link stands grossly underutilised and Nepalese facility is a partial success. A quick look at the reasons behind, will give important insights into the next course of action.

Understanding the existing rail transport dynamics to Nepal and Bangladesh: According to inputs received from Indian Consulate in Birgunj, the Birgunj ICD and Railways; as in 2016-17, nearly 60% of the containerised third-country import by Nepal - worth nearly \$3 billion – through Kolkata, Haldia and Vizag ports were handled by railways.

In the \$4 billion bilateral trade; railways shares nearly 60 per cent of the traffic of iron and steel. Dirty-cargo exports to Nepal - like coal, fly-ash, mined products and clinker, (used by cement grinding and packing units) – mostly move by rail. But this apart, **the share of rail cargo and containerised cargo is minimal in Indo-Nepal bilateral trade. The overall share of Rail traffic, in the combined transit and bilateral trade, is estimated at 25%⁹.**

To analyse the trend, containerisation is a compulsion in maritime trade. But, **the entire transit cargo is not moving by rail** for the following reasons:

1) Absence of rail connectivity to Nepalese gates other than Birgunj. Containers headed for Biratnagar, in South-West Nepal, for example travel by road. The **proposed Jogbani-Biratnagar rail connectivity will solve this puzzle.** Inclusion of multi-modal logistics clause for transit cargo and creation of container handling facility at the Indian gates, most of which are connected by rail is also an available option to increase share of rail freight in transit cargo.

2) Haldia and Kolkata port suffers from inefficient container handling practices, leading to delays and associated costs forcing a section of users to use road option.

3) Container Corporation or CONCOR has the monopoly right to carry rail consignments to Birgunj ICD. And, Nepalese importers accuse them of overcharging. CONCOR, however, argues that the trade (both bilateral and transit) being highly one-sided, they bear extra costs in returning empties. In the absence of competition and considering the inefficiency in Indian Railways (which runs cargo rakes at an average speed of 15 km/hour¹⁰ on this route); such allegations should be taken into cognizance and be explored.

⁹ Based on inputs from Indian Consulate in Birgunj, Nepal.

¹⁰ Forging Subregional links in Transportation and Logistics in South Asia, 2001. Pg-38

In the bilateral trade, rail is used for carrying voluminous cargo, as it is highly sensitive to logistics cost. According to the World Bank study¹¹, logistics costs 119% of the cargo value of limestone for 786 km road travel. On the contrary, logistics is only 44% of cargo value after 1535 km rail movement of cement. This perfectly explains why steel produced in Bhilai in India should take rail to cover 933 km to Birgunj. Also there are environmental restrictions in India on road travel of dirty cargoes, like coal, beyond 50 km.

Noticeably, beyond bulky cargoes imported by large industries, the **rail is barely used in Indo-Nepal trade. The share of containerisation is very low either on rail or road in bilateral trade. The reasons are the following:**

1) Indian Railways that doesn't accept consignments less than a full rake. (It has been nearly a decade or more Indian Rail stopped carrying parcel or wagon loads and wound up the marshalling yards.). Naturally **smaller importers have little option to use rail.**

2) CONCOR doesn't run scheduled services to Birgunj for bi-lateral trade, which means a consumer have to wait till CONCOR gets all 90 containers to fill a rake. No trader accepts this uncertainty. Also, neither **CONCOR nor Indian Rail offer any door-to-door service.** All this put together makes containerised movement by rail unattractive. Even Indian companies, like Dabur, having operations in Nepal rarely use rail for goods movement between India and Nepal.

3) There is no ready reference on the reasons behind low containerisation in India-Nepal road traffic. Ideally, the cost of container movement is higher than break bulk. But that is compensated by lower wastages of cargo and an overall savings. In India, use of containers is rising even in cement transportation. But the trend is completely missing in Indo-Nepal (and Indo-Bangla) trade. This is either due to lack of market making exercise or due to unexpectedly low savings in containerised trade. It would be time to explore the reasons.

To put it straight, Nepalese importers are forced to use the costly but more flexible road transport, which in turn is impacting competitiveness of Indian exports. The negative impacts may be felt if China offers a more competitive transport option to Nepal.

Like Nepal, Bangladesh too shows interest in taking mined material by train. Also, the trade is dominated by smaller players who cannot afford hiring a full rake. To add to the problem, unlike Nepal, Indian railways has minimal commercial interest in running cargo services to Bangladesh, in the existing form, because rake once entering Bangladesh takes a long time to return, due to capacity and system mismatch (starting from rolling stock like wagons, couplings, signalling to gauge). Containerisation has little role to play here. The axel-load restriction in Bangladesh ensures that containers are unloaded at the border. Also there is no container handling infrastructure at the border.

BBIN rail agreement and the issues involved

Bangladesh is currently witnessing major investment in improving rail infrastructure, including a host of projects under Indian development cooperation programme. The New Padma Bridge, which is scheduled for completion in end-2018, will ensure rail connectivity across the country. If all the projects are completed in time; seamless traffic will be a reality in next two to three years. And; discussions for BBIN Rail agreement are so far built on that premises. As an immediate measure, India and Bangladesh are also preparing¹² to run a container train between Kolkata and the main consumption centre in Dhaka. As per the plan, the two countries are negotiating ways to run the

¹¹ Forging Subregional links in Transportation and Logistics in South Asia, 2001. Pg-53.

¹² <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/india-bangladesh-to-pilot-freight-train-service-in-august/article9766111.ece>

freighter at less than optimal load to negotiate the current load restrictions on Jamuna Bridge. The Indian Rail Board has already entrusted CONCOR for the job.

However, there are question marks over the success of both the multilateral and bilateral rail connectivity initiatives in the immediate future:

1) To start with, there are serious concerns, if the proposed projects in Bangladesh will be completed in time. None of the BBIN countries have reputation in timely project completion. And, the records of Bangladesh are poor. If the latest media reports from Bangladesh are correct, majority of key rail projects are suffering inordinate delays¹³. Many projects under the Indian line of credit in 2010, are far from complete¹⁴. The Khulna-Mongla rail link which was scheduled for completion in 2018, is only 31% complete. The link is vital for Nepal to use Mongla port. Similarly the key 120 km Chittagong-Cox's Bazar link is 20% complete.

2) There are question marks over the technical feasibility of the bilateral initiative to run container train over Jamuna Bridge. The subject is long pending and the BIMSTEC study in 2008 didn't find much hope.

3) As is mentioned, the current goods train services between India and Bangladesh are economically unviable. It is not yet clear if the proposed BBIN and bilateral rail connectivity proposals are backed by a viability plan.

The trade in the region is heavily one-sided. Against a \$6 billion Indi-Bangla trade; Bangladeshi exports is below \$700 million (2016). Nepal's exports stands at \$ 0.9 billion against import of \$6.6 billion¹⁵ (2015). This poses serious challenges to the rail freight service operator, due to return of empty rakes and the associated costs for under utilisation of rolling stock.

Unless India or other other BBIN user countries operate such services under sovereign guarantee, the nature of trade should act as a discouragement to the operator to scale up the operation or the **tariff of such services will be unexpectedly high, thereby impacting the primary agenda of reducing trade costs**. We already have such examples in the Nepal trade.

4) Under bilateral programme India is trying to start container train service to Bangladesh by CONCOR. But the Nepal experience proves that merely offering a service is not enough for containerisation. When compared to Nepal, Bangladesh has a wider import basket. The sourcing points are spread around the country. Logistically it will therefore be more challenging for CONCOR to run such services than carrying third-country imports of Nepal from Kolkata or Vizag to Birgunj. Add to this the potential load restrictions to cross Jamuna Bridge; the cost of running such services will be higher on a per tonne-km basis. Can trade afford it? Unless rail services offer a significant savings on logistics; will trade shift from break-bulk road cargo to containerised rail cargo? The question is important because, trade has full-fledged soft and hard infrastructure at Petrapole-Benapole and needs adequate economic reason to switch over to a new mode.

In short, there are many ifs and buts for the planned initiatives to be successful on ground in the immediate future.

Remedies to solve logistics cost riddle in BBIN trade:

¹³ <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/development/2017/09/22/railways-priority-projects-face-delay-rising-costs/>

¹⁴ [http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/2017/06/17/74063/PMO-reviews-projects-under-Indian-\\$7.36b-LoCs-tomorrow/print](http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/2017/06/17/74063/PMO-reviews-projects-under-Indian-$7.36b-LoCs-tomorrow/print)

¹⁵ Data source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC).

While the effort to establish seamless rail and motor-vehicles movement must go on; the BBIN countries would do better to tap every available opportunity in the immediate term to reduce logistics costs which is win-win for all. Taking a multimodal approach is a justified goal in this regard.

Before listing out options, we should take note of the fact that the Eastern region of India - which is contiguous to other BBIN nations - has low level of participation in the existing formal trade within the sub-region. (They do, however, witness significant exchange of goods and services through the informal channels). This coupled with one-sided nature of trade indicates that goods travel much longer distance (running into thousands of kilometre) within India, when compared to the total journey.

As discussed above, land-border trade is the only option available to Nepal and Bhutan. Theoretically, India-Bangladesh trade could have taken a cheaper sea-route to transfer cargoes originating from the West and Southern India which is dotted with efficient deep-draft sea ports. But the capacity constraint and congestion at Chittagong port in Bangladesh (with available draft of 7.5 metre and 9 metre at the anchorage) limits the practical availability of this option. The problem can be solved once Bangladesh has a deep-sea port. Till then, we have to look at following options:

1) A detailed sub-regional logistics survey is the need of the hour. The three surveys (World Bank, SRMTS and BIMSTEC) having taken a broader view did not get into detailed mapping of cargo potential and specific logistics requirements in the region. This is important to zero in on priority routes and logistics options.

2) **India-Nepal trade** is relatively more organised compared to India-Bangladesh trade. With Biratnagar rail-link under implementation, the priority here is to shift road cargo to rail and focus on containerisation. This needs serious push to Indian Railways and CONCOR to change their monopolistic business model to offer more competitive solutions to trade. Market making require effort and investments. The easy terms offered by Maersk Line on container detention to popularise Vizag port operations to Nepalese traders; is a case in point. It has invited similar offers from other liners connecting Kolkata port.

It is time CONCOR take market risk and present a more competitive model to popularise rail bound container trade in a time bound manner. Removal of freight restrictions, container aggregation from customer's doorstep and running scheduled services on at least one priority line to Nepal is the need of the hour. While CONCOR needs to step up investment in the ICD capacity expansion; Indian railways must invest in decongesting the identified rail corridor to Nepal.

3) **India-Bhutan trade** needs Indian Railways to complete the long pending 30 km link to Bhutan on a priority basis.

4) Private sector must be allowed to throw their hat for future ICD and freight train operations with Nepal and Bhutan to infuse competition.

5) While BBIN rail agreement identifies Singhbad-Rohanpur link for Nepal-Bangladesh trade; a detailed analysis is required to ensure viability of this route vis-a-vis clubbing the transit traffic to proposed India-Bangladesh container train service through Gede-Darshana. Such critical view might help roping in private players in the container train operation.

6) The India-Bangladesh trade is the most complex of the BBIN intra-regional trade in terms of its potential, depth and complexity in logistics options. Naturally it needs in-depth analysis.

a. The existing cargo handling practices of Bangladesh are rudimentary and costly. This is true not only for intra-regional trade but also for Bangladesh's huge exports of readymade garments (RMG), where export consignments move in bulk form production units for containerisation at Chittagong Port. Containers received at the port are also unloaded from the

containers for movement in bulk form. Apart from repeated handling costs, this chokes the port capacity thereby increasing the indirect costs.

On a bilateral-scale RMG raw-material comprises 27% of Bangladesh's total imports from India and there is no through movement of containers; Bangladesh is ending up limiting the price competitiveness of RMG exports and the export potential. The same logic applies to a majority of commodities and goods. (Even liquid Oxygen cylinders which are either used for forging or healthcare are shifted to Bangladeshi vehicles¹⁶. The practice is not only costly but also hazardous).

b. **Harmonisation of axel-load by Bangladesh to encourage containerisation:** The primary reason behind such practices is axel-load restriction in Bangladesh limiting movement of a twenty feet container (TEU) with optimal load. Bangladesh, as mentioned before limits axel load at 8.2 tonne against 10 tonne in India, Nepal and Bhutan. The World Bank logistics report¹⁷ identified the restriction as a major cost attribute to Bangladeshi economy.

More importantly, this restriction is source of two major ills in Bangladeshi trucking industry. The most important of all is overloading. "Trucks carrying bulk cargoes are generally overloaded," World Bank said. The reasons are easy to understand, load restrictions make truck freight expensive naturally they flout norm to remain competitive to users. Another fallout is: It restricts use of modern high capacity multi-axel trucks which are more cost efficient.

The World Bank report anticipated removal of this restriction (bringing harmonisation of standards with other BBIN countries) in 2001.

It is time, Bangladesh relaxes the axel-load restriction to 10 tonne, like other BBIN countries, and impose strict restrictions on over-loading. This single move will pave way for containerisation in intra-regional trade and improve competitiveness of Bangladeshi economy.

c. Even if Bangladesh pegs the axel-load restriction at par with rest of the BBIN countries; the infra-gaps in Bangladesh remains. Harmonisation of standards with Indian Railways and through movement of rail to the consumption centres at Dhaka and Chittagong are uncertain at least in next two to three years. This calls for revisiting the well thought out proposals by SAACR Regional Multimodal Transport Study in 2006 and BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) in 2008 to set up transshipment facility.

Taking a cue from BIMSTEC Study, the 9th Meeting of the Bangladesh-India Joint Working Group¹⁸ on Trade held in Dhaka in March 2014, discussed the possibility of setting up an inter-modal transshipment facility at Ishwardi in Bangladesh that connects Gede-Darshana rain-link. If Set up this could be a highly useful, viable and win-win solution for all. Mechanised operation can complete transshipment operation on a full rake of 90 containers in only 30 minutes Europe. It would have reduced the turnaround of Indian Railway rakes and allowed Bangladesh complete flexibility in deciding on the mode of transport for the import cargo in Bangladesh. It would have also helped

¹⁶ <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/stakeholders-seek-early-implementation-of-bbin-motor-vehicles-agreement/article9549377.ece>

¹⁷ Forging Subregional links in Transportation and Logistics in South Asia, 2001

¹⁸ http://commerce.gov.in/trade/Minutes_9th_Meeting_India-Bangladesh_JWG_Trade_Dhaka_12-13March_2014.pdf

Bangladesh to cut logistics costs on its exports directed to India's Northern, Western and Southern regions.

d. **Inclusion of IWT as multimodal option:** With India government investing nearly a billion dollar in Jal Marg Vikash Project¹⁹ (JMVP) to convert 1380 km National Waterway-I from Varanasi to Kolkata on Ganga into an all-weather fairway capable to carry barges, capable to carry a train load of cargo. It is expected to shift 22 million tonne (mt) road traffic to IWT in 2022 and 45 mt in 2030. This coupled with the ongoing Dedicated Freight Corridor²⁰ project (for rail cargo movement) and the proposed sea port in Tajpur near Haldia is converting Kolkata into a multimodal transport hub with the existing Kolkata and Haldia Port emerging as the country's largest inland port.

BBIN might take full benefit of this infrastructure; if Bangladesh encourages movement of containerisation (as discussed above) and, if BBIN rail agreement connects IWT as a multi-modal option centering Kolkata and connecting, Mongla and other river ports in Bangladesh.

An Indian export cargo for Bangladesh originating in Hyderabad, for example, can take rail route to Kolkata. Those originating in Uttar Pradesh on the other hand can take National Waterway-I to Kolkata. From Kolkata, the export cargo can take any of the three transport modes available.

The possibilities can increase if more river ports in Bangladesh (apart from Mongla) are added to the protocol to take cargo by IWT nearer to the consumption centre in Dhaka.

The success of this approach depends on (A) containerisation and the necessary investments in container handling at Bangladeshi ports and; (B) expanding the scope of cooperation in IWT, where movement is now restricted in daytime leading to long turnaround time, shared responsibility in maintaining the fairway to optimise the prospects of cargo movement.

e) **Inclusion of Multimodal clauses may help Bangladesh tap North Eastern Indian economy better and add viability to container operation:** Apart from developing NW-1, India is also preparing to create a fairway on Brahmaputra (NW-2) from Dhubri on Bangladesh border to Sadia in the Upper and link it with NW-1 through Bangladesh for transit trade. In this direction India is also offering development assistance for river dredging²¹ in Bangladesh. The creation of the fairway will make Guwahati a multimodal hub as it is connected with the rest of the North East by rail and the rail network is expanding in the region.

Bangladesh can clearly tap this opportunity to tap export opportunity in North East via-Guwahati. Allowing cabotage - so that the vessels carrying Indian transit cargo picks up Bangladeshi cargo to India – may bring viability to the trade both in terms of freight operations and lower turnaround time for return empties.

Conclusion: The BBIN sub-region has huge logistics gaps especially between India and the rest of the countries due to legacy issues. It is unwise to expect the gap to be mitigated quickly. Within India there are wide logistics gaps between Eastern Indian states, especially Bihar, and the rest of the country. The domestic politics of the participating country and the existing transport lobbies in

¹⁹ <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/jal-marg-vikas/article9711712.ece>

²⁰ http://dfccil.gov.in/dfccil_app/home.jsp

²¹ <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/bangladesh-dredging/article9711709.ece>

each country are stumbling blocks for quick progress in mitigating the gaps. Under the circumstances, it may be realistic to take phase-wise initiative to cut logistics cost.

Such an approach needs innovative solutions, suited to the ground conditions. This may not be available in any of the regional templates, including the ones provided by SAARC, which took broad spectrum views. Targeting containerisation, investing in transshipment facility and multimodal approach may pave way for enhanced economic activity which is crucial for long term sub-regional cooperation.

Need for taking a fresh look at
BBIN logistics agreements with
focus on multimodal transport
and containerisation

Pratim Ranjan Bose
Chief of Bureau, Kolkata
BusinessLine

Connectivity to Prosperity

- Connectivity is not only way to growth. But one of the essentials to growth.
- Medical Tourism and Tourism has strong connection to air connectivity.
- Indians are high-spending foreign tourists. 5.4 million rising by 25% a year. (Forbes)
- Road/Rail/Maritime/Inland Water – for Goods Trade.
- IWT cheapest on per km-tonne basis, followed by sea, rail, and road.
- Road- door-to-door. Rest Line Haul.

Cost and time efficient logistics

- Regional trade one-way. India has maximum interest in cost reduction.
- India pays 14% of GDP on logistics against 8-9% global average.
- Logistics cost higher for Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan higher.
- Nepal/Bhutan dependent on road. India Bangladesh have all options.
- Road transport cost highest in Bangladesh due to lower 8.2 ton axel-load restriction.
- India-Bangladesh trade logistics inferior to India-Nepal.
- **Minimum containerisation, repeated loading.**

BBIN needs logistics push

- Vehicles can ply between India, Nepal Bhutan under conditions. Not allowed between India-Bangladesh.
- BBIN MVA may face resistance from truckers like GMS.
- BIMSTEC Study - Rail can be 35% cheaper to Maritime between India and Bangladesh (Before direct shipping)
- **Nepal** connected by Rail at Birgunj ICD. Biratnagar connection coming. Road dominates.
 - Transit Cargo: Containerised. 60% Rail
 - Bilateral: Dirty and Bulky cargoes by rail. Minimum containerisation. Low rail share in total.
- **Bhutan** lacks last mile rail connectivity.
- **Bangladesh**– No transshipment facility.
Containerisation minimal. Rail cargo insignificant due to logistics gaps.

BBIN - way to mitigate logistics gap

- BBIN Rail agreement looking to seamless connectivity. Questions on near-term solution as key projects are delayed.
- India-Bangladesh trying to run container train between Kolkata and Dhaka. Technical feasibility concerns.
- Nepal Example: Having Rail connection is no guarantee to containerisation and viability.
- Need for detailed commodity wise logistics mapping. Focus on Containerisation and Multimodal to mitigate logistics gaps.

Recommendations-1

- India-Nepal: CONCOR and IR should run scheduled services to ICDs. IR should find way to take parcel loads. Full rake clause forcing traders to opt road transport.
- Bhutan suffering due to lack of rail connectivity. Include multimodal clause. Set up ICD in Siliguri to make transport cheaper.
- Axle-load restriction is prime hurdle to container movement in Bangladesh. Chocking Chittagong Port, Benapole Land Port.
- World Bank says Bangla truckers flouting to remain competitive. Harmonisation with BBIN and strict imposition of overloading clause is win-win

Reccomendations-2

- Varanasi-Kolkata (NW1)Ganga Jal Marg (fairway), DFC making Kolkata Multimodal hub. Dhubri-Sadia (NW2) development planned.
- Delhi cargo to Bangladesh may take Jal Marg. Hyderabad Cargo can come by rail and take IWT. Bangladesh cargo can take IWT to Guwahati to take Rail to cater rest NE
- Multimodal agreement, containerisation and inclusion of more river ports in Bangladesh can decongest road.
- BIMSTEC proposal for transshipment hub inside Bangladesh valid solution infra gaps in Bangladesh are mitigated.
- Containerisation – A Must.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Mr. Nasir Uddin,
former Commissioner, Benapole, Bangladesh**

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

Mr. Nasir Uddin, former Commissioner, Benapole, Bangladesh

Mr. Nasir Uddin is a former Commissioner of Benapole, Bangladesh. He was the final speaker on the session concerning transit and multimodal connectivity among the BBIN nations. He continued from the observation Professor Prabir De made in his presentation about the customs single window initiated by India. Elaborating further, he remarked that Bangladesh was not lagging in that aspect as it had introduced the ASYCUDA system which also included the implementation of the customs single window.

The pointers discussed earlier on the automation of the system and paperless administration was also addressed and Mr. Nasir Uddin spoke optimistically on the chances of Bangladesh introducing paperless customs. He also made a proposal for Bangladesh and India to work on a joint system on that front as all the necessary infrastructure was already available and no significant costs were required.

Mr. Nasir Uddin also remarked that all four countries have the necessary infrastructure, ships, ports, jetties, equipment, airplanes along with “a good dose” of regulations required for transit and multimodal connectivity. It was now down to the executive class of all four countries to take the benefits of the existing legislation and the system and Mr. Nasir Uddin felt that the benefits were not being taken. Apart from that, there were some other common problems which plagued the region. Although the decisions taken are sound, the implementation and management is problematic.

He also referred to the keynote address by Dr. Mashiur Rahman and stressed on the impressive speech which covered all the topics and issues of the BBIN. Mr. Nasir Uddin wanted BBIN diplomacy to tackle the practical aspects by taking the benefit of the system. He concluded by addressing the pollution aspect of multimodal connectivity and encouraged the use of clean energy, including solar and wind.

Session 3: Energy-Hydropower and Water Resource Management

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Chair's Remarks by Dr. Sajjad Zohir, Executive
Director, Economic Research Group, Bangladesh**

Session III – Energy-Hydropower and Water Resource Management

Chair – Dr. Sajjad Zohir, Executive Director, Economic Research Group, Bangladesh

Dr. Sajjad Zohir chaired the third session of the day on energy-hydropower and water resource management. Before inviting the speakers to present their views, he provided a broad overview of the issues on the topic. Particularly, he was concerned with the regional market prospects for hydroelectricity.

Further, the issue of tying hydroelectricity with water sector management was highlighted. Dr. Zohir urged the economists and engineers to examine the feasibility of the hydroelectricity market in the BBIN region. Also, the issues of contracts were stressed upon. Rather than sharing, Dr. Zohir focused on the need to engage in a viable contract between different segments of population on resource access and use.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Mr. Abu Salah
Yousuf, Senior Research Fellow, BISS**

Session III – Energy-hydropower and Water Resource Management

Mr. Abu Salah Yousuf, Senior Research Fellow, BIISS

Mr. Abu Salah Yousuf, a Senior Research Fellow at BIISS was the first speaker of the third session which focused on energy-hydropower and water resource management. Mr. Yousuf expressed his desire to shed light on water and particularly how the water management issues affected South Asia. His presentation was an attempt to understand how emerging powers settled disputes with the smaller neighbors and he examined the India and Bangladesh water disputes in that aspect.

Speaking through the lenses of realism, Mr. Yousuf explained the regional power dynamics and how issues such as water disputes between an emerging power (India) and its neighbors (Bangladesh) depended on four primary factors, namely domestic complexities, regional realities, strategic calculations and the neighbor's perceived response.

Elaborating on those channels, Mr. Yousuf explained that when two symmetric powers attempt to resolve their disputes, it is a strategically difficult decision driven by internal political power dynamics. He provided the examples of the Doklam crisis of India with China and the Indus Valley water treaty with Pakistan.

However, when a symmetric power like India attempts to tackle its disputes with an asymmetric power (Bangladesh), then those four factors are taken into consideration. Only those issues which are politically and strategically convenient for the symmetric powers will be resolved swiftly. Mr. Yousuf thus explained why the border and the maritime issues between India and Bangladesh were quickly resolved whereas the water issues had stalled.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Dr. Chandan
Mahanta, Prof., Department of Civil Engineering,
IIT Guwahati**

Session III – Energy-Hydropower and Water Resource Management

Dr. Chandan Mahanta, Professor, Dept. of Civil Engineering, IIT Guwahati

Dr. Mahanta began by highlighting the advantages of the Tibetan plateau and stressed the need to view waterbodies through a multidimensional lens rather than having a sectoral view of them.

The interdependency among the BBIN countries in energy-hydropower and water resource management is obvious, given the scope of the navigation agreements in place to bring in equipment for the hydropower initiatives.

Dr. Mahanta also expressed his view on the climate change situation. In India and Bangladesh, millions have been affected by floods and even Bhutan, being a landlocked country has not been spared. Dr. Mahanta recognized the importance of the BBIN platform in addressing the issue including the multi-dimensional aspects of the rivers, starting from the Tibetan plateau and hydrology to the issue of tectonics. He urged the BBIN countries to have a deeper understanding of the hydrology and morphology of the rivers. Over time due to the type of sedimentation, the rivers have been drying up and this has resulted in the depletion of livelihood.

Most people of the region are dependent not only on rivers but also on terrestrial ecosystems, including the swampy areas and the mud lands. Dr. Mahanta urged the BBIN countries to leverage the technology from the future to find a solution to rejuvenate the rivers and revive the ecosystem. Also, a large platform could be created where all the existing data and information can be assembled together and shared among the countries involved.

Dr. Mahanta also commented on the issues of water quality, particularly from the Brahmaputra river which has arsenic. There were plans to clean up the Brahmaputra but they did not deliver and Dr. Mahanta stressed the need to put these plans into retrospection.

He identified a way forward by establishing a system which would integrate all physical and ecosystem services through an inclusive governance framework, operating within the environmental threshold, without compromising any of its functions towards any living entities, through a process of mutual trust, transparency, consensus, knowledge and innovation.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Dr. Enamul Haque,
Prof., East West University, Dhaka**

Session III – Energy-Hydropower and Water Resource Management

Dr. Enamul Haque, Professor, East West University, Dhaka

Dr. Haque stressed the potential of regional issues in the energy-hydropower and water resource management sector. He laid emphasis on the imbalance of the energy capacity in the region providing examples of Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh who possess surplus of hydroelectricity but lacked other kinds of energy.

Predicting a high-energy demand in the region in twenty years' time, Dr. Haque urged the BBIN to adopt a global trade view where the existing autonomy of the states could be diluted in favour of foreign investment, which could help open the economy into an energy trading system. He also stressed that the existing hub of energy trade must be shifted from Singapore to South Asia and eventually to regions of the BBIN, if the full potential is to be exploited. Elaborating on the need to shift the energy base, he also underlined the need to build ports which could serve as auction centers for petroleum and energy within the region. This would also bring in the multi-modal transportation and other kinds of agreements of the BBIN into the fore.

Further, Dr. Haque spoke of the possibilities of dividing the energy sector into different segments which would boost the potential for investment in the region. If a regional entity could be created and the complications gotten rid of, there was a possibility of making energy cheaper in the region. He concluded his speech on a positive note by highlighting the enormous potential in the region and the need to create an integrated route of trade and institutional governance sectors along with ports and other facilities including multi-modal facilities to help realize this potential.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
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**Abstract of Presentation by Dr. Shahab Enam
Khan, Former Chairman, Dept. of International
Relations, Jahangir Nagar University Savar,
Dhaka**

Session III – Energy-Hydropower and Water Resource Management

Dr. Shahab Enam Khan, Research Director, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute and Former Chairman, Dept. of International Relations, Jahangir Nagar University Savar, Dhaka

Acknowledging the efforts of the previous speakers in addressing the political and economic scenario during the session, Dr. Khan began by focusing on the hydro-electricity component and its relevance in the current economic situation of the BBIN. He remarked that the economies today are focusing on shifting the energy policies towards the hydro-power sources by shifting the traditional sources of electricity like coal and hydrocarbon to hydroelectricity and the likes. However, there is a major challenge and Dr. Khan was quick to point towards the case of Bhutan when the infrastructure projects that they undertook to generate hydropower are now facing major setbacks due to not factoring sedimentation in the 2006 and 2010 policies.

Second, he commented on the issues of FDI in the hydroelectric projects. He recognized that the high cost of insurance was because of the tectonic shapes that were taking place along with the glacier lake outward flushes and the sedimentation loads.

Dr. Khan also brought in the question of regional markets. He recognized that there were several regional initiatives that were going on but that they were determined by the government policies rather than the traditional demand and supply chain. He also spoke of the tariff policies and how the asymmetry in tariff policies within different regions of the same country obstructed the sources of hydropower. This is because, the cost of hydropower generation is so high that different tariff policies determined by the political priorities wasn't viable in the long run.

Another issue that was pointed out was that the surplus energy concerns remained. He underlined that all predictions in the energy production and consumption rest on hypothetical assumptions and that factors like topography and political influence were not always taken into consideration. Hence, the overall energy procurement remained tricky.

Dr. Khan concluded by talking about the structural and non-structural interventions required to check climate change. Structural interventions will require heavy cost and non-structural intervention will require political and economic policy decisions where the issues of heavy institutional reforms will be taken into consideration. Dr. Khan was of the view that these reform process were essentially very slow within these countries and even if we saw the hydropower as a viable option, converting to renewable resources remains problematic.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Mr. Sheikh Rokon,
Secretary General, Riverine People**

Session III – Energy-hydropower and Water Resource Management

Mr. Sheikh Rokon, Secretary General, Riverine People

From the perspective of a grassroots organization such as Riverine People, Mr. Sheikh Rokon it's Secretary General decided to focus on three issues, particularly, assessment of water resource; issue of connectivity in energy and wate resource; and the need to consult the public.

Elaborating on the first issue, he was of the opinion that before the water agreements are signed among the BBIN nations, the current water resource availability must be assessed. There are a lot of rivers which cross borders among BBIN. Despite having the energy-hydropower potential, these rivers have not been recognized and no agreements have been reached on them.

On the issue of connectivity in energy and water resource, Mr. Rokon remarked on the Protocol Route One and praised its area inclusion. However, he urged to further explore the existing connectivity by adopting a top-down approach and focusing on the larger protocol agreements which would provide the maximum benefits to all nations.

Lastly, Mr. Rokon was of the view that the public must be consulted. He remarked that the people that fell under the purview of the protocol were hitherto unaware of its fundamentals and that must be reversed.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract and Paper by Dr. Mahfuzul Haque, Former
Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment,
Government of the People's Republic of
Bangladesh**

*DPG Round Table Discussion on Advancing BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation
BRAC Centre Inn, Dhaka, Bangladesh
15-16 October 2017*

Emerging Challenges for BBIN countries in Energy Hydropower and Water Management sectors

Dr Mahfuzul Haque
Adjunct Faculty, Department of Development Studies
University of Dhaka (former Secretary, Government of Bangladesh)

Abstract

In an Indo-centric sub region, the present paper looks into the emerging challenges the BBIN countries are expected to face in the field of energy, hydropower and water management. As opposed to current global drive to shift to renewable energy, the BBIN countries continue to have their base on fossil-fuel based energy, mainly coal. Due to change in legal regime, investment climate exists in some of the BBIN countries for PPP and foreign collaboration. A great prospect of hydropower remains present in the two Himalayan countries subject to adequate funding for undertaking of mega projects. Nuclear power is slowly taking it's due share in the region with provision of nuclear waste management and adequate safety measures. Prospect of renewable energy, mainly solar is promising in the region, requiring constant research and development. Water management is an age-old issue requiring political blessing at the highest level. On disaster risk reduction (floods and cyclones), BBIN countries could play a pivotal role in reducing deaths and damages. Finally, the article concludes that good energy governance, full political commitment and consensus in the parliament are prerequisites to achieving affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for this sub region.

Introduction

To start with perhaps the national priority of the BBIN countries need to be identified reflected in national energy policies of respective countries. For example, Bangladesh is yet to finalize it's energy policy and the country is heading towards a coal-based energy with eight new coal-fired power plants generating 9,700 MW joining the national grid by 2030. In India 73% of electricity is generated by coal-fired power plants (BPDB, 2015). India is increasing its coal production and is the world's third-largest coal producer. By 2020, it is expected to be world's largest coal importer overtaking Japan, the EU and China. (IEA 2015). Although, countries are committed to promoting renewable energy, it is found that fossil fuel based energy gaining momentum in BBIN countries.

With an increase in GDP, demand for energy would continue to increase. Based on 7% GDP, Bangladesh Power Development Board in its Power System Master Plan (PSMP)-2016 predicted requirement of 24,000 MW of electricity by 2021 and 40,000 MW by 2030. PSMP predicts switching over country's dependency from gas to coal, meaning by 2030, 50% of the country's electricity would be generated from coal, which is currently less than 2% only (BPDB, 2016a).

Similarly, demand for energy would increase in other BBIN countries as well. Challenge is how to meet the demand and from which source?

Energy-traditional (Coal)

Traditional coal-based economy continues to run high in energy agenda of BBIN countries. Proposed coal-fired "Bangladesh India Friendship Power Company" at Rampal, Khulna generating 1320 MW is expected to be completed by 2021. The plant facing stiff resistance from civil society, NGOs and environmental activists because of its proximity to the largest mangrove forests, the Sundarbans. Likelihood that the raw material, the coal would be supplied by India through the sea. The other eight power plants in the offing would be run by imported coal, as it is understood. There is always a scope between India and Bangladesh to collaborate on coal, no matter a dirty energy.

Coal-fired plants emit greenhouse gases (SO_x, NO_x) and effluents like fly ash, bottom ash etc (Haque, 2013). How to treat them? Rampal power plant, despite having "Ultra Super Critical" devices, GHG emissions will continue to pollute the environment. How to address this pollution of a coal-fired power plant is a big issue.

Coal although "dirty" is being used massively for generation electricity in many developed and developing countries. Coal as a source of energy is being used by the following countries: Poland: 98%; South Africa: 93%; China: 75%; India: 73%; Australia: 65%; Germany: 46%; USA: 40%; Japan: 32%; Bangladesh: 2%; and Global Average: 41% (BPDB 2016b).

In line with global commitment and adherence to **Paris Climate Agreement 2015** (which committed reduction of CO₂ emission to 350 ppm and a temperature rise not more than 2 degree Celsius above pre-industrial level), BBIN countries are to reexamine their respective energy policies and there could be a common position on this issue.

It could be mentioned here that on climate change negotiation process, India is siding with China, Brazil and South Africa (BASIC). India along with China and USA are among the top-five CO₂ emitting countries of the world (IEA 2009).

Energy-traditional (Nuclear)

In Bangladesh, the first nuclear power plant of 2400 MW of third generation to be installed at Ruppur, Pabna by 2025 with Russian assistance. Safety issue of a Nuclear power plant is extremely important because of presence of radio-active waste and spent fuel waste. In India, nuclear power is the fourth-largest source of electricity after thermal, hydro and renewable sources. There could be joint collaboration between BBIN countries on nuclear safety measures and possibility of export to neighboring countries. Prospect for investment in nuclear energy exists.

Energy-nontraditional (Solar)

Bangladesh's progress in renewable energy is rather slow and modest. Out of a power generation of 9,200 MW (BWDB internet accessed on 27 September 2017), hardly 400 MW is received from solar energy. There are around 4 million solar home system (SHS) all over the country. Prospect of solar power joining the national grid in a big way is rather bleak.

Prospect of other renewable sources of energy like wind energy, wave energy, biogas plants is rather bleak in Bangladesh. India is known for its thriving solar energy sector. Currently, India's solar-generation capacity raised to 12,289 MW in 2017. Perhaps there could be collaboration between and among BBIN countries on research and development on SHS.

Energy-hydropower

On 4/7/17, Bangladesh, India and Bhutan signed a trilateral agreement to build 1125 MW hydroelectricity plant in Bhutan to export power to Bangladesh via India. Bangladesh will invest US\$ 1 billion for the power plant in Bhutan.

We are aware of hydropower potential in Nepal to the tune of 83,000 MW, although, by now, Nepal could harness hardly 680 MW of electricity having load shedding during dry season. There is always a prospect of hydropower export from Nepal to Bangladesh and in the sub-region provided necessary funds are made available for undertaking mega hydro projects.

On the other hand, Bhutan's hydropower potential was assessed at around 30,000 MW with 1480 MW developed so far. Close to 75% of electricity generated in Bhutan is exported to India. Surplus electricity could be shared in the sub-region.

Tipaimukh hydro plant in north-eastern Indian state of Manipur was expected to generate 1500 MW of electricity and it was thought that power would be exported to Bangladesh. Tipaimukh faced resistance from civil society bodies and environmental activists both in Bangladesh and North-eastern India because of likely adverse impacts of the project on the environment. It is learnt that more studies are being conducted to review the project before its construction.

Bangladesh's lone hydro plant generating 230 MW (2% of the country's total generation) remains insignificant and may get redundant considering the socioeconomic costs of the plant. Because of flat terrain, there is a poor prospect of hydroelectricity in Bangladesh. A few rubber dams/mini hydro pilot projects are in progress.

In Bangladesh, except hydropower (230 MW), generation of electricity by SHS remained a staggering 125 MW. Contribution of renewable energy to overall electricity generation is hardly 3.3% only.

Water Resource Management

Historical hiccups continue to exist between Bangladesh and India in water management sector, starting with Farakka barrage, proposed Ganges Barrage and proposed Teesta river agreement. India's river-linking project is another thorny issue affecting the region.

Construction of Ganges barrage in Bangladesh could have been a welcome move reflecting solidarity and goodwill of the Indian government, especially that of the West Bengal government. Technical and financial studies are done. It is understood that the project would benefit both the region in Bangladesh and West Bengal. An effective and collaborative water resource management require political blessings at the highest political level.

On flood forecasting, research collaboration in the region exists, although in an unstructured form. Flood Warning and forecasting centres and national Met offices of Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan could play an important role in sharing of data on weather, rain and river flow pattern in order to lessen damages to floods.

PPP and Energy Investment

Prospect of Private-Public Partnership (PPP) exists in energy sector. In Bangladesh, the present government had to go for “quick rental” to solve immediate power crisis as a contingency measure. Agreements were signed with private plants. Contacts were signed by-passing the Public Procurement Act (PPA) 2006 and new Act was promulgated to avoid litigation.

Opening up of energy sector in Bangladesh to private companies started attracting local and foreign companies.

Power Tariff

Power tariff among the BBIN countries is an important issue requiring serious attention of the policy makers. Because of fluctuation of tariff, cross-border smuggling increases.

Currently in Bangladesh, there is an increasing trend of power tariff of gas and electricity, which would affect the domestic market.

Conclusion

All the BBIN countries are committed to achieving the SDGs. Goal 7 of SDG ensured access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030. BBIN countries would continue to face a daunting challenge of how to bring all population under electricity coverage. For example, in Bangladesh, 30% population (mainly rural) is without access to electricity. In India, more than 20% of its population lacks access to electricity posing a major development challenge. In another study, it was revealed that in 2015, only 55% of all rural households in India had access to electricity, and 85% of rural households depended on solid fuel for cooking. Accessing affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for all could be a big challenge and the BBIN countries could initiate further discussions and collaboration on how to achieve the SDGs.

There is no denying of the fact that good energy governance, full political commitment and consensus in the parliament is necessary for achieving affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for all.

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**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Comments and Observations on Energy-
Hydropower and Water Resource
Management by Dr. M. Nurul Islam, Former
Professor, Chemical Engineering Department
and Institute of Appropriate Technology, BUET**

Session III: Energy-hydropower and Water Resources Management

Comments and Observations of Dr. M. Nurul Islam, Former Professor, Chemical Engineering Department and Institute of Appropriate Technology, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Dhaka, Bangladesh, 15-10-2017

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Participants; at first I would like to convey my gratitude to Ambassador Singh and Ambassador Nanda, Delhi Policy Group and thanks to Dr. Sagar Prasai, the Asia Foundation for inviting me to participate in this round table.

I shall limit my observations to energy issues only. Energy security is considered as a strategic input for the security and development of each country. Every country is cautiously eager to make energy cooperation with other countries. In BBIN region energy cooperation has become a necessity for all the participating countries. In the opening session, Honorable High Commissioner of India, His Excellency Harsh Vardhan Shringla has highlighted various energy cooperation agreements between India and Bangladesh. I am sure that India also has similar cooperative arrangements on energy issues with Bhutan & Nepal. In the above context appropriate title of the session could have been Energy and Water Resource Management; not limited to hydropower energy only. There is no doubt that, in future hydropower development of Bhutan, (North-East of) India and Nepal would help all the four countries of the BBIN sub-region. Because of global concern on the nexus between fossil fuels and climate change, hydropower is generally considered a favourable candidate for energy development. In Bangladesh, development of only 230MW of hydropower at Kaptai in 1960s created negative impacts on environment and economic situation on the people of Chittagong Hill Tracts due to inundation of human settlement and agricultural lands. I feel that the negative environmental issues of hydropower development in the BBIN Region would be given due consideration. Energy tariff would be an important agenda for discussion between the seller and the buyer of energy; but it can be solved through negotiation. If we consider various issues discussed in other sessions positively, then energy cooperation agreement would be more acceptable to all the countries of the BBIN sub-region for their mutual benefits.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
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**Abstract of Remarks on Energy-Hydropower and Water
Resource Management by Dr. Mohammad Tamim, Prof.,
PMRE Department and Former Special Assistant to the
Chief Advisor, Department of Petroleum and Mineral
Resource Engineering**

Session III – Discussant

Dr. Mohammad Tamim, Professor, PRME Department and Former Special Assistant to the Chief Advisor, Department of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Engineering

Dr. Tamim concluded the third session of the day with an insightful discussion on the potential of energy-hydropower and water resource management. He acknowledged the speeches of all participants and shed light on whether the claim about a reduction in cost to avail renewable energy in the form of wind and solar energy was viable.

Referring to the speeches made prior to the discussion, he perceived apprehension among the speakers regarding the work done in the field of energy-hydropower and water resource management of the BBIN nations. Hence, Dr. Tamim's first proposal was to aggregate all information on the topic available in a repository. He also urged the nations to adopt a bottoms-up rather than a top-down approach as only by producing results at the micro level could a change in the macro level be brought about.

On an optimistic tone, he recognized the ongoing relationship between India and Bangladesh particularly in their cross-border electricity initiative that provides impetus for increased power trading in South Asia.

Dr. Tamim also suggested that the participants consider water irrigation potential and techniques among the BBIN nations in further discussions remarking that water irrigation, particularly for Bangladesh is of paramount importance.

He concluded by re-emphasizing the bottoms-up approach, opining that the issues the panelists have spoken about would bear fruit, but the process will be slower than most people anticipate. He also urged participants to continue to work on those guidelines.

Session 4: People to People Connectivity through multi-sectoral Engagement

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Chair's Remarks by Ambassador H.K.
Singh, Director General, Delhi Policy Group**

Session IV – People to People Connectivity through multi-sectoral Engagement

Chair: Ambassador H.K. Singh, Director General, Delhi Policy Group

The Chair for the fourth and final session of Day One on people to people connectivity was Ambassador H.K. Singh, Director General of the Delhi Policy Group. Ambassador Singh viewed people to people connectivity as being the most important element of the sub-regional initiative among the four countries. All other elements ultimately lead to the necessity of such a connectivity to be in place. He also expressed his appreciation for the identification of a matrix of three priority issues for people to people relations and how to make them function on three legs.

The first leg was in relation to transport and border-interchange places which are properly sponsored including the presence of medical camps, food festivals, handicrafts, among others. The second area which was identified was the tourism circuit. It was a variable geometry circuit because it included religious tourism and wildlife tourism. Finally, the third leg focused on academic and media exchanges.

With those points, he invited each speaker to provide their insights and explore the future possibilities of the topic under discussion.

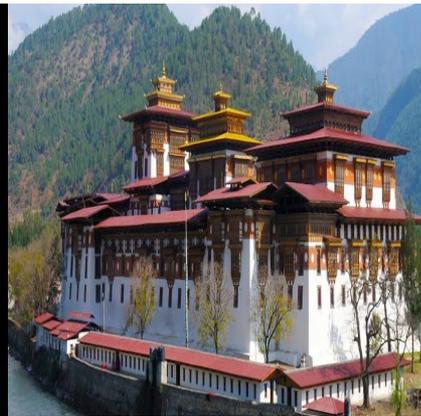
**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
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15-16, 2017**

**Presentation made during Special Address by Mr.
Akhtaruz Zaman Khan, Chairman, Bangladesh
Parjatan Corporation**

Making Tourism the Leading Sector for BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation



Cox's Bazar



Punakaha



Golden Temple of Amritsar



Himalaya

Akhtaruz Zaman Khan Kabir
Chairman
Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation

Preface



- The present era witnesses a strong regional integration across the globe for sustainable economic growth.
- Given that tourism industry is an effective tool for poverty reduction, job creation and economic prosperity, it is becoming an important tool for regional development as well as enhancing regional cooperation.

Contd.



- A conducive regional cooperation always helps tourism for a proper boost up.
- There are glaring examples in the world that some regions and sub-regions are promoting tourism with their common culture and heritages. European Union and Mekong Region and Baltic Regional Co-operations until now are arguably the best examples across the world for regional tourism growth.
- Here no need to mention the names of South Asia and South America and Scandinavian regions.

Unique Cultural Diversity



- The cultural diversity of the BBIN is unique. When we combine the scenic landscapes, natural beauty, and ethnic multiplicity of this region, it becomes an unparalleled tourism common tourist destination of the world.
- It is widely known that South Asia region is the home of all the major religions. This region is proud of possessing the world's highest peaks - The Mount Everest. We have world's largest mangrove forest - the Sundarbans and world's longest sea beach - Cox's Bazar. India has the most romantic and marvelous icon - Tajmahal and Ajanta. Bhutan is a country of the world's most serene nature and biodiversity.

Present Tourism Scenario

- However, despite having all the strength and geographical advantages, the regional tourism growth in terms of arrivals and earnings are yet low and remains mostly unexplored in compare to other regions.
- The global share of tourism in this region is only 1.5% though growth rate is around 4% (2015).
- It is also perceived that community involvement in tourism is not quite satisfactory.

Tourist Arrivals in South Asia

(Data in '000)

Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Bhutan	66	105	116	134	155
India	6309	6578	6968	7679	8027
Maldives	931	958	1125	1205	1234
Nepal	736	803	798	790	555
Pakistan	1161	966	-	-	-
Sri Lanka	856	1006	1275	1527	1798
Bangladesh	155	125	148	125	600

Connectivity for Tourism

- This region is also yet to make optimal utilization of its geographical location for tourism growth through establishing multimodal connectivity.
- Multi-modal connectivity for the regional growth of tourism is sine-quo-non. Air-connectivity among the BBIN member countries is gradually increasing.
- Bangladesh and India has put in effort to make land connectivity.



Maritime Connectivity

- However, road, rail and marine connectivity are yet to reach the satisfactory level. River connectivity between and among the member states also need to be expedited. Maritime connectivity is yet to be explored fully.

SEMINAR ON DOING
BUSINESS WITH BANGLADESH

3

Launch connectivity initiatives for expansion of sub-regional cooperation among BBIN (Bhutan - Bangladesh - India - Nepal) to cover links through road, rail, rivers, sea, transmission lines, petroleum pipelines & digital.



Contd.

- Bangladesh has rail and bus connectivity with India. There is also a river-protocol between Bangladesh and India. The land connectivity among Bangladesh, Nepal and India is on progress.
- Bangladesh has maritime agreement with India and some other non-SAARC member countries. If we can enhance connectivity through multi-modal transports, the movement of regional tourists to each member states will increase many-fold.



Multi-modal Transport for Tourism



- Many studies reveal that the intra-regional multi-modal transport connectivity in Europe has provided foundational support to tourism growth. This experience could be a great source of encouragement of this BBIN region for tourism development.
- The member states of the BBIN may reach consensus for the development of regional road and rail corridors, which may help sustainable growth of tourism besides trade and commerce.

Collaboration between BBIN and BIMSTEC



BIMSTEC



- For the development of regional tourism, some visible programmes may be organized bilaterally, trilaterally or multilaterally among the member states of BBIN and BIMSTEC. The programmes may include package tours, river cruises, car rallies etc.
- In addition, direct flight connectivity has to be enhanced to the major cities of this region.

Initiative for specific programmes

S/N	Programmes	Region/Countries
1	Package Tour	Among the BBIN member countries
2	Cross Country River Cruise	Bangladesh-India
3	Yearly Car Rally	Nepal, India, Bhutan, Bangladesh
4.	Adoption of regional project on Poverty Alleviation through Tourism	Bangladesh-India-Nepal-Bhutan
5.	Preparation of lists with unique tourism products and Marketing	BBIN
6	Formation of a BBIN tourism development fund	BBIN member countries
7.	Common Marketing Initiative of the common heritages	Bangladesh-India, Nepal-Bhutan
8.	Observe BBIN Cultural Night	BBIN

RECONNECTING THE NORTH-EAST

On Monday, transport ministers of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) will sign a motor vehicles agreement in a bid to boost trade and sub-regional connectivity among the four nations. The BBIN pact will also set the stage for a new connectivity paradigm in India's north-east, which is looking for easier access not just to mainland India but also to South-east Asia, a high growth area of the continent.

Mint takes a look at the operational and proposed transportation links.



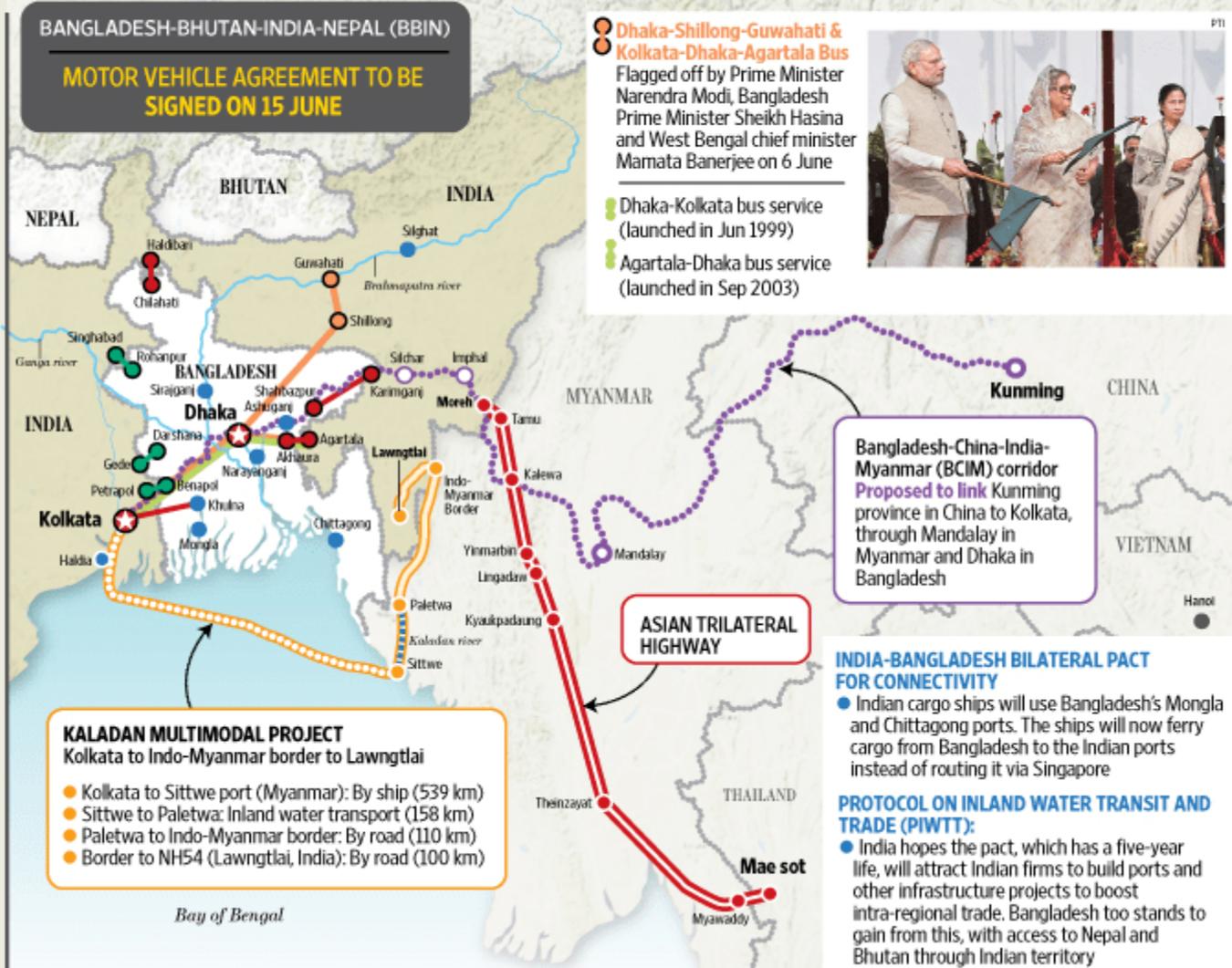
OPERATIONAL RAIL LINKS

- Petrapol (India)–Benapol (Bangladesh)
- Gede (India)–Darsana (Bangladesh)
- Singhabad (India)–Rohanpur (Bangladesh)

PROPOSED RAIL LINKS

- Maitree Express between Khulna (Bangladesh) and Kolkata
- Akhaura (Bangladesh)–Agartala railway link
- Radhikapur (India)–Biroi (Bangladesh)
- Karimganj/Mahisasan (India)–Shahbazpur (Bangladesh)
- Haldibari (India)–Chilhati (Bangladesh)

BANGLADESH-BHUTAN-INDIA-NEPAL (BBIN) MOTOR VEHICLE AGREEMENT TO BE SIGNED ON 15 JUNE



Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati & Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala Bus
Flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on 6 June

- Dhaka-Kolkata bus service (launched in Jun 1999)
- Agartala-Dhaka bus service (launched in Sep 2003)



Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) corridor
Proposed to link Kunming province in China to Kolkata, through Mandalay in Myanmar and Dhaka in Bangladesh

ASIAN TRILATERAL HIGHWAY

KALADAN MULTIMODAL PROJECT
Kolkata to Indo-Myanmar border to Lawngtlai

- Kolkata to Sittwe port (Myanmar): By ship (539 km)
- Sittwe to Paletwa: Inland water transport (158 km)
- Paletwa to Indo-Myanmar border: By road (110 km)
- Border to NH54 (Lawngtlai, India): By road (100 km)

INDIA-BANGLADESH BILATERAL PACT FOR CONNECTIVITY

● Indian cargo ships will use Bangladesh's Mongla and Chittagong ports. The ships will now ferry cargo from Bangladesh to the Indian ports instead of routing it via Singapore

PROTOCOL ON INLAND WATER TRANSIT AND TRADE (PIWTT)

● India hopes the pact, which has a five-year life, will attract Indian firms to build ports and other infrastructure projects to boost intra-regional trade. Bangladesh too stands to gain from this, with access to Nepal and Bhutan through Indian territory

Other Issues to be addressed for Regional Tourism Growth

- Relaxation of Visa and Frontier formalities is necessary for regional tourism growth;
- On arrival visa is now being issued by some countries of the BBIN, which can be extended for foreign tourists visiting the region under a common package tour.
- Information dissemination and sharing the data on tourism may be emphasized.
- A common Tourism Branding and Marketing of BBIN can be initiated.
- A common website covering the landmark tourist attractions of BBIN may be developed.
- Fellowship may be offered to each other country on tourism planning and development.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed,
Prof., Department of International Relations,
University of Dhaka**

Session IV – People to People Connectivity through multi-sectoral Engagement

Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed, Professor, Dept. of International Relations, University of Dhaka

Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed's presentation focused on two aspects, one, the economic trade theory through a pragmatist lens and two, the higher education policies and issues among the countries of BBIN. Acknowledging the need to focus not only on Bangladesh and India relations but rather all four countries of BBIN, Dr. Ahmed based his first half of his presentation on the keynote speech by Hon'ble Dr. Mashiur Rahman, Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Specifically, he focused on Dr. Rahman's theory of the economy of territorial neighbors where he opined that the economy of a country would be better if they traded with neighbors rather than other countries.

Dr. Ahmed expressed a difference in opinion and remarked that it is labor which creates a surplus value rather than the distance. Commenting on the nuances of the current capitalist society, he explained via the case of Bangladesh where despite the country being the number two exporter of garments in the world, it did not enjoy the relative benefits. This was because thirty percent of cotton is exported from Central Asia while twenty percent is from India. The machine used for manufacturing garments comes from China and the designs all come from either New York, Milan or Paris. None of these countries save India is Bangladesh's immediate neighbor and it is only the cheap labour cost which allows Bangladesh to become the second highest exporter of garments in the world.

In the second half of his speech, he began by expressing disappointment that none of the South Asian universities were in the top thousand ranks in the world. On the other hand, a country like Singapore, which attained independence only few years before Bangladesh, had the National University of Singapore (NUS) which was in the top 50.

The hypothesis he drew thus was that the countries in South Asia were neither investing the money or the resources in the correct manner. They have been unable to grasp the changes that are taking place around them and hence, it is a major cause of worry.

Through multi-sectoral engagement, Dr. Ahmed opined that the use of technology needs to be brought about in a more efficient manner in South Asia. Virtual universities have become the norm through which students all over the world connect from the homes via the internet and it is high time that South Asia explored that opportunity too.

Overall, Dr. Ahmed reiterated the areas which highlighted the weaknesses, lack of imagination and the fragilities in the kind of system that has been in operation in this part of the globe.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
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**Paper by Dr. Sreeradha Dutta, former Director,
MAKAIS**

BBIN : The People to People Connect

Sreeradha Datta

The South Asia region through South Asia Association for Regional Organisation (SAARC) for long struggled to build develop a cohesive a regional organisation to boost economic cooperation and free trade amongst the member countries. For a variety of reasons the regional grouping proved untenable and, the region remained hostage to its political differences. For years inter and intra bilateral trade remained low and did not match the expected estimates or expectations of several studies undertaken. However the rational for regional growth and prosperity through greater physical connectivity and economic linkages continued to inspire the globalised and multipolar world. India and its neighbourhood did not remain immune to this growing phenomenon too. The idea of benefits accruing from subregional cooperation grew and India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal (BBIN), decided to cooperate to take this idea forward. The motor vehicle agreement (MVA) was deemed as the first step towards this. The MVA would facilitate trade through a single vehicle moving across the four states. An integrated transport system was one of the core elements to growing an efficient and economically viable subregional grouping. Given the geographical situation Bangladesh Nepal and Bhutan had to use Indian borders for land trade and movement of cargo with each other. Now as decided with the signing of the MVA the transport system would now not only be smoother if not totally seamless across the borders and would also as per few assessments give way to substantial economic benefits through an integrated and efficient transport network within the BBIN states.

In the ongoing initiative of strengthening physical and other aspects of connectivity through energy grids and such other it becomes imperative to connect the people directly. Thus while the MVA is in its final stages of being concluded there are several other issues that are being explored for BBIN to can consider working together on. One such core areas of convergence is the people to people (PtP) connectivity. The (PtP) connectivity has assumed greater significance towards reinforcing the new thrust of connectivity between the BBIN member countries.

Any engagement within BBIN whether political or economic will assume greater depth with people connecting through the cultural and educational spaces. The educational and cultural connect not only percolates easily to the ground but also provide a more enabling environment for creating greater regional synergy in other sectors of collaboration of cross border linkages. The delivery mechanisms involved are easily doable and can be prioritised as per choices and preferences.

The BBIN region has always enjoyed PtP movement but it largely consists of movement to India or from India. An attempt is being made to ensure that people are able to move from

one state to another through another in a more seamless way than that has been possible as yet. This paper will also focus on the possibilities of creating greater synergies within region through common areas such as education culture including tourism. While all the states have significant tourism potential there is limited movement amongst the BBIN states with the exception of India. Indian tourists form a major section travelling within the BBIN region is common occurrence, initiatives to tap the tourists from other member countries needs development. It is increasingly being understood that there is a knowledge gap amongst the people within BBIN although all belong to the same eco system. Thus an attempt to familiarise with each others' knowledge systems becomes an imperative of the contemporary times.

The PtP is necessarily premised on recognising the value of differences and preserving the identity and creating common spaces for building appreciation and mutual respect between different societies and cultural traditions. The sustained interactions will provide a context of learning individual value systems and understanding and embracing differences. To initiate any BBIN common space sharing the regional grouping needs to reach out beyond the government initiative that is working to get MVA started. BBIN would greatly benefit if it could expand the platform that the leadership has provided and now allow the momentum to develop at various cross cultural sections. At the initial stages BBIN think tank forum could bring together the various stakeholders under the same platform. Forging Institutional linkages at various levels would engage the civil society and domain knowledge experts to chart out a common BBIN trajectory.

Educational Facilities

A region to be equitable and progressive it has to build itself from the society that forms the base block and holds it all together. Every individual is an intrinsic part of any society and is the ultimate source for enabling stable balanced communities and modern society formation. Apart from others, education plays a key role in building character of an individual and the state as well. English language especially at higher level of education is common to all the BBIN countries. Interestingly young school students especially from Bhutan and Nepal have for years been admitted in boarding schools spread all over India. The Indian education system is an attraction for students from the neighbourhood. The Institutes of higher learning especially Indian engineering and technology, software development, the management schools, medical colleges are established names making India the destination for many students from abroad access quality education within comparative costs. But given the limited number of available seats and the stringent requirements to qualify it is impossible to accommodate all students especially from outside the country. There are several ways to address the issue. Collaboration with Universities and education centres across the regions would benefit larger number of students. Collaborations can happen in various ways. The private sector has come to play an important role in this sector and while some opened up similar Institutes abroad the

numbers are few and far. The BBIN youths would benefit from future collaboration in the region. Sharing course credits with comparable curriculum has been achieved elsewhere, no reason why this possibilities cannot be examined. This would introduce a flexibility that not only Indian students can enjoy and experience from but will also allow students from the immediate neighbourhood to benefit from each other's institutions. In today's wired world encouraging easy mobility amongst youth groups becomes necessary for nation building. The courses could range from vocational training to subjects of arts and sciences may hold equal interests.

Distance education has been well established within India. The Indian apparatus that exists can be expanded to include greater geographical and subject bandwidth for imparting quality education far and wide. Transmission of distance education can be in a variety of languages as demanded by the member countries. Given Indian technological advancement distance education can reach out to different audiences with different needs.

Common certifications for courses is another area that other regional groups have successfully implemented. This is most effective for vocational courses including common areas like tourism, culinary, yoga, etc. An entrepreneurial culture can thus be encouraged through concerted efforts by both state and civil society organisations.

As a low hanging deliverable proposal, research Institutes with similar core interests may collaborate on subjects of common interest and initiate joint working papers from amongst a small group from the member countries. A signing of Memorandum of Understanding between Universities would be useful in bringing together like minded students and faculty in greater interaction and beneficial exchanges.

Towards Border Community Zones

By and large youth from heartland and urban spaces have access to quality education, children from rural economy and border zones are unable to access the same. Indeed to provide people living on the border zones a better life and greater stakes in creation of wealth and resources they need to be provided with greater access to opportunities. Border areas in most member states are at the same level of development. Poor infrastructural facilities given limited available resources impede the opportunities available. But these are the very areas which can be tapped for creation of common physical spaces for nurturing of cultural and natural heritage. Conceiving border community zones for an outreach to population at the borders can address the huge gaps that remain between the urban and non-urban population in the BBIN countries that are at various levels of development and a shared border community given the existing commonality can transform the nature of lives on each side.

The social and economic environment on both sides of borders are often similar, the livelihood patterns the available educational opportunities even cultural practices. Thus creating an interactive space for building a common knowledge system through interaction and exchange with the local population on each side cannot only provide basic amenities most required but also de-securitise the border zones to a large extent. The space would be readily available for issues of climate change and its prevention and mitigation, agricultural methods, simple vocational training and issues that are common and beneficial to all. Trans-border community living has to be incubated for creating connected minds and hearts.

At present the localised border *haats* on few of the Indo-Bangladeshi borders have gathered momentum providing direct contact between buyers and sellers. While the *haats* have generated a specific economic activity it has opened up avenues for social interaction. Although this space is yet to be fully explored, the cultural and social connect is undeniable. Indeed it is not uncommon to have fields and unused land available at borders which are not fully utilised. Border *haats* usually held in the open space have some limited infrastructure available usually meant for the security agencies. To begin with Border Community Zones built with shared resources for common good needs explorations. Apart from the limited economic activity that the *haats* provide, it can further be explored for developing as a space for a variety of PtP engagement. Ranging from cultural interaction during fixed hours it can include medical facility as that more often than not available very easily in these border areas. The development of border zones that become an interactive space rather than a dividing line will enable creation of an integrated economy and a stable friendly neighbourhood.

Cultural Interactions

Buddhism, a way of life

The other subject that binds the people of BBIN is Buddhism. Amongst the many forms of cultural and philosophical heritage that have spread beyond India, Buddhism is undoubtedly one of the most influential and significant. The impact of the spread of Buddhism and its philosophy was felt on architecture, art, music, literature and food, giving rise to visual materials and documentations that have not only provided different perspectives but also new research on Buddhist phenomena. The ancient Indian universities of Nalanda and Taxila played a prominent role in the dissemination of Buddhism as a cultural tradition. While India does receive Buddhist tourists it still remains at a very moderate level. There is tremendous scope to improve this sector easily achievable through improvement in the travel and accommodation services the increased footfall would lead to new dominoes to develop. The formal sector of tourism is barely engaged in the process and whatever is being undertaken is through informal and individual efforts. Unfortunately Buddhist tourism is one of the least underdeveloped sectors in India. Simple procedures can be adopted to provide greater access to more Buddhist heritage sites and make a Buddhist heritage tour encompassing religion culture and education.

Medical and Environment Tourism

Medical tourism which has gathered popularity in India can be further strengthened through mechanism that facilitate easier movement for the patients and their family. Visa procedures have been streamlined in the past few months but measures to provide for other complementary amenities will facilitate larger numbers to avail of the facilities. Private hospitals from India opening coordinating centres have been beneficial for patients and their families more such initiatives could be encouraged within the BBIN countries. While high end hospitals attract a large numbers of patients from outside Indian medical facilities much appreciated by all still often remain beyond the budget of many within the region. Avenues to provide improved medical facilities specially through cross border linkages can be examined. Indeed the border community centres could be one such venue for providing quality medical services.

Niche tourism has captured the imagination of people all over the globe. BBIN group could similarly benefit from creativity in this area. Indeed there are tour operators in Bangladesh that have created specific riverine holiday packages including the Sundarban area that spreads over both India and Bangladesh. These are awaiting governmental approval from both sides and would provide a great start to many more such tour packages. People would immensely enjoy the grand reach from the high mountains of Himalayas to the blue waters of the Bay of Bengal.

People Mobility and Movement

The BBIN region also has a thriving informal labour movement. While governments are reluctant to admit and resolve the issue of informal labour mobility given the associated issues of human security state intervention alongside civil society support can address this issue. Search for equitable solutions which will benefit both the demand and supply side will move the states towards the creation of a non securitized atmosphere. As has been pointed out 'Existing national governance structures do not have well-defined spaces that delineate the relationship between government responsibilities and the rights and obligations of public citizenship.'¹ People lives and their welfare is an integral element of any migration and population movement and cognition of that will remain the core of any people to people connect. While most states within the region have some mechanism in place for movement of professionals, limited institutional arrangement exists for likes of blue collared workers. BBIN could be the first towards attempting to establishing common standards to protect the rights of migrant population.

¹ UNESCAP Report, 'Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity,' May 2014, p64. Available at www.unescap.org/resources/regional-connectivity-shared-prosperity.

Media Sector

Media a critical but isolated sector can be made an effective vehicle for reaching out across borders. Moving away from the government organised media tours the media houses can be encouraged and facilitated to reach out to its brethren's from across the member states While the media may often not seen in positive light their freedom to take positions necessarily need nurturing. Progress can never be without the ability to express and healthy respect for varied opinions and ideas. Improved interaction leading to greater access to information will create larger perspective which often the media lacks. The focus on negative news can be only broken through a determined effort from all sides. An enabling atmosphere will yield to responsible reportage and respect for each other's' concerns especially in the wake of circulation of 'fake' news. Media's role to connect people and to the government is tremendous and in the modern connected world has ability to influence much beyond borders. Thus imperative to physically connect the media can never be overstressed.

There are several other aspects of culture which can have a greater reach out to people ranging from collaborations of films both fiction and documentary. Collaborations within civil society organisations and similar Institutes and Academies can establish common research and common documentations and other activities. In the digital world many of these initiatives can be established through very modest financial commitment but leads to intensive interaction at various levels. BBIN textile exhibition, BBIN sports, BBIN literary festivals etc all can seamless form part of many such similar events taking place in India and elsewhere within BBIN.

Conclusion

Creation of an enabling atmosphere for direct and greater interaction is the first step towards greater linkages within the member countries. The creation of a BBIN website would be a handy tool for all those seeking information and knowledge sharing. The people of the sub-region needs greater familiarity with this group and digital world can easily fill that gap. But to make a beginning data gathering becomes an essential factor to translate many of the ideas that are being generated. Detailed information of all the member countries with the available facilities and trade and economic opportunities will be required to even initiate a PtP connectivity. Indeed today's youth would relate well to BBIN facebook page which can easily help them share and showcase individual and institutional activities that will complement the connectivity dialogues underway to bring the sub regional group closer.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October
15-16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Mr. Pratim Ranjan
Bose, Deputy Editor and Chief of Bureau, Hindu
Business Line**

Session IV – People to People Connectivity through multi-sectoral Engagement

Mr. Pratim Ranjan Bose, Deputy Editor and Chief of Bureau, Hindu Business Line

Mr. Bose began his presentation by remarking about the shared culture among the BBIN nations and the need to encourage cooperation amidst the historical background. He remarked that the new generation must not carry the historical or cultural baggage that has kept the four countries isolated in the past. Therefore, the BBIN should be considered to be at the crossroads of a new beginning which will be judged not by what they did in the past but by what they achieve in the future.

Mr. Bose was of the view that the four countries should look at the prospects of solving problems among each other rather than seeking outside help. For instance, India could seek the help of Bangladesh and Nepal who have been performing exceptionally well in the field of public hygiene.

Finally, Mr. Bose urged the BBIN countries to tap the full potential of tourism as an effective means to improve each other's image and economy. For instance, a little institutional engagement between Bangladesh and Nepal could help them boost tourism owing to the proximity of North-Western Bangladesh and South-Eastern Nepal to the tourism circuit centering Siliguri. Also, a religious circuit could be formed covering Janakpurdham, Kamakhya and Northern Bangladesh which has some Satipiths. Also, Mr. Bose stressed on the other tourist destinations within India apart from West Bengal.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October
15-16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Mr. Shyamal
Dutta, Editor, The Daily Bhorer Kagoj**

Session IV – People to People Connectivity through multi-sectoral Engagement

Mr. Shyamal Dutta, Editor, The Daily Bhorer Kagoj

Mr. Shyamal Dutta is a journalist based in Bangladesh and has been part of many SAARC conferences since the early 1990s. He began by addressing the audience on how SAARC over a period became non-functional. Comparing the BBIN initiative to SAARC, he hoped BBIN would not face the similar outcomes as SAARC.

Mr. Dutta urged the participants to not limit their speeches to the relations between Bangladesh and India but rather focus on the sub-regional cooperation among all the four countries. Bangladesh has 4,000 kilometers of border with India while Bhutan and Nepal had a combined boundary of 83 kilometers only with Bangladesh. Despite sharing a small boundary with Bhutan and Nepal, Mr. Dutta questioned whether they shared an interest in people to people connectivity in principle only, or whether they were connected.

A lot has been said on trade and transit connectivity amongst other matters, but if the people were not connected, how could other types of connectivity be advanced? Advancing on the visa issues put forward by Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed where he wasn't granted the ability to speak in the conference in India on a tourist visa, Mr. Dutta expressed similar concerns on the visa process controlled by the Bangladesh High Commission of India. Similarly, the validity of the SAARC visa has been reduced from one year to only three months and Mr. Dutta stressed on not producing similar outcomes for the suggested BBIN visa. He also gave the example of the Sunderbans forest which was partly in India and partly in Bangladesh, but one could not visit the entire forest in one stretch. A visa was required to go from one part of the forest in India to the other part of the forest in Bangladesh and vice versa.

He concluded by posing questions for the three nations – Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal – on why their respective relations with China had assumed greater importance than the relations with India.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Presentation by Mr. Gopilal Acharya,
Independent journalist, Journalist Association
of Bhutan**

Session IV – People to People Connectivity through multi-sectoral Engagement

Mr. Gopilal Acharya, Independent journalist, Journalist Association of Bhutan

Being an independent journalist from Bhutan, Mr. Acharya chose to speak as an individual rather than representative of Bhutan. He remarked that the sessions have progressed from the technical issues and developments towards the socio-cultural aspects of the initiative, which is the need of the hour. BBIN has this aspect at the core of its agenda and he was of the view that this was where the civil society, including the media could play a significant role.

Fresh perspectives could be provided to old issues through media harmony of the four countries. Also, Mr. Acharya was of the view that a new narrative must be built for the BBIN as opposed to the unfavourable notions people have of the SAARC.

He was pragmatic in his speech in remarking that the BBIN initiative, over the course of time, will face more challenges, individual as well as collective, despite shared culture and history. However, BBIN is at the right juncture to embark on a path characterised by development and progress.

He then focused on the issues of food, energy and water and urged the BBIN to make these issues their primary focal point. When energy, food and water is referred to, there is nothing to be done in isolation. It only calls for the better sharing of resources among the four countries and these issues must all be addressed together.

To conclude, he observed that there was a donor-recipient imbalance between India and Bhutan and wished that could change as both countries stand to gain through BBIN cooperation. Mr. Acharya also spoke of the need to improve the Gross National Happiness (GNH) rankings among South Asian countries, particularly the BBIN.

**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

**Abstract of Discussion for People to People
Connectivity through multi-sectoral
Engagement by Mr. Enamul Haque Shamim,
News Editor, Radio Today**

Session IV Discussant – People to People Connectivity through multi-sectoral Engagement

Mr. Enamul Haque Shamim, News Editor, Radio Today

Mr. Shamim began the discussion by referring to the special address delivered by Mr. Akhtaruz Zaman Khan in the beginning of Session IV. Mr. Khan had earlier stressed on strengthening global tourism for the BBIN nations and Mr. Shamim suggested the development of a common tourism board comprising of the four countries and questioned its viability.

He also spoke on media and particularly explained why there needs to be an established people to people connectivity before any other agreements are put in place. To change the mindset of people about the region, there needs to be connectivity and Mr. Shamim stressed on the role media can play in establishing that connectivity. The media can seamlessly convert global news concerning all four countries into local news through greater cooperation and porous borders, thus allowing the reporters to travel from one country to another without any hassle.

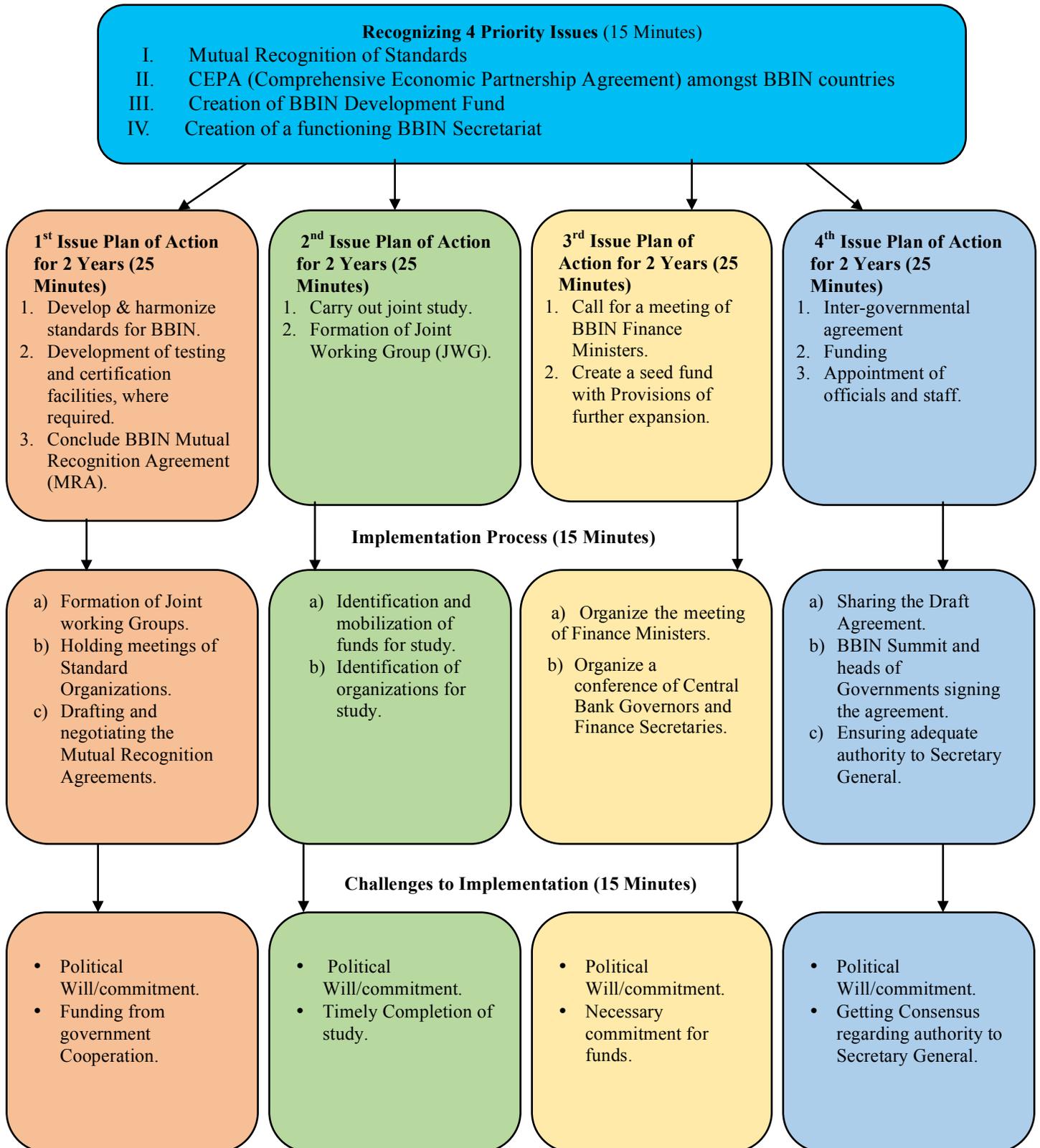
He concluded by stressing on the need to establish connectivity in the mind and fairness in commitment so that all differences and unfairness of any kind can be avoided.

Breakout Session: Trade and Economic Issues

Policy Recommendations for 2 years Plan of Action

Day 2 - Breakout Session: Trade and Economic Issues

Participants: Mr. Purushottam Ojha (Group Mentor), Prof. Prabir De, Mr. Ali Ahmed, Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem and Dr. Selim Raihan

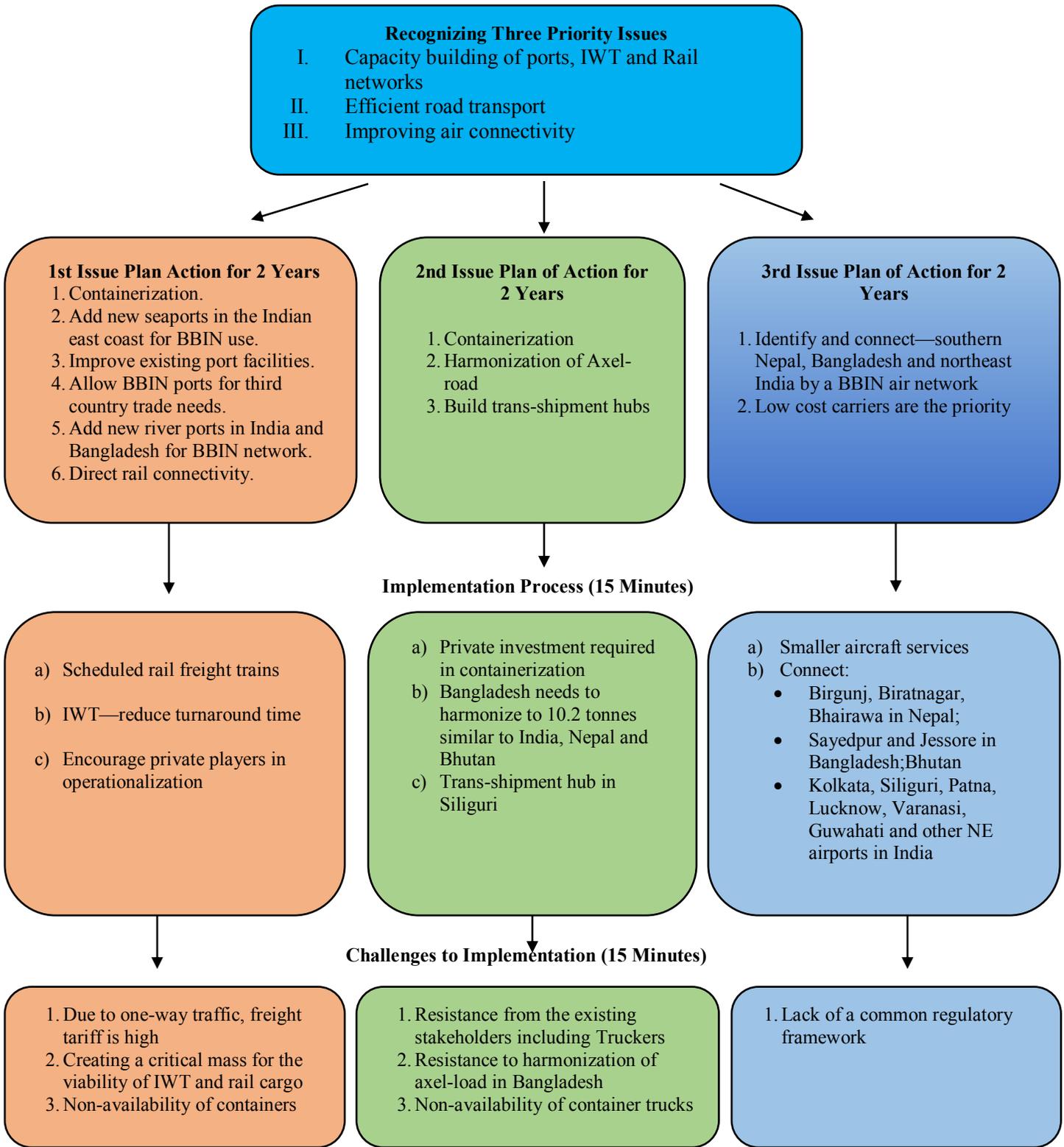


**Breakout Session: Transit and
Multimodal Connectivity (Roadways,
Waterways, Railways, Aviation)**

**Policy Recommendations for 2 years
Plan of Action**

Day 2 - Breakout Session: Transit and Multimodal Connectivity

Participants: Mr. Pratim Bose (Group Mentor), Mr. R.B. Rauniar, Mr. Md. Nasir Uddin of and Dr. Lailufar Yasmeen



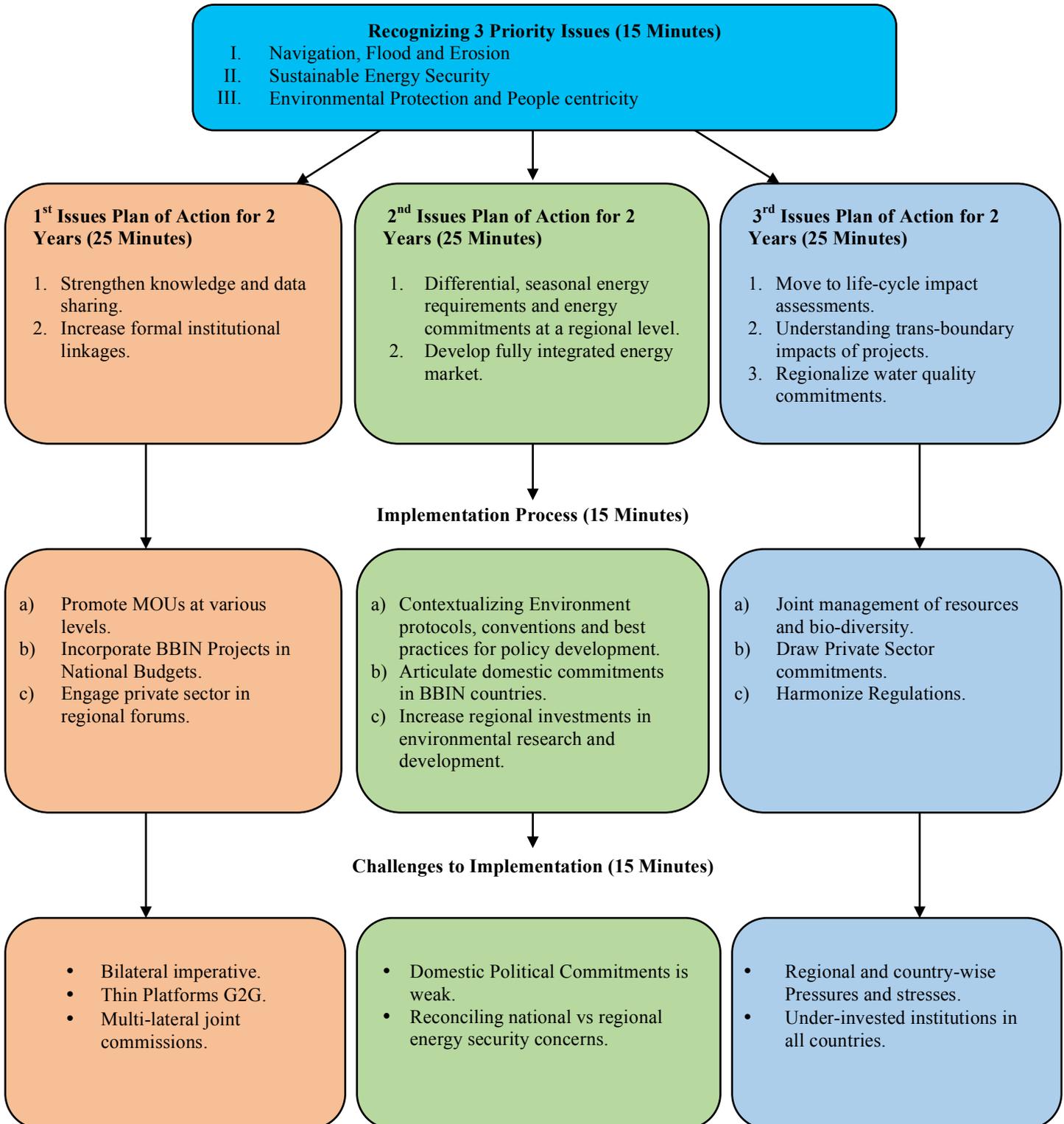
Note: The Team working on transit and multimodal connectivity focused on following important areas. A) Containerization to help multimodal transport B) India should open an efficient East coast deep-sea port preferably Dhamra in Odisa for use of BBIN countries including Bangladesh. This should also help allay the controversy in Bangladesh about giving NE India (which is not landlocked as per nomenclature) access to Chittagong port. PRB.

Breakout Session: Energy-Hydropower and Water Resource Management

Policy Recommendations for 2 years Plan of Action

Day 2 - Breakout Session: Energy and Water Issues

Participants: Dr. Sagar Prasai (Group Mentor), Dr. Mahfuzul Haque, Dr. Chandan Mahanta, and Mr. Abu Salah Yousuf.

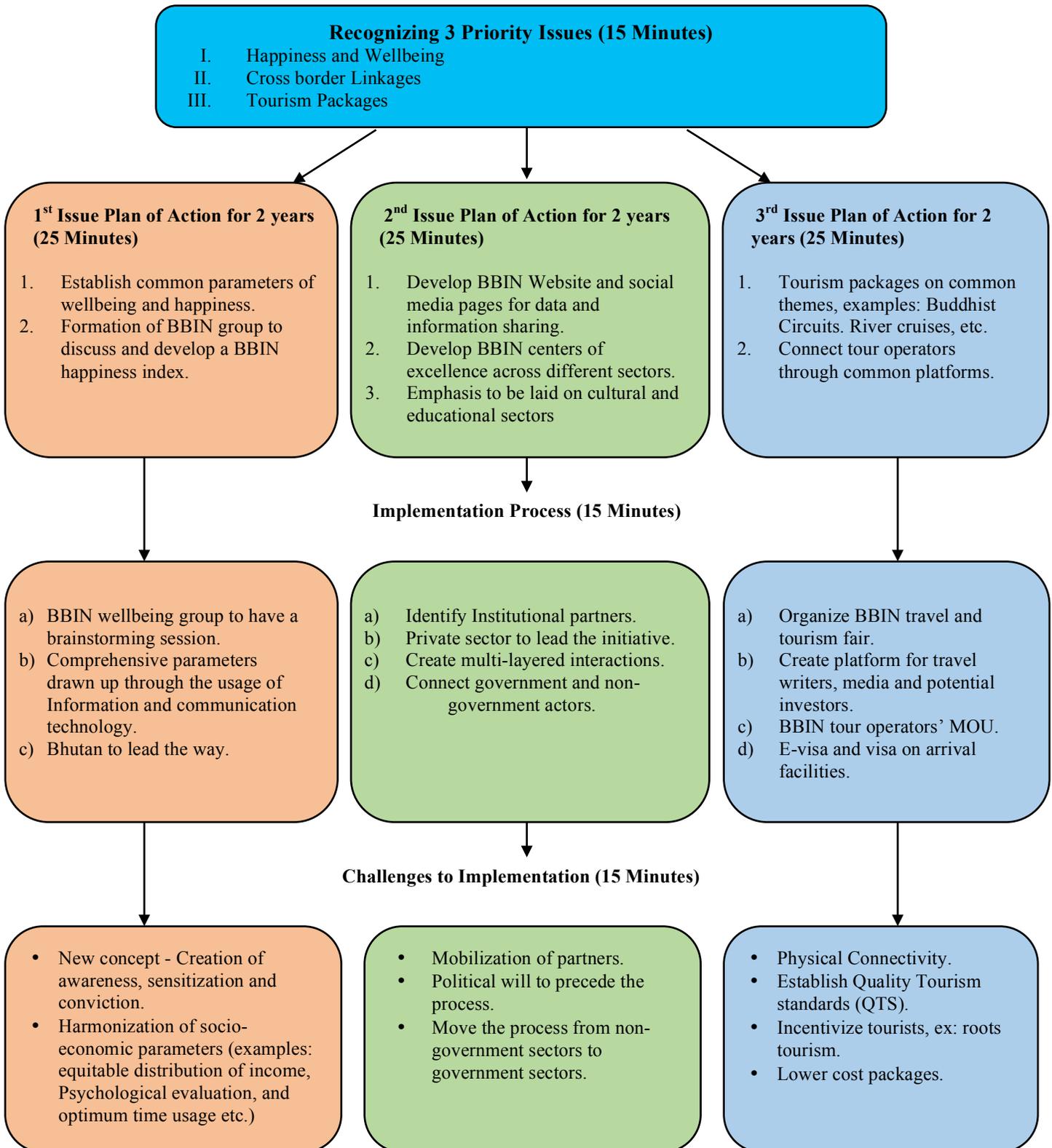


**Breakout Session: People to People
Connectivity through multi-sectoral
Engagement**

**Policy Recommendations for 2 years
Plan of Action**

Day 2 - Breakout Session: People to People Connectivity

Participants: Dr. Sreeradha Datta (Group Mentor), Mr. Akhtaruz Zaman Khan, Mr. Gopilal Acharya and Mr. Enamul Haque Shamim



**DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub
Regional Cooperation, Dhaka, October 15-
16, 2017**

Speakers' Profile and Participant's List



DELHI POLICY GROUP



The Asia Foundation

DPG Round Table Discussion on Advancing BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation

Venue: BRAC Centre Inn, Dhaka, Bangladesh

15th-16th October 2017

Profile

Delhi Policy Group Faculty:



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



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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 was the co-Chair of the India Indonesia Eminent Person's Group which prepared a report and 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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Angana Guha Roy,
Research Associate, Delhi Policy Group

Angana Guha Roy did her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Presidency College. After completing Master of Arts in International Relations from Jadavpur University, she worked as an Assistant Professor in colleges affiliated to University of Calcutta and Kalyani University in West Bengal. She did her M.Phil in foreign policy with a scholarship from Ministry of External affairs, India. She has studied French, Russian and Korean. In 2013 she received the Shinan Bank Dream Foundation Scholarship from Shinan bank. Presently she is pursuing her Ph.D in University of Delhi and working with Delhi Policy Group. She has published research papers and articles and has presented papers in various national and international conferences in India and abroad.



Shulagna Pal
Research Associate, Delhi Policy Group (BBIN)

Shulagna Pal holds a Master's in Politics with a specialization in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and a Bachelor's in History from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. She has previously worked as Research Assistant and Programme Officer at the Forum for Strategic Initiatives, New Delhi. Recently, she was part of the Indian delegation of Young scholars in the NGO exchange programme of the BRICS sponsored by Chinese People's Association for Peace and Disarmament, Beijing, China. In the past, she has actively worked and organized national and international seminars, workshops and was also granted the Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship.



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Dr. 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.



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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Day I: Sunday, 15th October 2017

Venue: BRAC Centre Inn

Welcome Address: **Ambassador H. K. Singh,**
Director General, Delhi Policy Group

Special Address:



H.E. Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla
High Commissioner of India to the People's Republic of Bangladesh

High Commissioner Harsh Vardhan Shringla is a career diplomat and a member of the Indian Foreign Service. In the course of his diplomatic career spanning 32 years, Mr. Shringla has held a variety of positions in New Delhi and in Indian Missions in Paris, Hanoi and Tel Aviv. He has also served as Minister/Counsellor in the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York and as Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam and Durban, South Africa. Prior to his arrival in Bangladesh on 14 January 2016, he was the Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mr. Shringla has served in the Ministry of External Affairs as Joint Secretary (Director General) responsible for Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Maldives. Mr. Shringla has also headed the United Nations Political and SAARC Divisions in the Ministry. Earlier, he served as Director of the Northern (Nepal and Bhutan) Division and Deputy Secretary of the Europe West Division.

Mr. Shringla graduated from St. Stephen's College, Delhi and has worked in the Corporate and Public Sectors in India prior to joining the Indian Foreign Service. He studied multilateral diplomacy and conflict prevention in Columbia University, New York, a subject on which he has published an international paper. He has also published Papers on economic diplomacy and the Indian diaspora.

Mr. Shringla speaks French, Vietnamese and Nepalese apart from English and Indian languages. He is married to Mrs. Hemal Store Shringla and has one son.



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**Inaugural
Remarks:**



Hon'ble Dr. Mashiur Rahman

Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister of People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Dr. Mashiur Rahman is the chief Economic Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister of People's Republic of Bangladesh since January 2009 with special focus on sub-regional economic cooperation. He is a member of the Awami League's Advisory Council and has acted as second co-convener of the parliamentary Election Committee in 2008 & 2014.

Dr. Rahman joined the civil services on merit in 1965 and he was appointed as the Private Secretary to the Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur. Over the course of 37 years as a career civil servant, Dr. Rahman has held numerous government offices including, Secretary of Finance Division, Economic Relations Division, Internal Resources Division, Statistics Division & Director General of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in Ministry of Planning, Railway Division and Ministry of Water Resources. He represented Bangladesh at the various International Cooperations, like the Asian Development Bank, World Bank and Islamic Development Bank. Dr. Rahman was elected Director of the Islamic Corporation for Private Sector Development (ICD). He had been Governor at the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and chairman of its Evaluation Committee in the 1980s. He has been closely associated with Islamic Development Bank (IDB), he was Vice Chair of IDB and chaired business sessions at the annual meeting in Algiers in 2001. Dr. Rahman chaired the business session at the 65th Annual Meeting of UN ESCAP, Bangkok, on 23-29 May, 2009. He has been Managing Director & CEO of the Credit Rating Agency of Bangladesh and member of the Association of Credit Rating Agencies of South Asia.

Dr. Rahman has a MALD & Pd.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy of Tufts University and MPA from Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University (1975-80) in International Economics and Law. Dr. Rahman is a accomplished writer and has published several books and articles at home and abroad including Integrated Rural Development (monograph co-authored with John D. Montgomery, Professor at Harvard University, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Cambridge, Mass., USA, 1980); Political Economy of Income Distribution in Sri Lanka (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 1987); Structural Adjustment and Social Protection of Workers (ILO-ARTEP; 1994); Structural Adjustment, Employment and Workers (UPL, Dhaka 1994); Democracy in Crisis (UPL, Dhaka, 2008); Constitution, Democracy and Development (The Daily Star: January 21, 2014) and Constitutional Democracy (Dhaka, Mawla Brothers, 2014). Dr. Rahman retired from government service in 2001.



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Session I: Trade and Economic Issues

Chair:



Chair: Professor Prabir De

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)

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’ (Knowledge World, New Delhi, 2016). He is also the Editor of the South Asia Economic Journal, published by Sage.



Mr. Purushottam Ojha

Former Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, 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



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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 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.



Dr. Selim Raihan

Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka and Executive Director, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM)

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, ILO, IDRC, DFID.



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Mr. Ali Ahmed

Chief Executive Officer,
Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute (BFTI), Dhaka.

Mr. Ali Ahmed, CEO, Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute, Dhaka, graduated with honours in Economics from the University of Dhaka. He also has a Master's degree in the same subject from the same university.

After a short stint as a teacher, he entered Bangladesh Civil Service through a nation-wide competitive examination, and went to the Revenue service of his country. After serving in various capacities at different positions and places in the country, he rose to the top of Customs Administration of the country before his normal retirement from government service.

After working for some time as an independent consultant on tax, trade and reformation issues, which found him working for the World Bank, the Bangladesh government, especially the National Board of revenue, and in certain other related fields, he joined the Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute, in early 2015, as its CEO, and has been continuing there.

After joining the Institute, he has seen through its rejuvenation, and transformed a nearly- moribund institute to its present vibrant position of a research, training and policy advocacy Institution of repute and respect. The BFTI is now on the threshold of working for the IMF, DFID, UNESCAP, WTO, etc. besides working for the government of Bangladesh and some private sector organisations.

Mr. Ahmed has been to many countries of the world to receive training on taxes, trade and administration. These include Germany, Japan, The U. K., South Korea, the Philippines, India, New Zealand, Australia, and many other countries. He has presented papers, chaired some sessions, and acted at discussants on different aspects of trade and economies in places like New Delhi, Colombo, Kathmandu and, of course, in Dhaka. He was very recently invited to present a paper on a country study in Bangladesh at a regional dialogue of ESCAP in Bangkok, Thailand. A summarised version of the presentation is available on the ESCAP website.

Mr. Ali Ahmed is also an economic analyst and takes part in offering comments on the national economy and the annual budget of Bangladesh. He is also an author and has more than fourteen publications, both English and Bangla, to his credit. He is also a well-known TV commentator. He is married with three children and lives in Dhaka.



Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem,

Research Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue

Dr Moazzem is the Research Director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh. Dr Moazzem holds a PhD from the Kyoto University, Japan. As a specialist on industry and trade related issues, Dr Moazzem extensively works on issues related to the least developed countries (LDCs). His major area of interests include global value chain development, trade related issues, entrepreneurship development and private investment including FDI. His recent research include



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‘Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the Global Value Chain (GVC): Trends, Determinants and Challenges’. Dr Moazzem is member of different committees including Member of Eminent Persons’ Group under the Ministry of Finance and Advisory Committee Member of the Accord Bangladesh etc.

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

Chair:

Dr. Selim Raihan
Professor, University of Dhaka



Mr. R.B. Rauniar
Managing Director, Interstate Multinational Transport, Nepal

Mr. R B Rauniar is with the transport and trade facilitation industry for more than four decades. “*Unlocking land-locked countries through the potentials of the land-linked countries for the regional economic upliftment*” is the strong belief of Mr. Rauniar. Logistics transport, Transit and trade facilitation are synonymous to Mr. R B Rauniar. He is an institution in himself in these fields and has been deeply contributing his vast knowledge for the regional growth in transport and trade. He has vast experiences in the fields of multimodal transport, customs, transit, shipping, international freight forwarding, and trade facilitation in bilateral, multilateral & regional trade. He is very well known to the shipping fraternity in the whole of South Asia.

His expertise and significant contributions with his wealth of knowledge and experiences in the National and International arena has led to several consultancy and advisory positions with top financial institutions like the World Bank, ADB, UNCTAD/UNESCAP, JICA, SAARC, CACCI, etc in his respective fields. He has been regularly participating in high level seminars & international conferences as panelist, speaker, and presenter on transport, transit & trade facilitation issues.

He has taken up challenging high level positions as Chairman, President, Executive Member in various apex business organizations of Nepal including Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Nepal Chamber of Commerce, Nepal Goods Carriers Association, Nepal Freight Forwarders Association, Nepal India Chamber of Commerce & Industry, SAARC, CACCI, etc.

He is the Managing Director of Interstate Multimodal Transport Pvt. Ltd, the largest project cargo forwarder and the first and only Multimodal Transport Operator (MTO) of Nepal. He is also the Director of Himalayan Terminals Pvt. Ltd, the Terminal Management Company of the first and only rail based ICD/Dryport Birjung, which is handling over 65% of Nepal’s trade traffic.



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Mr. Chandan Kumar Dey

Joint Secretary, Road Transport & Highways Division, Ministry of Road Transport & Bridges, Government of Bangladesh

Mr. Chandan Kumar Dey is currently Joint Secretary of the Road Transport & Highways Division, Ministry of Road Transport & Bridges of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. He started his civil service career in the year 1991 as a member of BCS (Administrative) Cadre. During his journey of his career, he worked in various capacities both in the field Administration and in the Secretariat. In the field Administration, he served as Assistant Commissioner, Senior Assistant Commissioner, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (Chief Executive of a sub-district) & Additional Deputy Commissioner. In the Secretariat, he served as Senior Assistant Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Joint Secretary. He holds B.A. (Honours), M.A. in English from University of Chittagong and an L.L.B. from National University, Dhaka. He is a member of the Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation under UN-ESCAP. He participated in the Training on Infrastructure Management from Monash University, Melbourne, Australia under Australia Awards Fellowship. For the last 5 years, he has dealt with issues relating to road connectivity in Road Transport & Highways Division. He participated actively in the regional seminar/workshop/ meeting under UN-ESCAP, BIMSTEC (BTILS), SASEC and BCI-EC. He also played an effective role in the formulation of the BBIN-MVA.

Professor Prabir De

Research and Information System for Developing Countries



Dr. Lailufar Yasmeen,

Professor, Dept. of International Relations, University of Dhaka and Deputy director (Research), Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA)

Dr. Lailufar Yasmin is Professor at the Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. She is also a Deputy Director (International Affairs) of Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA). She has undertaken her studies at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, Georgia State University, Atlanta, USA, and Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. She has been a recipient of the US Fulbright, British Chevening, and Australian International Post-Graduate Research Scholarship (IPRS). She has done her fellowship on peace and conflict issues of South Asia in the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland, UK. She was a fellow of the Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing, China, working on China's national interest after 9/11.

She was a recipient of Ethel Woodruff Draper Research Fellowship in the Development of Young Women provided by the Women's Studies Institute, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA. She has published extensively on secularism in Bangladesh, maritime security issue, China's politics, and on South Asian issues. Her latest publications include "Making Cultural Transformations Visible: Changing Patterns of Dresses", in *University of Dhaka: Making, Unmaking, Remaking*, 2016, "Bangladesh and the Great Powers", in *Routledge Handbook on Contemporary*



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Bangladesh, 2016 and “Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean Region: Bangladesh’s Cogitation” in *Intelligence, National Security, and Foreign Policy: A South Asian Narrative*, 2016. Her latest research involves religion and politics, Bangladesh’s foreign policy, maritime security, and gender empowerment, women, peace building and conflict related issues, and China’s rise.



Mr. Pratim Ranjan Bose,
Deputy Editor and Chief of Bureau, Hindu Business Line

Pratim Ranjan Bose is a senior writer of *The Hindu Business Line*. He writes columns on India’s Act East strategies and, developments in energy and infrastructure sectors. Some of his works are reproduced in regional media.

A post-graduate in economics, Bose has spent over two decades in financial journalism and has keen interests in development strategies, geopolitics, international trade and economic growth perspectives in Asia.

A winner of several journalism awards and a Jefferson Fellow (Spring 2010), Bose has several publications in the fields of renewable energy, border trade and connectivity. He has also co-authored a book.



Mr. Nasir Uddin,
Former Commissioner, Benapole, Bangladesh

Md. Nasir Uddin studied in the University of Dhaka. Passed Honors and Masters in Political Science. An officer of Customs and Excise Cadre of BCS, 1982. Worked as a Commissioner of Customs in all the major Custom Houses of Bangladesh (Dhaka Custom House, Chittagong Custom House and Custom House, Benapole). Worked as a Member in Customs, Excise & Value Added Tax Tribunal and the National Board of Revenue of Bangladesh. Served as the Convener of the Central Task Force. Led Bangladesh Customs delegations in many meetings, training, conferences, etc. at home and abroad, including leading Bangladesh delegation of Customs in the meetings of the Joint Group of Customs between India and Bangladesh held in Delhi and Dhaka. Also led the Bangladesh delegation to Turkey for the finalization of an agreement between The Government of The People’s Republic of Bangladesh and The Government of the Republic of Turkey. Attended the 4th Bangladesh Trade Policy Review Meeting held at the WTO Head Quarters in Geneva. At present working as a Senior Customs & Trade Facilitation Specialist in USAID/Bangladesh Trade Facilitation Activity.



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Session III: Energy-hydropower and Water Resource Management



Chair: Dr. Sajjad Zohir

Executive Director, Economic Research Group, Bangladesh

Dr. Sajjad Zohir is the Executive Director of Economic Research Group (ERG) and Professor of Economics at BRAC University. He earned his PhD in Economics from University of Toronto and received his Bachelor's and Master's in Economics from University of Dhaka. Previously he worked as a Senior Research Fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

Dr. Zohir have previously worked with organizations like the World Bank, UNICEF, FAO, UN-ESCAP, The European Commission, Asian Development Bank, Lois Berger Inc., UNDP, Asian Development Bank, IFAD and most recently as a advisor to Nathan Associates (London) Ltd. with them he was working to develop Bangladesh Bank's SME credit related policies. Dr. Zohir is an accomplished writer and has published several monograms, articles and papers on the themes of development, trade, agriculture and economics.



Mr. Abu Salah Yousuf,

Senior Research Fellow, BIISS

Abu Salah Md. Yousuf is a Senior Research Fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), Dhaka. His areas of interest are Securitisation and Non-State Actors, Non-State Actors in South Asia and Policy influencing instruments used by Non-State Actors. He has published two book chapters and forty journal articles in the country and abroad.



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Dr. Chandan Mahanta

Professor, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, Assam

Prof. Chandan Mahanta Dean, Students' Affairs and Professor, Centre for the Environment Professor, Department of Civil Engineering Indian Institute of Technology – Guwahati Dr. Chandan Mahanta is currently the Dean of Students' Affairs and Professor in the Centre for the Environment at IIT Guwahati. He has served as the Head of the Centre for the Environment. He is also a BOG member of NIT Nagaland and Khelhoshe Polytechnic at Zunheboto, Nagaland. He has been an ASCE-EWRI visiting fellow at the Utah Water Research Laboratory of the Utah State University, USA and has been EurIndia visiting fellow to the University of Applied Sciences, Karlsruhe, Germany; he was in the Monash Sustainability Institute of Monash University under the Australian Leadership Award Fellowship Programme.

He was part of a Hydro Diplomacy programme jointly hosted by MIT, Harvard University and Tufts University in 2014. Prof Mahanta has served in various national and international committees including the Planning Commission of India. Prof Mahanta has carried out projects funded by national bodies and international agencies including MHRD, MoUD, MoEF, DST, SIDA, EURINDIA, UNICEF and IUCN. Prof. Mahanta has authored more than fifty technical publications in peer reviewed journals, proceedings and books.

He has organised trainings, workshops, conferences and has lectured to a cross section of professionals in USA, Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, China, Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries including Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and had collaborations with several US and European universities. He has been advisor to eighteen PhD and more than fifty Masters Students. One of his major projects on Digital Brahmaputra has attempted to leverage IT applications in building robust hydrological information system. Several of his current research engagements are focused on sustainable drinking water and sanitation, and urban river restoration and management. Prof Mahanta has been part of past TERI events including DSDS.



Mr. Enamul Haque,

Professor, East West University, Dhaka

A.K. Enamul Haque is a Professor of Economics in the East West University of Dhaka. He is also the Director of both the Asian Centre for Development, and the Economic Research Group. His other positions include Trustee Board Member at BDIX Trust, Advisor and Fellow at SANDEE and Academic Director at Insight Institute of Learning. Apart from that he is also the Editor of East West Journal of Business and Social Studies since 2016.

Some of his published works include 'Benefits from Lighting – A Cost Benefit Analysis of Distributed Solar Home Systems', 'Reducing the Cost of Climate Adaptation using Stakeholder-based Cost Benefit Analysis' and the 'South Asian



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Economy in 2060: Challenges Ahead’.

Dr. Haque is an M. Sc. in Agricultural Economics from University of Guelph, Canada where he also completed his PhD in National Resource Economics in 1991.

He also regularly engages in public and social service engagements like the SPIMS Training Program on Cost Benefit Analysis with the LFA in July 2017 and the Meeting of Bangladesh-India Joint Consultation on Sustainable Development of Navigation and Fisheries Resources in May 2017.



Mr. Shahab Enam Khan,
Research Director, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute
Dhaka, Bangladesh and Former Chairman, Department of International Relations, Jahangir Nagar University Savar, Dhaka

Mr. Shahab Enam Khan is Associate Professor in International Relations at Jahangirnagar University and Research Director at the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute. Mr. Khan’s research portfolio includes Security, Regional Cooperation and Trade, and National Integrity Institutions and Public Policy. Mr. Khan has closely worked with various international organizations and development agencies, i.e. IUCN, UN Women, IFC, RCSS as advisor and/or senior consultant. He has been involved in drafting several key public policy documents for the Government of Bangladesh including the National Broadcast Policy 2014 and counter terrorism strategy. He also serves as Board Member of various NGOs and companies in Bangladesh. He received education from the Harvard University, University of Manchester, University of Delaware, and University of Birmingham. Mr. Khan is a NESAC Center Alumnus. He is also a scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India and a Senior Fellow at the Hainan Institute of World Watch, Hainan, China.



Mr. Sheikh Rokon,
Secretary General, Riverine People

Writer and researcher Sheikh Rokon (Sheikh Rokonzaman, by passport and certificate) is the founding Secretary General of Riverine People, a Dhaka-based national civil society initiative on river and water. He has been writing and researching on green, ecology, water and rivers. He is known for his expertise on India-Bangladesh trans-boundary river issues, youth engagement in river movement, citizen science on rivers and riverine community culture.

Sheikh Rokon obtained BSS and MSS degree in Mass Communication from University of Dhaka. He has completed a special course on India-Bangladesh Water Relations from Sikkim University, Gangtok, India. He is awarded by professional fellowship by US State Department.

Sheikh Rokon is the author of couples of books and writes column frequently on river and environmental issues. He is often interviewed in the Bangladeshi and Indian newspapers on riverine issues. He is the editor of ‘Nadee’ a Bangla publication



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dedicated to riverine issues. His most favorite hobby is to traveling rivers.

Sheikh Rokon has been working as Assistant Editor in Daily Samakal, one of the leading Bangla daily published from Dhaka, Bangladesh, as well. He follows, analyzes and writes on environment, water and renewable energy issues there.



Dr. Mahfuzul Haque,

Former Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Dr Mahfuzul Haque, a former Secretary of the Government of Bangladesh has been teaching for a decade and half in different public and private universities taking courses on environment and development; sustainable development; natural resource management; climate change; biodiversity conservation; natural disaster management; and environmental impact assessment.

He joined civil service in 1981. During his decade-long stint at the Ministry of Environment and Forests, he received on the job training home and abroad on environmental conservation, natural resource management and environmental laws and compliance. He led official Bangladesh delegation at the Conference of Parties of various conventions, including UNFCCC, CBD, Montreal Protocol, Ramsar Convention etc. He was elected as the President of Montreal Protocol Implementation Committee; and Vice President of CBD Bureau based in Montreal, Canada.

He is a prolific writer and extensively contributed in various journals home and abroad. He has authored books on ethnic issues in South Asia, Climate Change, and Street Children. He also contributed articles in peer-reviewed journals on issues related to sustainable environment, natural resources management, bio-diversity conservation, global warming, ozone layer depletion, desertification and environmental laws. His latest book on "Environmental Governance, Emerging Challenges for Bangladesh" published in 2013 looked at the crises of environmental governance in Bangladesh. Recently published book by Routledge, UK in 2016 titled, "Governance in South Asia" carried his article on "Shipbreaking Industries in Bangladesh". His contribution on "Environmental Governance" has been published online by Springer in June 2017 in "The Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance" both in print and online versions.

He is currently teaching at both post-graduate and undergrad levels at the Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka as an Adjunct Faculty.



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

Chair: **Ambassador H. K. Singh**
Director General, Delhi Policy Group

Special Address:



Mr. Akhtaruz Zaman Khan,
Chairman, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation

Mr. Akhtaruz Zaman Khan Kabir, Additional Secretary to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and he is currently the Chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation. Prior to joining Bd. Parjatan Corporation, he was Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB). Mr. Khan started his professional career in Civil Service (Administration) Cadre in 1988. He worked in different Divisions and Ministries including Public Administration, Commerce, Health & Family Welfare ministry and Cabinet Division of the Republic. He was Director (Fair) in Export Promotion Bureau of Bangladesh. He is one of the honorable Member of PATA Board.

Mr. Kabir completed high-profile training in the 7th edition of the UNWTO Asia Pacific Training Program on Tourism policy and strategy at Bussan, South Korea in 2013. Mr. Kabir successfully completed different types of Training Courses like Post-Graduate Diploma on Development & Planning from Planning Academy, Bangladesh, Diploma Course on Trade Policy from National University of Singapore sponsored by WTO, Geneva, Certificate Course on International Trade Law from IDLO, Sydney, etc.

Mr. Kabir has participated in numerous meetings, seminars, workshops held around the world. He visited World Travel Mart (WTM), ITB-Berlin, PATA Travel Mart, MITT-Russia and lead the Bangladesh delegation. He attended 25th joint meeting of the UNWTO Commission for South Asia (CSA) and the UNWTO Commission for Asia and the Pacific (CAP) held at Hyderabad, India in 2013. He also attended the PATA Board meeting held at Bangaluru, India in last February 2015. Besides, he has visited many countries like USA, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, India, UK, Germany, Korea, Thailand and Europe for official purpose.

Beside his professional life Mr. Kabir is actively engaged in different types of Social Works and Sports & Cultural Activities. He is National Commissioner of Bangladesh SCOUTS.



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Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed

Professor, Dept. of International Relations, University of Dhaka

Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed is a Professor of International Relations and Founder Director at the Centre for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka. Prior to that, he has also taught at Sagesse University, University of Paris XI, Yokohama City University, Carleton University, and Jahangirnagar University.

His research interests include South Asian politics, religion and culture, tolerance and terrorism, the politics of development, refugees and migration, and women and the environment. He has published on a wide range of issues including *Contemporising Tagore & the World* (2013), *Women & Militancy: South Asian Complexities* (2011), and *Terrorism in the 21st Century: Perspectives from Bangladesh* (2009).

He completed his PhD from the Carleton University in Canada in 1991 after which he worked as a Foreign Policy Fellow at the School of Public Affairs at the University of Maryland.



Dr. Sreeradha Dutta,

Former Director, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of South Asian Studies (MAKAIAS)

Dr. Sreeradha Datta is author of three books including, *Caretaking Democracy: Political Process in Bangladesh, 2006-08*, *Bangladesh: A Fragile Democracy*, *The Northeast Complexities and its Determinants*, co-edited volumes on *Political Economy of India's North-East Border*, *Changing Security Dynamics in South East Asia* and *Northeast Border Trade Changing Dynamics in Southeast Asia*, and three monographs including, *China's Strategic Rise and its Implications for India with a focus on India's Northeast Security*, *Drug menace in South Asia: Pakistan connections*, an Occasional Paper, besides over 100 articles in journals, edited volumes and newspaper and academic websites.

She was till recently director, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata. Prior to this she has been a Fellow with Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi from 1998 till 2011. Specializing in South Asian studies she has a PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Amongst other distinctions, she has been recipient of International Leadership Visitors Programme, at USA, US State Department, awarded the Shelton Kodikara Award for South Asian Strategic Studies, and Distinguished Indian Scholar Series University of Taiwan.

Mr. Pratim Bose,

Deputy Editor and Chief of Bureau, Hindu Business Line



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Mr. Shyamal Dutta,
Editor, The Daily Bhorer Kagoj

Mr. Shyamal Dutta is an editor for Bhorer Kajog and anchor of a daily show, Current Affairs at ATN Bangla, a leading Bangla Chanel. Mr. Dutta is also currently vice president of Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA), London, director of Institute of Conflicts, law and Developments (ICLDS) and Executive member of National Press Club, Dhaka, Bangladesh. He has previously worked with Weekly Friday, Daily Bhorer Kagoj, and Bhorer Kajog as executive Editor and special correspondent. He has a B.A. from University of Dhaka and is married with two children.



Gopilal Acharya,
Independent journalist, Journalist Association of Bhutan

Gopilal Acharya is an independent consultant and freelance journalist. He was educated in Bhutan and Sweden. He is an award-winning journalist with a career spanning 17 years in media and communication industry. He has worked in Bhutan, Nepal, Singapore, and India. He worked as Chief Editor of Bhutan's first English language private newspaper, *Bhutan Times*, and later founded a weekly newspaper, *The Journalist*. Most recently he worked with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development in Kathmandu as Communication Specialist.

He has taken up several consulting assignments, working for the Royal Government of Bhutan, UNDP Bhutan, UNICEF Bhutan, Danida Bhutan, Asian Development Bank, International Finance Corporation, and the Community of Evaluators in Sri Lanka. He is also a member many local and international professional societies and volunteer organizations.

He is the author of *Bhutanese Folktales (From the South and the East)* and *Dancing to Death* (a collection of poems). The manuscript of his debut novel *With a Stone in My Heart* was long listed for the 2009 Man Asian Literary Prize. His latest book is about Denmark-Bhutan bilateral development relationship. He is a contributor to the *Asia Literary Review* and *Himal Southasian*. Gopilal Acharya's journalistic works have appeared in *The Straits Times*, *The Telegraph*, *Kuensel*, *Druk Journal*, and *The Third Pole*. He has authored (as well as co-authored) papers on disaster management, climate change, Gross National Happiness, Bhutan's media landscape, mountain forestry, and population studies, among others.



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Day II: Monday, 16 October 2017

Venue: BRAC Centre Inn, Dhaka

Welcome

Address:

Ambassador Biren Nanda

Senior Fellow, Delhi Policy Group

Special Address:

Prof. Prabir De

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)
Group Mentor, People to People Connectivity

Briefing on

Breakout

Sessions:

Ambassador Biren Nanda

Senior Fellow, Delhi Policy Group

Presentation by

Core Group

Mentors:

GROUP MENTORS

Group Mentor: Trade and Economic Issues

Mr. Purushottam Ojha, Former Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, Nepal

Group Mentor: Transit and Multimodal Connectivity

Mr. Pratim Bose, Chief of Bureau Business Line

Group Mentor: Energy-hydropower and Water Resource Management

Dr. Sagar Prasai, Country Representative, India, Asia Foundation

Group Mentor: People to People Connectivity through Multi-Sectoral Engagement

Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Former Director, MAKAIS



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DPG Round Table Discussion on Advancing BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation

Venue: BRAC Centre Inn, Dhaka,
Bangladesh, 15th – 16th October 2017

List of Discussants/ Commentators:

1.	Dr. M. Nurul Islam	Former Professor, Chemical Engineering Department and Institute of Appropriate Technology, BUET
2.	Mr. Shaquib Quoreshi	Secretary Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce & Industry
3.	Dr. M Tamim	Professor, PMRE Department and Former Special Assistant to the Chief Advisor, Department of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Engineering
4.	Mr. Enamul Haque Shamim	News Editor, Radio Today

DPG Roundtable Reports, Vol. 2, Issue 6

Roundtable on Advancing the BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation

BRAC Centre Inn | Dhaka | Bangladesh | October 15-16, 2017



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