



# Fourth Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue (BoBED)

**Towards a Prosperous Bay of Bengal amidst Global Uncertainties**

**16-17 January 2026**

**Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi**

## CONFERENCE BOOKLET



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# Agenda



## Day 1: 16 January 2026 (Friday)

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0900-1000 hrs Registration

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1000-1100 hrs Inaugural Session

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- *Welcome Remarks:* **Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma**, Director General (DG), RIS
- *Remarks:* **Amb. Sumith Nakandala**, Chairperson, Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue (BoBED), and former Secretary General, BIMSTEC
- *Remarks:* **Ms. Mikiko Tanaka**, Head, UNESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia (UNESCAP-SSWA), New Delhi
- *Special Address:* **H.E. Indra Mani Pandey**, Secretary General, BIMSTEC
- *Keynote Address:* **Amb. Periasamy Kumaran**, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi

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1100-1130 hrs Group Photo and Tea/coffee

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**1130-1300 hrs Session I: Reimagining Global South and the Role of the Bay of Bengal**

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- *Chair:* **Mr. Jayant Dasgupta**, Former Indian Ambassador to WTO, and Member, RIS Governing Board, New Delhi (online)
- *Special Remarks:* **Prof. Ram Singh**, Director, Delhi School of Economics (DSE), Delhi University, Delhi

*Speakers*

- **Dr. Wimon Punkong**, Dy. Executive Director, International Institute for Trade and Development (ITD), Bangkok
- **Dr. Mustafizur Rahman**, Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka (online)
- **Dr. Dayaratna Silva**, Former Ambassador of Sri Lanka to WTO, and Executive Director, Pathfinder Foundation, Colombo
- **Mr. Atul Kaushik**, GDC Fellow, RIS, New Delhi

Q&A

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**1300-1400 hrs Lunch**

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**1400-1530 hrs Session II: Trade, Investment, and Regional Value Chains: Deepening Regional Integration amidst Global Uncertainties**

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- *Chair:* **Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna**, Dy. Head and Senior Economic Affairs Officer, UNESCAP-SSWA, New Delhi
- *Special Remarks:* **Dr. Rupa Chanda**, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, UNESCAP, Bangkok

*Speakers*

- **Dr. Selim Raihan**, Executive Director, South Asia Network of Economic Modeling (SANEM) and Professor, Dhaka University, Dhaka (online)
- **Dr. Paras Kharel**, Executive Director, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Kathmandu
- **Prof. Amita Batra**, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi
- **Prof. Shahid Ahmed**, Professor, Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi

Q&A

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**1530-1600 hrs Tea/coffee**

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**1600-1730 hrs Session III: Economic Corridors and Multi-modal Connectivity: Integrating the Bay and Beyond**

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- *Chair:* **Amb. Rajiv Bhatia**, Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House, Mumbai
- *Special Remarks:* **Dr. Sanjeev Ranjan**, Former Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), New Delhi

*Speakers*

- **Dr. Mahfuz Kabir**, Research Director, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), Dhaka
- **Dr. Thiam Hee Ng**, Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration, South Asia Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB), New Delhi
- **Mr. Joseph George**, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP-SSWA, New Delhi
- **Dr. Prabir De**, Professor, RIS, New Delhi

Q&A

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**1830 hrs Reception and Dinner (Habitat Terrace, India Habitat Centre)**

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**Day 2: 17 January 2026 (Saturday)**

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**1000-1130 hrs Session IV: Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Blue Economy: Towards a Resilient Bay of Bengal**

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- *Chair:* **Cmde. Sujeet Samaddar**, Visiting Fellow, RIS, New Delhi
- *Special Remarks:* **Dr. J R Bhat**, Member, Central Empowered Committee (Constituted by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India), and Distinguished Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi

*Speakers*

- **Dr. Shailly Kedia**, Senior Fellow and Director, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi
- **Dr. Om Katel**, Lecturer, College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan, Thimphu
- **Mr. Rajdeep Mukherjee**, Policy Analyst, BOBP-IGO, and BIMSTEC-India Marine Research Network (BIMReN), Chennai
- **Prof. S K Mohanty**, Distinguished Fellow, RIS, New Delhi

Q&A

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**1130-1200 hrs Tea/Coffee**

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**1200 – 1330 hrs Session V: AI Governance and Digital Integration: Enabling Integration, Key Challenges and Solutions**

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- *Chair:* **Dr. Arabinda Mitra**, Distinguished Fellow and Former Scientific Secretary, Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to Government of India, New Delhi

*Special Remarks*

- **Prof. Rajat Kathuria**, Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Shiv Nadar University, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Delhi NCR
- **Mr. Vinayak Godse**, CEO, Data Security Council of India, and Head, National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) for Cybersecurity Technology and Entrepreneurship, New Delhi

*Speakers*

- **Dr. Sineenat Sermcheep**, Director, ASEAN Studies Centre, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok (online)
- **Prof. Arpita Mukherjee**, Professor, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi
- **Mr. Vivek Rana**, Consultant, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Kathmandu
- **Dr. Amit Kumar**, Assistant Professor, RIS, New Delhi

Q&A

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**1330-1430 hrs Lunch**

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**1430-1600 hrs Session VI: Accelerating Regional Integration in the Bay of Bengal: Role of the People-to-People Contacts**

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- *Chair:* **Amb. Sumith Nakandala**, Chairperson, Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue (BoBED), and former Secretary General, BIMSTEC
- *Special Remarks:* **Prof. Amitabh Mattoo**, Dean, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi

*Speakers*

- **Mr. Uttam Kumar Shahi**, Director, BIMSTEC, Dhaka
- **Amb. Lahpai Zau Goone**, Senior Adviser, Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS), Yangon
- **Dr. Constantino Xavier**, Senior Fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), New Delhi



- **Prof. Surat Horachaikul**, Director, Indian Studies Centre, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok
- **Mr. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury**, Diplomatic Editor, The Economic Times, New Delhi

Q&A

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**1600 - 1630 hrs Tea/Coffee Break**

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**1630 - 1700 hrs Session VII: Valedictory Session: Towards a Resilient, Equitable and Inclusive Bay of Bengal**

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- *Chair:* **Dr. Seshadri Chari**, Member, Governing Board, RIS
- *Valedictory Address:* **Mr. C S R Ram**, Joint Secretary (SAARC and BIMSTEC), MEA, New Delhi
- *Closing Remarks:* **Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma**, DG, RIS
- **Release of Delhi Declaration**
- *Vote of Thanks:* **Dr. Priyadarshi Dash**, Associate Professor, RIS, New Delhi

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**1700 - 1730 hrs. High Tea and End of the 4th BoBED**

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# Profile of Speakers

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## Inaugural Session

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### **Professor Sachin Kumar Sharma**

Director General, RIS

Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma is the Director General of RIS. He has over two decades of expertise in international trade, development cooperation, and multilateral and regional negotiations. His research, advocacy, and capacity-building work have shaped discussions on trade and development, agricultural subsidies, investment, food security, sustainability, market access, trade disputes, transparency, LDC graduation, Aid for Trade, and negotiations at the WTO, FAO, G20, and in regional trade agreements. He holds an M.Phil and a PhD in Economics from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi, with a specialisation in the WTO, international trade, quantitative techniques, and agricultural policy. He is skilled in econometrics, Computable General Equilibrium (GTAP), Partial Equilibrium Modelling, and statistical tools, with extensive experience in trade analytics. Prof. Sharma has authored six books, numerous peer-reviewed journal articles, several working papers, and book chapters, in addition to regularly contributing to policy debates through articles in leading newspapers and participating in global forums. Before joining RIS, he served as a Professor at the Centre for WTO Studies (CWS) at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade.



### **Ambassador Sumith Nakandala**

Former Secretary General, BIMSTEC & Chairman, BoBED, Colombo

Ambassador Sumith Nakandala is a career member of the Sri Lanka Foreign Service with extensive experience in diplomacy and international relations. He has served at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombo and in overseas postings in the Maldives, India (New Delhi and Chennai), and the United States (New York). He has held ambassadorial appointments to Nepal, Iraq, and the Netherlands, and served as Deputy High Commissioner in Chennai and London. From 2014 to 2017, he was the first Secretary-General of BIMSTEC. He later served as Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and as Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the Netherlands, with concurrent accreditation to the OPCW and the Common Fund for Commodities. He is currently a Visiting Scholar at the Department of Political Science, University of Peradeniya, Colombo.



### **Ms. Mikiko Tanaka**

Director and Head of ESCAP Sub-regional Office for South and South-West Asia Office, New Delhi

Ms. Mikiko Tanaka is the Director and Head of ESCAP Sub-regional Office for South and South-West Asia Office, New Delhi effective 2 May 2022. Ms. Tanaka brings over twenty-five years of experience within the United Nations system. She most recently served as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Guyana and worked with UNDP in Guyana, Yemen, Timor-Leste, Pakistan, Benin, China, Lao PDR and New York. Prior to the UN, she worked for Care International in Thailand and the financial sector in Japan. Ms. Tanaka holds master's degrees in applied conflict transformation from Paññasastra University and Center for Peace and Conflict Studies in Cambodia, public policy and management from the University of London and in rural development management from Khon Kaen University in Thailand, and a bachelor's degree from the International Christian University in Japan.



### **H.E. Indra Mani Pandey**

Secretary General, BIMSTEC

His Excellency Indra Mani Pandey is a career diplomat of India. He joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1990. Before his current assignment, he served as Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations and Other International organizations in Geneva. He had earlier served as Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs in-charge of Disarmament & International Security Affairs Division. During his 33 years long career as an Indian diplomat, Ambassador Pandey has served as Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman. Before his Ambassadorial assignment in Muscat, he served as Deputy Ambassador of India to France and Consul General of India at Guangzhou, China. Ambassador Pandey had also served in various diplomatic capacities at Indian Missions in Cairo (Egypt), Damascus (Syria), Islamabad (Pakistan), Kabul (Afghanistan) and Permanent Mission of India to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva (Switzerland). During his earlier stints at the Ministry of External Affairs of India in New Delhi, Ambassador Pandey handled assignments in West Asia and North Africa Division; Consular, Passport and Visa Division; Counter Terrorism Cell; Americas Division; and Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Myanmar (BSM) Division. During October 1998- June 1999, Ambassador Pandey attended Foreign Service Programme at Oxford University, the U.K. In 2009, he attended the 49th Annual Course on National Security and Strategy, conducted by National Defence College of India.





## **Ambassador Periasamy Kumaran**

Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi

Ambassador Periasamy Kumaran belongs to the 1992 batch of the Indian Foreign Service. His first assignment was as Third Secretary in the Embassy of India, Cairo (1994-1997), followed by his posting as Second Secretary in the Embassy of India, Tripoli (1997-2000) and then as First Secretary in the Embassy of India, Brussels (2000-2003). Following this, he returned to India and served as Deputy Secretary [Europe West] in the Ministry of External Affairs (2003-2005). Amb Kumaran then served as the Regional Passport Officer, Bangalore (2005-2007), followed by a posting to Pakistan, where he served as Counsellor in the High Commission of India, Islamabad (2007-2009) and then as Counsellor in the Embassy of India, Washington, (2009-2011), and thereafter as Deputy High Commissioner at the High Commission of India in Colombo (2011-2014). His next assignment was at the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, as Joint Secretary (Consular, Passport & Visa Division) (2014-2016). He then moved to Qatar for his first Ambassadorial assignment, to serve as Ambassador of India, Doha (2016-2020). From Doha, he moved to Singapore as the High Commissioner of India to Singapore (2020-2023). In July 2023, he assumed charge as Additional Secretary (Economic Relations & Development Partnership Administration) and was later promoted to Special Secretary (ER & DPA) in the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi. He took over his current charge as Secretary (East) on 1st April 2025. Shri Kumaran has a B.Tech in Electronics and Communication, from IIT Madras (Chennai).

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## **Session I: Reimagining Global South and the Role of the Bay of Bengal**

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## **Mr. Jayant Dasgupta**

Former Indian Ambassador to WTO and Member, RIS Governing Board, New Delhi

Mr. Jayant Dasgupta is member of the Indian Administrative Service, and a trade specialist with extensive experience in multilateral and bilateral negotiations. Served as India's Ambassador to the WTO (2010-2014), he helped shaping national positions on agriculture, services, and intellectual property during the Doha Round and other key negotiations. He held senior roles across the Commerce Department, Ministry of Textiles, and as Secretary to the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, and contributed to policies on FTAs, SEZs, and TRIPS. He has been recognized for advocacy on protecting India's agriculture and dairy sectors, advancing interests of labour-intensive industries such as textiles and leather, and navigating complex India-US trade dynamics. He serves as an arbitrator in trade disputes and a frequent commentator on multilateralism versus bilateralism. He combines technical legal knowledge with practical negotiation experience to advise governments, industry stakeholders, and international forums on trade strategy, dispute resolution, and policy design that balance development objectives with global trade commitments.



### **Prof. Ram Singh**

Director, Delhi School of Economics (DSE), Delhi University and Member of the RBI Monetary Policy Committee

Dr. Ram Singh is Professor at the Delhi School of Economics (DSE), University of Delhi. He holds Ph.D. (JNU, New Delhi) and Post-Doctorate (Harvard) degrees in economics. His areas of research interests are contract theory, public economics, public private partnerships, and law and economics. He is a recipient of Fulbright, Commonwealth, and Erasmus Mundus Fellowships in economics Ronald Coase Fellowships in economics. Some of his publications include “The Inefficiency of Compulsory Land Acquisition” in the Economic and Political Weekly, 2012; “The Efficiency of Comparative Causation” (with Francesco Parisi) in the Review of Law and Economics 2011; “Delays and Cost Overruns in Infrastructure Projects: Extents, Causes and Remedies” in the Economic and Political Weekly, 2010; “Comparative Vigilance” (with Allan Feldman), in the American Law and Economics Review, 2009. He has taught at the DSE, Brown University, University of Hamburg, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and has been Commonwealth Fellow at the London School of Economics. He is Co-editor of the Indian Economic Review.



### **Dr. Wimon Punkong**

Deputy Executive Director (Academic), International Institute for Trade and Development (ITD), Bangkok

Dr. Wimon Punkong serves as Deputy Executive Director (Academic Affairs) at the International Institute for Trade and Development (ITD) under the Ministry of Commerce, Thailand. He is a researcher specializing in international trade economics, with more than 25 years of experience in policy-oriented research. His research focuses on trade facilitation, impact analysis of trade agreements at both bilateral and multilateral levels, enhancing the utilization of trade agreements, the transition to a green economy and a digital economy, and the promotion of international investment to support supply chain development. He plays an active role in academic communication and knowledge dissemination, providing expertise to entrepreneurs and students as an international trade specialist, with the aim of raising awareness of international economic issues and their implications for economic and social development.



### **Professor Mustafizur Rahman**

Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka

Professor Mustafizur Rahman is a Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka. Earlier Professor Rahman had taught at the University of Dhaka. Dr. Rahman was educated at Moscow State University, where he did his Ph.D., Oxford University, UK and Warwick University, UK, where he was Post-Doctoral Fellow and Yale University, USA, where he was Senior Fulbright

Fellow. His recent works have focused on Bangladesh's macro-trade-fiscal policies, sustainable LDC graduation and regional and global integration. His works were published by Routledge, McMillan, Hart and other reputed publishing houses. He was a member of Panel of Economists of various Five-Year Plans of Bangladesh. He is a Series Editor of South Asia Economic Policy Studies published by Springer. He was a member of the White Paper Committee set up by the Interim Government of Bangladesh and is currently a member of the High-Level Expert Group set up to advise the Government on Bangladesh's upcoming LDC graduation.



### **Dr. Dayaratna Silva**

Former Ambassador of Sri Lanka to WTO and Executive Director of Pathfinder Foundation, Colombo

Dr. Dayaratna Silva is an International Trade Economist with over 35 years of experience specializing in trade and economic policy, trade facilitation, and international economic and development policy. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Hons.), First Class, from the University of Peradeniya, a PhD in Economics from the University of Melbourne, and a master's degree in international economics from the University of London. He currently serves as Executive Director of the Pathfinder Foundation and has previously held senior roles with the International Trade Centre in Geneva and UNESCAP in New Delhi. His diplomatic and public service career includes appointments as Sri Lanka's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the WTO, Director of Commerce at the Department of Commerce (DoC) in Sri Lanka, Consul General to the UAE, and Minister (Economic and Commercial) in Geneva, Brussels, and London. During his career, attached to DoC spanning over 25 years, he was responsible for a wide range of duties, including representing and safeguarding Sri Lanka's interests in multilateral and regional trade negotiations under the WTO, UNCTAD, GSP, GSTP, SAARC, and BIMSTEC frameworks.



### **Mr. Atul Kaushik**

Former Additional Secretary, Government of India and GDC Fellow, RIS, New Delhi

Mr. Atul Kaushik has worked in the Government of India for 35 years dealing with bilateral and multilateral trade policy, climate change, justice, and the Parliament. He has been India's negotiator for international trade at the WTO and climate change at the UNFCCC. He has delivered multiple development cooperation projects in Africa and for developing country Missions in Geneva. After retirement, he has been working on development cooperation including triangular cooperation with Indian, U.S., and German governments. Currently, he advises Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) on India's development partnership initiative called DAKSHIN - the Global South Centre of Excellence, leads its Global Development Centre (GDC) and contributes to its international trade law related work.



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## Session II: Trade, Investment, and Regional Value Chains: Deepening Regional Integration amidst Global Uncertainties

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### **Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna**

Dy. Head and Senior Economic Affairs Officer, UNESCAP-SSWA, New Delhi

Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna is a policy specialist with 39 years of experience in formulating government trade and economic policy, leading research, and delivering technical assistance to governments. Former Indian civil servant with 25 years in the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, he was responsible for India's foreign trade policy and trade negotiations at the WTO and in bilateral/multilateral FTAs. Implemented Uruguay Round commitments and led India's engagement in the Doha Round. He has served as lead negotiator on 15+ Free Trade Agreements (1999–2012). He was Professor and Head, Centre for WTO Studies, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (2008–2010); visiting professor at universities in India and abroad. He has been prolific author of books and peer-reviewed articles; recent UNESCAP paper on reciprocal tariffs and their impact on South and South-West Asia. He has been recognized for strategic negotiation skills, policy design, capacity building, and bridging research with practical policy implementation. Dr. Rajan holds Ph.D. in Economics; M.Phil in Environmental Sciences; Executive Programme in Trade Policy and Negotiations, Harvard University.



### **Dr. Rupa Chanda**

Director, Trade, Investment, and Innovation Division, UNESCAP, Bangkok

Dr. Rupa Chanda is the Director of Trade, Investment, and Innovation at UN ESCAP. Earlier, she worked as a Professor of Economics at the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore and was an Economist at the IMF in Washington, DC. She holds a PhD from Columbia University and BA from Harvard University. Her research interests include the WTO, international trade in services, regional integration, health services, and migration. She has served on national and international committees and advisory boards in these areas and has undertaken research for several international organizations and think tanks, including the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), OECD, European Commission, World Bank and ICRIER. She has published extensively in the form of authored and edited books, journal articles, book chapters, reports, and popular media articles. She frequently presents in national and international forums.





## **Professor Selim Raihan**

**Executive Director, SANEM, and Professor Dhaka University, Dhaka**

Dr Selim Raihan is a Professor at the Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and the Executive Director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM). He holds a PhD from the University of Manchester, UK. Professor Raihan is the Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Manchester, UK. He is an alumnus of Harvard University's program on "Cutting Edge of Development Thinking". He possesses vast expertise in empirical research on international trade, economic growth, poverty, labour market, macroeconomic policies, political economy, and climate change issues. He has worked quite extensively on applied economics, especially assessing impacts of trade and economic policies, using country-specific and global Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) models, and micro and macro-econometric modelling and estimation techniques. Professor Raihan is the editor of Thinking Aloud – a monthly digest from SANEM. He contributed extensively to the preparation of the Sixth and Seventh Five-year National Plans of Bangladesh. He led a research team to prepare the SDG Financing Strategy: Bangladesh Perspective - a flagship publication of the Planning Commission of Bangladesh. He 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, etc.



## **Dr Paras Kharel**

**Executive Director, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Kathmandu**

Dr. Paras Kharel is an economist engaged in research, capacity building and policy advocacy on international trade and development. He has been with South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) – a Kathmandu-based think tank – since 2007 and is currently its Executive Director. He has a PhD in Economics (University of Melbourne) with specialization in international trade and applied microeconometrics. Kharel's research and publications span regional integration, trade facilitation, gains from trade, application of structural gravity models, World Trade Organization issues, export competitiveness, aid for trade, linkages between trade policy and industrialization, structural transformation, sustainable development, development finance, economic reforms, SMEs, trade and development issues of least-developed and landlocked countries, and migration and remittances. His publications include two edited volumes on South Asian cooperation/integration, and articles in peer-reviewed journals such as Review of International Economics, International Economics, East Asian Economic Review and Review of Development Economics.



### **Professor Amita Batra**

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi

Dr. Amita Batra is a Professor, South Asian Studies, JNU. She has worked as Senior Fellow at the ICRIER, New Delhi for five years and before that as Reader, Economics, Hindu College, University of Delhi. Dr. Batra has also worked as Consultant for the World Bank, New Delhi and as Visiting Professor, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. She has to her credit several national and international publications in refereed and other journals including two Books, namely, *India and the Asian Corridor* and *Preferential Trading Agreements in Asia: towards an Asian Economic Community*. Dr. Batra's areas of specialization include International Trade and Finance, Regional Economic Integration with a special focus on South Asia/ Asia, Gravity model, Trade and conflict, Time series modelling.



### **Professor Shahid Ahmed**

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

Prof. Shahid Ahmed is a Professor of Economics at Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), New Delhi, and a leading scholar in international trade, macroeconomics, and sustainable development, with over twenty-nine years of experience in teaching, research, and policy engagement. His work integrates theoretical rigor with applied policy analysis, with a strong focus on globalization, trade policy, and development challenges faced by emerging and developing economies. At JMI, Prof. Ahmed has held several senior academic and administrative positions, including Head of the Department of Economics, Director of the Centre for Jawaharlal Nehru Studies, and Finance Officer of the University, contributing significantly to academic governance and institutional development. Beyond JMI, he served as Economist and Senior Economist at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), where he was involved in trade modeling, CGE-based policy analysis, regional economic integration and capacity-building initiatives across India and the Global South. Prof. Ahmed has also been associated as an Honorary Senior Adjunct Fellow with the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi. He has authored seven books, published over 105 research papers, supervised numerous doctoral scholars, and played a major role in curriculum development across Indian universities in alignment with NEP 2020.

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## Session III: Economic Corridors and Multi-modal Connectivity: Integrating the Bay and Beyond

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### Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia

Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House, Mumbai

Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia is Distinguished Fellow, Foreign Studies Programme at Gateway House. He serves on CII's International Advisory Council, Trade Policy Council and Africa Committee, and chairs FICCI's Task Force on Blue Economy. He earlier chaired the Core Group of Experts on BIMSTEC, is a founding member of the Kalinga International Foundation, and sits on the governing council of Asian Confluence. As Director General of the Indian Council of World Affairs (2012-15), he strengthened India's Track-II research and outreach. A career Indian Foreign Service diplomat with 37 years' experience, he served as Ambassador to Myanmar and Mexico, High Commissioner to Kenya, South Africa and Lesotho, and Joint Secretary (South Asia) in the MEA, and was Senior Visiting Research Fellow at ISEAS (2011-13). A prolific columnist and speaker on foreign policy, his expertise spans the Quad and Indo-Pacific, South and Southeast Asia, Africa and the Blue Economy; he holds an MA in Political Science from Allahabad University and authored *India in Global Affairs* (2015), *India-Myanmar Relations* (2016) and *India-Africa Relations* (2022).



### Dr Sanjeev Ranjan

Former Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), New Delhi

Dr. Sanjeev Ranjan is Member of the Major Ports Adjudicatory Board, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India, with over 37 years of experience in multi-modal connectivity, trade facilitation, and ease of doing business. He served as Chairman, National Shipping Board and as Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (2020-2023), where he finalized the New Model PPP Concession Agreement (2021), boosting private participation in Sagarmala and port development. He spearheaded Maritime India Vision 2030 and the Blue Economy Vision 2047 roadmap, and re-conceptualized the National Maritime Heritage Complex, including recreation of the 2000 BC Lothal Dockyard. As Chairman, NHAI and Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (2016-2020), he oversaw Bharatmala, Expressways, Golden Quadrilateral, and regional highway projects. Earlier, as Chief Secretary of Tripura, he addressed connectivity challenges, and as Joint Secretary, Ministry of Defence, restructured the Border Roads Organization for faster completion of DS-DBO, Lipulekh, and other border linkages. Dr. Ranjan holds degrees from IIT Kanpur, FMS Delhi, University of Glasgow, IIT Delhi (PhD), National University of Singapore, and was a Lee Kuan Yew Fellow at Harvard University.





### **Dr Mahfuz Kabir**

Research Director, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), Dhaka

Dr Mahfuz Kabir is Economist by training and profession. He is currently Research Director at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), Dhaka. He holds PhD in Economics from School of Economics and Finance, Curtin University, Australia (thesis title: Trade Response to Economic Regionalism in BIMSTEC). His areas of research interest include international trade and regional integration, connectivity, BIMSTEC, SAARC, macroeconomic issues, disasters and climate change, energy, time series and panel data econometrics, stochastic frontier analysis, partial and computable general equilibrium modeling. He has more than 100 publications from home and abroad that includes Elsevier, Taylor and Francis, World Bank, Springer Nature, and UNDP. He regularly speaks at various televisions channels of Bangladesh in talk shows and news.



### **Dr. Thiam Hee Ng**

Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration South Asia Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Dr. Thiam Hee Ng is an economist with extensive experience in regional cooperation, economic development, and finance. At the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Dr. Ng leads the regional cooperation and integration program for South Asia, driving multi-country initiatives that strengthen connectivity, trade, and sustainable development. He also heads ADB's operations in Maldives. Dr. Ng holds a Ph.D. and M.Sc. in Economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a B.A. (Hons.) in Economics from the University of Cambridge.



### **Mr. Joseph George**

ESCAP-SSWA, New Delhi

Mr. Joseph George is a trade analyst working at United Nations ESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia, where he provides research support for implementation of UNESCAP's projects and programmes on regional trade, connectivity, and economic integration in Southern Asia. He has more than ten years of work experience on development issues of South Asia. His co-authored published works include 'The Doha Round and South Asia: Need for Better Coordination' (2011); 'Cost of Economic Non-cooperation to Consumers in South Asia' (2012); 'Reforming Non-Tariff Barriers: Case for a Participatory Approach in South Asia' (2013); 'Unlocking the Potential of Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in South Asia' (2017); 'Integrating South Asia's Power Grid for a Sustainable and Low Carbon Future' (2018); and 'Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Food Security in South Asia' (2020).





### **Dr. Prabir De**

Professor, RIS, New Delhi

Dr. Prabir De is a Professor at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi. He works in the field of international economics and has research interests in international trade and development. He has been conducting policy research for the Government of India and several national and international organisations including UN agencies and multilateral development banks. He was a Visiting Fellow of the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO); Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI); Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP); and Visiting Senior Fellow of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). He has contributed several research papers in international journals and written books on trade and development.

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## **Session IV: Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Blue Economy: Towards a Resilient Bay of Bengal**

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### **Cmde. Sujeet Samaddar**

Visiting Fellow, RIS, New Delhi

Commodore Sujeet Samaddar, NM (Retd) is a Visiting Fellow at RIS, New Delhi. He is the Founder and Secretary of Society for Aerospace Maritime and Defence Studies, (SAMDeS) a Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Air Power and Strategic Studies (CAPSS) and Member of the Governing Council of Society for Indian Ocean Studies (SIOS). Commodore Sujeet Samaddar graduated from IIT Roorkee (B.E) in 1978. Samaddar began his career as an Engineer Trainee with Tata Consulting Engineers, Mumbai. Commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1980, Samaddar held various staff, four command appointments and retired in 2009 as Principal Director Naval Plans. He was awarded the Nao Sena Medal by the President of India in 2008. He specialises in Maritime Policy, Maritime History, Shipbuilding, Circular Economy and Sustainable resource utilisation, Green Hydrogen and derivatives, Space technology for developmental applications. Post retirement he has served as Vice President Operations, NOVA Integrated Systems, a TATA Enterprise and Director and CEO of ShinMaywa Industries (Japan). Samaddar was Senior Consultant (Industry), NITI Aayog, Government of India until January 2019. He drafted the National Maritime Policy and the National Material Recycling Policy and was also involved in preparing the FDI policy for the aerospace and defence sector, small arms manufacturing, regional transport aircraft program amongst other industry issues. He also prepared the Draft Vehicle Scrapping Policy for MoRTH.



### **Dr J.R. Bhatt**

**Distinguished Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi**

Dr. J.R. Bhatt is an internationally recognized expert on various facets of environment, prominently climate change and biodiversity. As a lead negotiator, he regularly represented India, championing and mainstreaming the principles of conservation, sustainable development, equity, climate justice, balance between mitigation and adaptation, climate friendly lifestyles, means of implementation and technology transfer at over 90 important international meetings. He had been the Designated National Focal Point for all matters pertaining to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and for National Communications including Biennial Updates to the UNFCCC. He also co-authored India's First Biodiversity Action Plan which continues to form the basis for work on Biodiversity within the country. He has guided and mentored extensive research on climate change and biodiversity throughout the country. He has an unreserved commitment to India's all round inclusive growth and development.



### **Dr. Shailly Kedia**

**Senior Fellow and Director, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi**

Dr Shailly Kedia is a policy researcher who is a Director and Senior Fellow with the Centre for Sustainable Development Research and Leadership at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi. Dr Kedia has been with TERI since 2009, and her core research interests include the interface of sustainable development with climate policy, budgeting, public procurement, and international organization. In the past, Dr Kedia has worked with the Sustainable Development Network of the World Bank in Washington, DC, and with the Center for Climate Systems Research at Columbia University and NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York. She has academic degrees in international organization, finance and applied sciences.



### **Dr. Om Katel**

**Lecturer, College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan, Thimphu**

Dr. Om Katel is a faculty member at the College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan (Lobesa, Punakha). He holds a PhD in Natural Resources Management and has advanced his expertise through post-doctoral research at Nagoya University, Japan. Dr Katel teaches diverse courses, including Integrated Watershed Management, Environmental Systems Analysis, Statistics, and Climate Change, to undergraduate and postgraduate students. He has participated in prestigious international programs on sustainable development, including the Youth Encounter on Sustainability (YES) in Switzerland; the Intensive Program on Sustainability (IPoS) at the Asian Institute of Technology (Thailand) and University of Tokyo (Japan); training at the International Centre for Climate

Change and Development (ICCCAD) in Dhaka, Bangladesh; the Alliance for Global Sustainability (AGS) at the University of Tokyo, Japan; and the South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE) in Kathmandu, Nepal. Mr. Katel's research focuses on critical areas such as climate risk assessment, urbanisation in mountainous regions, hydrology, ecosystem services, land-use change, and biodiversity conservation. His work addresses critical challenges in biodiversity conservation, food systems, water resources, and ecosystem services in the vulnerable Himalayan context.



### **Mr. Rajdeep Mukherjee**

Policy Analyst, BOBP-IGO, and BIMSTEC-India Marine Research Network (BIMReN), Chennai

Mr. Rajdeep Mukherjee joined the BOBP-IGO in 2004 as a Research Associate and later assumed the position of Policy Analyst in 2009. His responsibilities include assisting the Director in programme development, implementation and evaluation; providing scientific inputs for policy advisory and theoretical contribution towards improving fisheries management of the region. His main contributions include assistance in developing national MCS plans for BOBP-IGO member- countries, policy advisory in improving small-scale fisheries in the region and addressing IUU fishing and livelihood support through improving fisheries management, etc. He was also credited for assisting in designing and implementing the first national level study on socio-economic condition of salt workers in India. Earlier he has worked as a Research Associate in the Centre for Rural Economy, Appropriate Technology and Environment (CREATE) in Saint Joseph's College, Darjeeling, where he helped in developing marketing strategy for the handloom and handicraft sector of North-East India for the Consortium of Indian Industries and developing a guideline for private-public partnership for greening of degraded forest lands. Mr Mukherjee holds an M. Phil Degree in Economics from University of North Bengal with specialization in Natural Resource Economics and Econometrics.



### **Prof. S.K. Mohanty**

Distinguished Fellow, RIS, New Delhi

Professor S. K. Mohanty serves as a Distinguished Fellow at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi. His work on BIMSTEC focuses on advancing regional trade integration and strengthening agricultural value chains. His broader research interests extend to trade and tariff analysis, quantitative trade modelling, ESG issues, trade protection, macroeconomic evaluation, and mechanisms of regional trade financing. His contributions encompass regional trading arrangements, multilateral frameworks, technology-intensive trade, trade classifications, MSME development, South Asian integration, and evolving trade relations with China. He has led numerous international studies addressing bilateral and regional FTAs, the food processing sector in Asia, and Southern



perspectives on development cooperation. His policy contributions include shaping India's Blue Economy and maritime strategies through roles in the Ministry of Commerce, PMEAC, and NITI Aayog. Presently, his research agenda encompasses Free Trade Agreements under negotiation, North-South trade dynamics, and sectoral studies on fishery trade. Formerly a faculty member at Jawaharlal Nehru University, he also served as Chair of the IORA Academic Group and Vice-Chair of the G20 Think Tank Trade Working Group during India's presidencies.

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## Session V: AI Governance and Digital Integration: Enabling Integration, Key Challenges and Solutions

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### **Dr. Arabinda Mitra**

Distinguished Fellow and Former Scientific Secretary, Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to Government of India, New Delhi

Dr. Arabinda Mitra holds a PhD from University of Cambridge, U.K., and is an Earth Scientist by training with four decades of experience at the interface of research, education and innovation. Both as a scientist and as an able science administrator, he has held scientific positions in the Dept of Atomic Energy, Ministry of Earth Sciences and the Dept of Science & Technology, Government of India. At the National Centre for Polar & Ocean Research, Goa, he was responsible for formulating and implementing the scientific programs of the Indian Antarctic expedition and established the first low temperature ice-core research laboratory of the country. He has been a member of the Indian expedition to Antarctica and has undertaken research cruises to the Indian, Atlantic, Pacific and Southern Oceans. He has won several academic awards including Cambridge-Nehru Fellowship, ORS Award of UK; Bursary Award of St. Edmund's College UK; JSPS Bridge Award of Japan and was elected as a Fellow of the Geological Society, London. He has authored international publications in Nature, Marine Chemistry, Geochimica Cosmochimica Acta, International Journal of Remote Sensing, etc. In 2004, Dr. Mitra was appointed as the first Executive Director of the bi-national Indo-US Science and Technology Forum where he played a seminal role in enriching the scope and contents of Indo-American cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) by linking academia, research laboratories and industry. In 2011, Dr. Mitra assumed the position of Adviser & Head International Cooperation in DST, where he oversaw India's research and innovation engagements with 44 countries across the globe. In 2018, he was appointed as the Scientific Secretary in the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser with the mandate to develop national S&T missions, provide policy interventions, and render periodic advice across the Government in matters related to science, technology and innovation. Subsequently, as a Distinguished Fellow in the O/o PSA he was involved in developing capacity building plans for scientists and technologists of seven S&T Departments of Government of India. He



has served on numerous Governing Boards/Councils of research institutions and industry bodies. From Nov 2022 until Jan 2025, he served as Advisor in the Startup Incubation and Innovation Centre of IIT-Kanpur. Currently he is serving as Advisor with the Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer at IIT-Delhi supporting deep-tech startup eco-system across sectoral domains. He also serves as Consultant with the Wadhvani Foundation working with top academic institutions to support translational research aimed towards technology-led product development and promoting startup enterprises.



### **Professor Rajat Kathuria**

Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Shiv Nadar University, New Delhi

Professor Rajat Kathuria carries over 20 years of experience in teaching and more than 15 years of experience in economic policy, besides pursuing extensive research on a range of issues relating to regulation and competition policy while working with ILO and UNCTAD. His work has been published in several journals of repute as well as in top magazines and newspapers across the world. He serves on multiple industry and government Committees such as the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Committee on International Trade Policy and Exports, the Implementation for Intended Determined Contribution (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India), and on the Research Advisory Council of the State Bank of India (SBI).



### **Mr. Vinayak Godse**

CEO, Data Security Council of India (DSCI), New Delhi

Mr. Vinayak Godse is the CEO of Data Security Council of India. He has over 30 years of experience in Information Security, IT Transformation, Intelligent Networking and Telecom Infrastructure. Vinayak also leads the National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) for Cybersecurity Technology and Entrepreneurship, a joint initiative of DSCI and Ministry of Electronics & IT. He is engaged in cybersecurity industry building, fostering security research and product engineering, and building an ecosystem for security entrepreneurship. He is engaged in the DSCI outreach program at national and international platforms in establishing collaboration with different legal and regulatory bodies, data protection authorities, global clients, and service providers. He is the principal author of the DSCI Security Framework (DSF) and DSCI Privacy Framework (DPF). He was instrumental in developing privacy credential program, DSCI Certified Privacy Lead Assessor (DCPLA) and DSCI Certified Privacy Professional [DCPP]. He is also closely working with government bodies involved in policymaking and capability building in national cybersecurity, data protection, and data policies. He has been advising DSCI members on their data protection strategies, and also overseeing efforts for privacy innovation and engineering in the country. Vinayak contributes to national and sectoral initiatives, as empanelment auditors by CERT-In, cyber security committees of regulators across all sectors and other policy institutions. He has been working closely with

MeitY, MHA, Department of Commerce and MEA on transborder data flow and global cybersecurity norms, etc. Before joining DSCI, he worked with the Global Consulting Practice of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) as a Consultant, Information Risk Management, and as a Telecom Engineer at Bharat Sanchar Limited. Before that, he was working with DOT and BSNL in core telecom switching, mobility, and intelligent networking.



### **Asst. Prof. Dr. Sineenat Sermcheep**

Director, ASEAN Studies Center, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

Dr. Sineenat Sermcheep is the Director of the ASEAN Studies Center and a lecturer at the Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. She is also a chairperson of the Center for Labor Development and Management. She earned her Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Utah and is currently an Assistant Professor of Economics at Chulalongkorn University. She was Associate Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, and Director of Research Affairs, ASEAN Studies Center, Chulalongkorn University. Her academic interests involve issues related to foreign direct investment, digital economy, trade in services, economic integration, and ASEAN. Her recent publications include *Digital Connectivity in ASEAN: Opportunities and Challenges* (2024), *Digital Trade with the Bay of Bengal Region: Thailand's Perspectives* (2024), *Enhancing ASEAN-India Digital Connectivity: Pathway to Shared Prosperity* (2023), and *Digital Investment and the Post-Pandemic Recovery in ASEAN* (2022).



### **Professor Arpita Mukherjee**

Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi

Dr. Arpita Mukherjee is a Professor at ICRIER with over three decades of experience, including extensive work on the IT/ITeS sector in India and global markets. She has led and authored several high-impact studies on technology services trade, digital economy regulations, cross-border data flows, and investment policy, working closely with government ministries, multilateral organizations, and industry bodies such as NASSCOM. Her work has informed policy negotiations, market access strategies, and reforms affecting India's IT and IT-enabled services exports, particularly in the UK, EU, North America, and Asia-Pacific regions. With deep expertise in regulatory analysis, stakeholder consultations, and data-driven policy design, she has contributed to strengthening India's global competitiveness in IT/ITeS, supporting innovation, ease of doing business, and sustainable growth in the digital services ecosystem. Dr. Mukherjee has a PhD in Economics from the University of Portsmouth, UK, and prior to joining ICRIER, she worked with the UK based think-tank Policy Studies Institute and taught at the University of Portsmouth.



### **Mr. Vivek S. Rana**

Consultant, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Kathmandu

Mr. Vivek S. Rana is an Artificial Intelligence (AI) generalist and a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and e-governance architect who translates policy goals into interoperable platforms at scale. Over the past 20 years, he has worked across Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Bhutan, and beyond - partnering with ADB, the World Bank, NORAD, GIZ, DFID/DANIDA, the EU, and UNDP. His portfolio spans Digital ID/CRVS, secure data exchange and API design, real-time payments/EFT, and public financial management (PFM) modernization.



### **Dr. Amit Kumar**

Assistant Professor, RIS, New Delhi

Dr. Amit Kumar is a tenured Faculty/Senior Researcher at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi, India. He is an Engineering graduate from University of Delhi and holds a PhD in Science Policy Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. He has been mainly working in the research domain of technology assessment; ethical and socio-economic implications of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI); their national and global governance; inclusive digitalisation; science diplomacy and biodiversity. He has been involved in several national and international projects within the domain of STS (Science-Technology-Society) policy studies. He has published number of papers/articles in peer-reviewed journals and contributed chapters in books; apart from preparing reports, policy briefs and discussion papers on related topics. He is also Associate Editor of Science Diplomacy Review (SDR) journal and Asian Biotechnology and Development Review (ABDR) journal, an international, Scopus-indexed peer-reviewed and open access journal. The Economic Survey 2023-24 of the Government of India had cited his RIS Policy Brief on 'Artificial Intelligence and Its Impact on Jobs in India'.

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## **Session VI: Accelerating Regional Integration in the Bay of Bengal: Role of the People-to-People Contacts**

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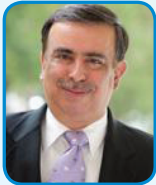
### **Ambassador Sumith Nakandala**

Former Secretary General, BIMSTEC & Chairman, BoBED, Colombo

Ambassador Sumith Nakandala is a career member of the Sri Lanka Foreign Service with extensive experience in diplomacy and international relations. He has served at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombo and in overseas postings in the Maldives, India (New Delhi and Chennai), and the United States (New York). He has held ambassadorial appointments to Nepal, Iraq, and the Netherlands, and served as Deputy High Commissioner in Chennai and London. From 2014 to



2017, he was the first Secretary-General of BIMSTEC. He later served as Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and as Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the Netherlands, with concurrent accreditation to the OPCW and the Common Fund for Commodities. He is currently a Visiting Scholar at the Department of Political Science, University of Peradeniya.



### **Professor Amitabh Mattoo**

Dean, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi

Professor Amitabh Mattoo is Dean and Professor, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and Chair of the Centre of International Politics, Organisation and Disarmament Studies. He directs the Energy Studies Programme and serves as President of the Indian Association of International Studies. He sits on the Board of the Australia India Institute, the Council of the Central University of Jammu and Kashmir, and is Honorary Professor of International Relations at the University of Melbourne. A former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jammu – appointed at the youngest age in independent India – he has bridged academia and public policy through roles including Cabinet-rank Advisor to the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, member of the National Security Council advisory board, and member of the National Knowledge Commission. He founded the Australia India Institute and co-chaired the Australia India Leadership Dialogue, and chaired a long-running Track II dialogue between India and Pakistan. A D.Phil. from Oxford, he has held visiting professorships at Stanford, Notre Dame, Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Paris. He has published 12 books and 50+ articles, supervised numerous doctoral and M.Phil. theses, and received the Padma Shri and an honorary Doctor of Laws.



### **Mr. Uttam Kumar Shahi**

Director, BIMSTEC, Dhaka

Mr. Uttam Kumar Shahi, a career diplomat from Nepal Foreign Service, joined the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Secretariat as a Director on 16 March 2025. He is the third Director from Nepal serving at the Secretariat. Prior to this, Mr. Shahi served at the Foreign Ministry under different capacities such as Undersecretary at the Office of the Foreign Minister, Deputy Chief of Protocol and Undersecretary at the International Relations Division, Office of the President of Nepal. In the early years after joining the Foreign Service in 2010, Mr. Shahi served as a passport officer at the Department of Passports, section Officer at the General Administration Division, and United Nations, International Organizations and International Law Division at the Foreign Ministry. During his career, Mr. Shahi represented Nepal as Counsellor/Deputy Permanent Representative at the Embassy/Permanent Mission of Nepal to the



United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland (2019-2023) and Second/First Secretary at the Embassy of Nepal in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2012- 2016). His academic credentials include Bachelor of Laws (LLB), Bachelor of Science (BSc.) and Master of Arts in Political Science from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. He has attended several trainings and workshops on Human rights, trade, administration and diplomacy and has also obtained Certificate of Advanced Studies in Public governance and Administration from ETH Zurich.



### **Ambassador Lahpai Zau Goone**

Senior Adviser, Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS), Yangon

Ambassador Lahpai Zau Goone was born on 13 January 1947 in Kutkai, Northern Shan State, the individual is a graduate of the Arts and Science University of Mandalay. He began his professional career as an English Tutor at Myitkyina College from 1971 to 1974 before joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in 1974, where he served in various capacities until 2007. His overseas postings included assignments in Tokyo, Paris, and Moscow, holding positions such as Assistant Commercial Attaché, Minister Counsellor, and Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served as Director of the East Asia and Pacific Division and as Acting Deputy Director General of the Protocol Department at MOFA. He later served as a Commissioner of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (2011–2014). Currently, he is Senior Adviser at the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies and Chairperson of the Humanity Institute and Kachin Land Research Center in Myitkyina.



### **Dr. Constantino Xavier**

Senior Fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), New Delhi

Dr. Constantino Xavier is a Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy and Security Studies at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) in New Delhi. He is also a visiting professor at Ashoka University's Department of International Relations and a non-resident fellow in the Foreign Policy program at the Brookings Institution, in Washington DC. His research expertise is on India's role as a regional power and the intersecting dimensions of security, connectivity and democracy across South Asia and the Indian Ocean. He also works on India's relations with the European Union and other democratic powers in the Indo-Pacific, and has published widely in academic books and journals on India's foreign and security policies with a focus on state capacity, regional institutions, economic and infrastructure diplomacy and soft power.



### **Asst. Prof. Surat Horachaikul**

Director, Indian Studies Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

Asst. Prof. Surat Horachaikul is a lecturer in political science at the Department of International Relations, and former Deputy Dean, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University. He gained his M.A. in Politics and Contemporary History at Guildhall University, London, and an M.Sc. in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management from the University of London. One of his publications is Democratic Development in Thailand. Ajarn Surat organized a great variety of international events at Chulalongkorn University, a.o. Gandhi Memorial Lectures with Vandana Shiva, Satish Kumar, Rajagopal P.V., and Dr. Ramin Jahanbegloo. He is a co-founder of the School for Wellbeing Studies and Research.



### **Mr. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury**

Diplomatic Editor, Economic Times, New Delhi

Mr. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury is Currently Diplomatic Editor, The Economic Times, India's No 1 financial and political daily. A journalist with 25 years of experience, Dipanjan has been monitoring and analysing policy making and governance in India. An author of books on India's immediate and extended neighbourhood, Dipanjan is aware of the economic opportunities in the region and India's security imperatives. Simultaneously, he has been a regular participant and moderator in various global conferences including in France, UAE, Singapore, Russia and Slovenia. Dipanjan has been awarded fellowships by the USA State Department and Taiwan (Republic of China) besides German government and RSIS, Singapore.

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## **Session VII: Valedictory Session: Towards a Resilient, Equitable and Inclusive Bay of Bengal**

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### **Dr. Seshadri Chari**

Member, RIS Governing Board, New Delhi

Dr. Seshadri Chari is a noted scholar, social activist, and strategic affairs expert with a PhD in Geopolitics and International Relations from the Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE). He is a Member of the Governing Council of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and serves as a Visiting Faculty in the Department of Geopolitics & International Relations at MAHE. A former Editor of the *Organiser* weekly and a past member of the National Executive of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Dr. Chari has been a regular speaker at

national and international intellectual debates and policy forums. He has also served as a Consultant with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in South Sudan, contributing to post-conflict governance, constitutional processes, and women's political participation. His areas of expertise include geopolitics, foreign policy, security and strategic studies, international trade, and governance. Dr. Chari has authored and edited several books and policy publications on India's strategic and political affairs and has been part of high-level Indian delegations to numerous countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, and North America.



### **Ambassador C S R Ram**

**Joint Secretary (SAARC and BIMSTEC), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi**

Ambassador Ram is a career diplomat belonging to Indian Foreign Service. Presently he is Joint Secretary in Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi as National Coordinator of India for BIMSTEC and SAARC, the organizations for regional integration in the regions of Bay of Bengal and South Asia respectively. Ambassador Ram began his diplomatic career at the Indian Mission in Moscow (2003-2006). Later, he served in the Indian Diplomatic Missions in Jakarta (2008-2011) and in New York (2011-2014). He was Consul General of India in Munich, Germany (2016-2020). He also served at the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi dealing with India's relations with Sri Lanka (2006-2008) and Pakistan (2015-2016) and with External Publicity & Public Diplomacy (2016). Ambassador Ram was High Commissioner of India to Ghana from January 2020 till June 2023. He has authored several publications, including 'Connecting Dots: Reaching Out to the People' and 'India Ghana Dialogue: Strengthening South-South Cooperation'. Ambassador Ram by education is B. Tech. in Electronics and M. Phil. Geography. Among foreign languages he speaks Russian and also knows Bahasa Indonesia and German.



### **Professor Sachin Kumar Sharma**

**Director General, RIS, New Delhi**

Prof. Sachin Kumar Sharma is the Director General of RIS. He has over two decades of expertise in international trade, development cooperation, and multilateral and regional negotiations. His research, advocacy, and capacity-building work have shaped discussions on trade and development, agricultural subsidies, investment, food security, sustainability, market access, trade disputes, transparency, LDC graduation, Aid for Trade, and negotiations at the WTO, FAO, G20, and in regional trade agreements. He holds an M.Phil. and a PhD in Economics from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi, with a specialisation in the WTO, international trade, quantitative techniques, and agricultural policy. He is skilled in econometrics, Computable General Equilibrium (GTAP), Partial Equilibrium Modelling, and statistical tools, with extensive experience in trade analytics. Prof. Sharma has

authored six books, numerous peer-reviewed journal articles, several working papers, and book chapters, in addition to regularly contributing to policy debates through articles in leading newspapers and participating in global forums. Before joining RIS, he served as a Professor at the Centre for WTO Studies (CWS) at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade.



### **Dr. Priyadarshi Dash**

**Associate Professor, RIS, New Delhi**

Dr. Priyadarshi Dash is Associate Professor at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi, India. He has 18 years of experience in policy research on macroeconomic policy, infrastructure financing and international finance issues in the context of G20, IORA, BRICS, BIMSTEC and Indo-Pacific. Currently, his research work focuses on digital economy and fintech applications. He has co-authored two books titled 'Asia-Africa Growth Corridor: Development and Cooperation in Indo-Pacific' and 'Universal Banking in India: Evolution, Trends and Performance' and a number of research papers in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes. He is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of Cambridge Scholars Publishing, London; editorial boards of International Organizations Research Journal and Advances in Economics and Business; Member, Editorial Review Board of Virtual Economics; Managing Editor of G20 Digest, and Co-Editor of Journal of Asian Economic Integration. He is a Co-Lead of T20 (Think 20) Task Force on Financing for Sustainable Development for the South African presidency of G20. Earlier, he was Co-Chair of T20 Task Forces on Reforming the International Financial Architecture for the Indian and Brazilian Presidencies of G20. Dr. Dash holds Masters in Economics, M.Phil (Planning & Development) and PhD in Economics from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay.





# Concept Note



The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was set up in 1997 to foster economic and social development among member countries, namely, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Its significance lies in the fact that it serves as the bridge between the South Asian and Southeast Asian countries through intra-regional collaboration in seven priority areas. BIMSTEC opens up opportunities for the South Asian region as a viable alternative for regional cooperation.

BIMSTEC started its journey in 1997 in Bangkok, where the four countries of the Bay of Bengal region, namely, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand convened a meeting and jointly formed a new sub-group on 6 June 1997 by the name BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand – Economic Cooperation). Myanmar attended this summit as an observer and obtained full membership in December that year. To acknowledge the additional membership, the acronym was changed to BIMSTEC. Subsequently, Nepal and Bhutan also joined in 2004. In the first Summit of Heads of Governments held on 31 July 2004, the leaders of the group formally announced the complete name of the grouping as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, in short BIMSTEC. In 2011, a permanent secretariat was established in Dhaka. At the highest level, six BIMSTEC Summits have been held so far; one in 2004, held in Bangkok, 2008 in Delhi, then in 2014 at Nay Pyi Taw, 2018 in Kathmandu, 2022 in Colombo, and 2025 in Bangkok. India hosted the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach meeting at Goa in October 2016.

Recently, BIMSTEC has reorganised its priority areas into seven including (i) Trade, Investment and Development, (ii) Environment and Climate Change, (iii) Security, (iv) Agriculture and Food Security, (v) People-to-People Contact, (vi) Science, Technology and Innovation and (vii) Connectivity. Moreover, the BIMSTEC Charter was signed and adopted during the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit, which was held in virtual format in Colombo in 2022.

The world is passing through a turbulent time with high trade uncertainties and control, geopolitical risks, supply chain disruptions, natural disasters, etc. Global uncertainties are looming large. Multilateralism is under threat. Smaller landlocked and island economies are most vulnerable and facing disproportionate threats. In times of global uncertainty, the BIMSTEC comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand faces a complex mix of escalating geopolitical rivalries, severe climate change impacts, and fragmented economic conditions. The region's coastlines and dense populations are acutely vulnerable to intensifying environmental disasters. On the other hand, global economic uncertainties have also underscored the need for deeper regional integration. The role of the Global South is critical to any transformative change in global governance and regional cooperation frameworks.

BIMSTEC has unique resource endowments and geographic location that can be leveraged effectively for promoting connectivity, trade and investment and people-to-people contacts among the South Asian and Southeast Asian countries. Further, these littoral states of the Bay of Bengal also connect major international maritime trade routes between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. Further, BIMSTEC member states are a powerhouse in a number of products such as garments (Bangladesh), digital services (India), maritime services (Sri Lanka), consumer durables (Thailand), tourism (Nepal and Bhutan), among others. Greater intra- and inter-regional cooperation may pave the way for higher trade and growth among the BIMSTEC countries. Moreover, deeper regional understanding on global challenges and collective endeavour can provide sustainable solutions.

In view of the above, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) in collaboration with the think-tanks of the Bay of Bengal region, the BIMSTEC Secretariat, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and the UNESCAP SSWA is organising the fourth Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue (BoBED) in New Delhi on 16-17 January 2026 on the theme 'Towards a Prosperous Bay of Bengal amidst Global Uncertainties'. The current network partners of the BoBED are SANEM (Bangladesh), RIS (India), SAWTEE (Nepal), Pathfinder Foundation (Sri Lanka), and Chulalongkorn University (Thailand). Originated at the SANEM, the previous three editions of the BoBED were held in Dhaka (2021, 2022) and Bangkok (2024), respectively. The Delhi BoBED edition will be attended by senior experts, research scholars, diplomats, and practitioners from the Bay of Bengal region. The Secretary General and other senior officials of BIMSTEC Secretariat will be joining the programme. Partner organizations such as the ADB, the UNESCAP, the World Bank, etc. have also agreed to extend their support in organising the Dialogue.

The conference has six technical sessions covering all major areas of BIMSTEC cooperation. Besides deliberations in the conference, the organizers will issue the *Delhi Declaration* presenting the key outcomes of the Dialogue. Suitable publication opportunities will be worked out post-event.

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## Session I: Reimagining Global South and the Role of the Bay of Bengal

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Shaping a Global South agenda towards enhanced cooperation and integration is vital amid escalating conflicts, climate change and more frequent extreme weather, resource depletion, and supply chain disruptions driven by unilateral trade measures such as rising tariffs and the CBAM. These shocks, alongside persistent poverty, hunger, and low land and labour productivity, are widening socioeconomic divergence across Global South countries. In this context, deeper integration and cooperation – particularly among the Bay of Bengal nations – can address historical and structural backwardness. Establishing shared mechanisms and a common framework to pursue inclusive development is indispensable to meet collective aspirations and deliver the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. This session, therefore, aims to address some of the following issues:

- **Fostering Global South Integration:** How does the Bay of Bengal reshape the Global South agenda under the global uncertainty to meet their shared development aspiration?
- **Integration Mechanisms:** What concrete institutional mechanisms and common frameworks are needed among Bay of Bengal states to overcome historical and structural backwardness?
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** What collective strategies can mitigate supply chain disruptions caused by unilateral trade measures (e.g., tariffs, CBAM) while safeguarding development objectives?
- **Poverty and Productivity:** How can regional cooperation address persistent poverty, hunger, and deprived land and labor productivity to overcome structural backwardness?
- **Adaptation Priorities:** How should Bay of Bengal nations prioritize regional adaptation to reduce the negative impact of systemic issues including geo-political tensions, climate change, and more frequent extreme weather to protect vulnerable countries and populations?
- **Explore the effective ways and instruments to enhance regional financing for funding resilience and shared development goals?**
- **How can deeper integration be designed to accelerate inclusive development and ensure the Bay of Bengal region meets the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs?**



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## Session II: Trade, Investment, and Regional Value Chains: Deepening Regional Integration amidst Global Uncertainties

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Equitable, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient trading systems are essential to achieve the global developmental agenda, particularly Global South countries' aspirations are closely associated and significantly influenced by it. Therefore, ensuring the efficient multilateral and regional trading system is vital to reducing poverty, ensuring global food security along with boosting employment, investments and economic growth. Trade is also critical to achieving the 2030 Agenda by fostering growth and higher per capita income. Evidence shows deeper regional integration is a strategic priority amid global uncertainties. Policies and trade agreements that lower tariff and non-tariff barriers, deepen regional value chains, and attract investment can expand market access, boost competitiveness, and enhance comparative advantage. Advancing regional integration among the Global South countries in particular across the Bay of Bengal region (comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand) is essential to enhance trade and increase cross-border investments. This will also advance economic cooperation among the member states. In this regard, promoting the actionable interventions is necessary to improve regional cooperation and integration and to achieve the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030 to build a Prosperous, Resilient, and Open BIMSTEC by 2030. In this context, this session aims to explore possible solutions to some of the following questions and produce actionable policy recommendations.

- Explore to promote the actionable interventions by BIMSTEC members to deepen regional cooperation and integration towards strengthening resilient supply chains, and attract investment and to reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers?
- What actions can be taken to enhance trade facilitation and its measures should be harmonised to reduce border delays and logistics costs across the Bay of Bengal?
- How does FTAs deepen regional value chain including enhancing Trade and Investments?



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## Session III: Economic Corridors and Multi-Modal Connectivity: Integrating the Bay and Beyond

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Economic corridors play a key role in integrating economies across region. Some of their environmental effects notwithstanding, well-functioning and efficient economic corridors are essential for the development of a region. Economic corridors are meant to serve as a blueprint for enhanced connectivity, increased competitiveness, and a greater sense of community in the Bay of Bengal region. Economic corridors also help strengthen industrial (or, services) agglomeration over time through establishment of industrial zones (or, SEZ) and also help in dispersion from congested or agglomerated zones to less congested or in periphery areas. Climate-friendly economic corridors are essential to promote sustainable connectivity. The Bay of Bengal region has witnessed some good progress in maritime and border connectivity, whereas the progress in land and digital connectivity is limited and they are yet to acquire the needed momentum for deepening the integration. BIMSTEC member states have signed the Maritime Cooperation Agreement (MCA) at the 6<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Summit. BIMSTEC member states have taken up trade facilitation initiatives including paperless trade measures. However, the economic corridor alone cannot be successful until and unless other operational priorities such as trade policy, trade facilitation and transit, institutions, energy corridors, telecommunications, etc. are in place. Therefore, a strategic partnership for policy development to set-up an economic corridor and an action plan to foster regional cooperation and integration have to be implemented in the region. In general, the task ahead is to revive the transportation networks in the Bay of Bengal region and beyond, and establish region-wide multimodal transport and transit to reduce transportation costs. In view of the above, this session aims to review the progress in multi-modal connectivity in the Bay of Bengal region. It will also discuss the challenges and possible mitigation measures, and provide answers to following questions:

- What are the shared challenges in connectivity in the Bay of Bengal? What can be done in mitigating such challenges in order to strengthen the connectivity?
- What are the policy reform gaps in promoting regional infrastructure such as the economic corridor in the Bay of Bengal?
- What should be done in facilitating economic corridors in the Bay of Bengal region? Are there any lessons that India can offer?

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## **Session IV: Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Blue Economy: Towards a Resilient Bay of Bengal**

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The changing climate with an increased frequency of extreme climatic conditions are weakening the growth momentum besides unsuitable livelihoods, increased hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition, damaging physical and connectivity infrastructure. Such adverse impact is more evident across all the sectors and regions globally. Particularly, the Bay of Bengal region is more vulnerable to the extreme climatic conditions with an increased frequent natural disaster such as floods, cyclones and earthquakes, etc. This necessitates ensuring resilience and sustainability is necessary by increased cooperation and collaborations towards enhancing the adaptation and mitigation strategies to safeguard against climate change future shocks. Such interventions need to be promoted across the sector by prioritising the climate sensitive sectors as well. This will help in achieving the shared socioeconomic development prospects of the regions while saving lives and livestock further. In this regard, deepening regional cooperation among the member countries includes sharing climate-smart technologies and innovations, dedicated climate finance and related R&D investments to support effective implementation of adaptation activities, along with knowledge sharing and the promotion of nature-based solutions. This session aims to address some of the following questions:

- Explore the strategic ways to deepening cooperation and collaborations towards ensuring climate resilient and sustainability of the Bay of Bengal region under changing climate and frequent extreme climatic condition includes natural disasters
- How can Bay of Bengal countries prioritize and finance for climate-smart technologies and R&D to accelerate adaptation in the most climate-sensitive sectors?
- How can blue-economy strategies be aligned with sustainable development goals to balance economic growth, ecosystem health, and climate resilience in the region?
- What institutional arrangements and capacity-building programmes are required to improve cross-border knowledge sharing and joint implementation of adaptation projects?
- Which nature-based solutions offer the highest cost-effectiveness and co-benefits for disaster risk reduction, food security, and livelihoods in the Bay of Bengal?
- How can member states harmonize policies and share best practices to strengthen infrastructure resilience and protect connectivity networks from extreme events?

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## Session V: AI Governance and Digital Integration: Enabling Integration, Key Challenges and Solutions

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The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping economies, societies and governance systems, intensifying the need for an inclusive AI governance framework that supports inclusive digital integration. This session intends to examine the intersection of AI governance and digital integration with a specific focus on the BIMSTEC region. It would discuss the prevailing AI governance and regulatory architecture, along with the digital strategy across the BIMSTEC member states. At the same time there are key governance challenges including data sovereignty, algorithmic accountability, cyber-security, and uneven digital capacities across the region. This scenario highlights the role of regional cooperation mechanisms, interoperable digital public infrastructure, and multi-stakeholder engagement. Strengthening capacity-building, aligning regulatory approaches, and fostering public-private collaboration can emerge as key pathways to achieving resilient and equitable digital integration in an AI-driven world. Given this, there is an imperative for a coordinated, context-sensitive AI governance framework, aligned with BIMSTEC's development priorities, which is essential for building a resilient, inclusive, and future-ready digitally integrated regional economy. In light of this, this session aims to discuss the following:

- What is the current state of AI governance and regulatory architecture across BIMSTEC member states and how are they striving for enhancing digital integration?
- What lessons can the BIMSTEC Members States learn from each other toward responsible development of AI and inclusive digital integration?
- What is the role of cooperation in addressing uneven digital capacities and risk of digital exclusion, since the disparities in infrastructure, skills, and institutional readiness may limit inclusive participation of countries in AI-driven digital integration?

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## Session VI: Accelerating Regional Integration in the Bay of Bengal: Role of People-to-People Contacts

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Bay of Bengal countries share deep cultural bonds. Connected by common heritage and civilization, BIMSTEC has made good progress in the area of people-to-people contacts. In BIMSTEC, the people-to-people sectoral cooperation consists of four sub-sectors: culture, tourism, people-to-people contact forums and poverty alleviation. There are initiatives to create forums for media and parliamentarians to enhance dialogue. India hosted the BIMSTEC Aquatics Championship in New Delhi in 2024 with 400-plus athletes from all BIMSTEC member states; India organized the BIMSTEC Youth Summit in Ahmedabad in February 2025; a special 'BIMSTEC Pavilion was established at the 38th Surajkund International Crafts Fair in February 2025; BIMSTEC Youth Led Conference on Climate Change organized in February 2025 in New Delhi. BIMSTEC member states have agreed to take concrete steps to promote intra-BIMSTEC tourism, including through cross-border travel facilitation and sustainable tourism practices, leveraging the region's rich natural, cultural heritage, and historical sites, which can help boost economic growth and employment. Promoting travel and cultural exchanges is going to build cultural bonds. The network of think-tanks and universities are important means to strengthen cultural contacts. BIMSTEC underscores the critical importance to build on the progress made with regard to BIMSTEC tourism circuits, including the BIMSTEC Buddhist Circuits, BIMSTEC Temple Circuits, and BIMSTEC Eco-Tourism Circuits. Greater public-private partnership is required to enhance infrastructure, services, and innovation in the tourism sector. There are immense opportunities in education, media, travel and tourism, health, etc. in the Bay of Bengal region. There have been discussions on BIMSTEC Visa Schemes (exemption/ simplification) to ease travel. In view of the above, this session aims to take a stock of progress made in the area of people-to-people contacts and discuss the new agenda for accelerating regional integration. This session, in particular, aims to answer to following questions:

- What should be done to build a truly “people-oriented, people-centered” cultural community in the Bay of Bengal region?
- What would be the strategy to leverage shared history, culture, and civilizational links for deeper strategic partnerships in the changing global order?
- What can be done to deepen the cross-regional cultural contacts?





## Notes

## Notes





# RIS

Research and Information System  
for Developing Countries

विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

RIS specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. It is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues. The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. Through its following centres/forums, RIS promotes policy dialogue and coherence on regional and international economic issues.



The word “DAKSHIN” (दक्षिण) is of Sanskrit origin, meaning “South.” The Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence in November 2023. The initiative was inspired by the deliberations of Global South leaders during the Voice of the Global South Summits. DAKSHIN stands for Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative. Hosted at the RIS, DAKSHIN has established linkages with leading think tanks and universities across the Global South and is building a dynamic network of scholars working on Global South issues.



AIC at RIS has been working to strengthen India’s strategic partnership with ASEAN in its realisation of the ASEAN Community. AIC at RIS undertakes research, policy advocacy and regular networking activities with relevant organisations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN countries, with the aim of providing policy inputs, up-to-date information, data resources and sustained interaction, for strengthening ASEAN-India partnership.



CMEC has been established at RIS under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPS&W), Government of India. CMEC is a collaboration between RIS and Indian Ports Association (IPA). It has been mandated to act as an advisory/technological arm of MoPSW to provide the analytical support on policies and their implementation.



FITM is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Ayush and RIS. It has been established with the objective of undertaking policy research on economy, intellectual property rights (IPRs) trade, sustainability and international cooperation in traditional medicines. FITM provides analytical support to the Ministry of Ayush on policy and strategy responses on emerging national and global developments.



BEF aims to serve as a dedicated platform for fostering dialogue on promoting the concept in the Indian Ocean and other regions. The forum focuses on conducting studies on the potential, prospects and challenges of blue economy; providing regular inputs to practitioners in the government and the private sectors; and promoting advocacy for its smooth adoption in national economic policies.



FIDC, has been engaged in exploring nuances of India’s development cooperation programme, keeping in view the wider perspective of South-South Cooperation in the backdrop of international development cooperation scenario. It is a tripartite initiative of the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, academia and civil society organisations.



FISD aims to harness the full potential and synergy between science and technology, diplomacy, foreign policy and development cooperation in order to meet India’s development and security needs. It is also engaged in strengthening India’s engagement with the international system and on key global issues involving science and technology.



As part of its work programme, RIS has been deeply involved in strengthening economic integration in the South Asia region. In this context, the role of the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) is very important. SACEPS is a network organisation engaged in addressing regional issues of common concerns in South Asia.



Knowledge generated endogenously among the Southern partners can help in consolidation of stronger common issues at different global policy fora. The purpose of NeST is to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks for collaboratively generating, systematising, consolidating and sharing knowledge on South South Cooperation approaches for international development.



DST-Satellite Centre for Policy Research on STI Diplomacy at RIS aims to advance policy research at the intersection of science, technology, innovation (STI) and diplomacy, in alignment with India’s developmental priorities and foreign policy objectives.

## — Policy research to shape the international development agenda —

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