

Bay of Bengal Conversation

RIVALS • RUPTURES • REALIGNMENTS

22 - 24 NOVEMBER, 2025 • DHAKA

NAVIGATING POWER
AND DISORDER IN
A CHANGING WORLD



CONVERSATION BOOKLET
2025



This booklet was prepared by compiling information from event participants, speakers, and other important organizing partners. Although great care was taken in editing and releasing the book, inadvertent human mistakes are possible and occasionally inevitable. Because the speaker's schedule and other components of the program are subject to change at any time, the schedule and agenda published in this book may differ from actuality. The most recent agenda may be found at bayofbengalconversation.cgs-bd.com/agenda. Kindly inform us at ed@cgs-bd.com of any publication or factual mistakes.



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MESSAGE



Adviser for Foreign Affairs



MD. TOUHID HOSSAIN

Adviser for Foreign Affairs

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

I am delighted to extend a hearty welcome to all the esteemed speakers, delegates, and attendees of the Bay of Bengal Conversation 2025, which is being hosted by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS).

The Bay of Bengal is in a unique historical moment right now. It has once more emerged as a crucial hub for the geopolitical, commercial, and cultural interconnectedness of Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the larger Indo-Pacific region. The scope of our opportunities for shared good, through greater trade, maritime cooperation, and digital connectivity, is vast. The nations surrounding this bay are linked not merely by oceans but also by destiny.

Naturally, each of us has our unique challenges, but we also have universal ones. In order to address the existential threat posed by climate change and how it impacts our coastlines, as well as the numerous technical and diplomatic challenges that come with maritime security and economic prosperity, waters in which great powers continue to play leading roles, we must work together to ensure a future of peace and prosperity.

Therefore, open and critical dialogue venues are not only necessary but also vital. In record time, the Bay of Bengal Conversation has emerged as a top Track 2 platform for this type of discourse in South Asia. It provides a unique forum for open communication between academics, politicians, security analysts, and leaders of civil society organizations, fostering an atmosphere of open communication and reciprocal learning in the search for practical answers to some of the most urgent regional issues we confront.

The establishment of an affluent, peaceful, and interconnected area is always a top priority for the Bangladesh government. We believe that our progress and collective security are intertwined, and we need places to foster the trust and intellectual capital necessary to achieve our common objectives.

I commend the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) for planning this important gathering year after year, and with such vision. I have no doubt that the discussions that will take place over the next three days will provide us with insightful and thought-provoking ideas and strengthen the collaborative structure of our area.

My best wishes to everyone who will attend the Bay of Bengal Conversation in 2025.



(Md. Touhid Hossain)



CHAIR'S NOTE

President, Centre for Governance Studies

When the idea of the Bay of Bengal Conversation was first conceived, it was not born in a moment of calm; it was born out of necessity. The world was growing more polarized, truth was being silenced, and Bangladesh was living through years when open discussion itself became an act of quiet defiance. In that climate, the Centre for Governance Studies took upon itself a difficult mission: to preserve a space for reasoned dialogue. The journey from those modest beginnings to what the Bay of Bengal Conversation represents today, one of Asia's leading Track II dialogues, has been long, uncertain, and often uphill. We had no blueprint to follow, no powerful patron to shield us. What we did have was conviction: the belief that if we could create a forum honest enough to host disagreement, courageous enough to challenge orthodoxy, and humble enough to listen, then it would endure.

Endurance, however, came at a price. During the years of the previous authoritarian regime, CGS faced constant surveillance, harassment, and the quiet but relentless machinery of suppression. Events were disrupted; invitations were questioned; even the act of convening a public discussion was treated as a subversive act. There were moments when the continuation of this conference felt impossible. But each time, it was the strength of our friends, at home and abroad, that sustained us. Many of you reading this booklet, or sitting among the audience today, were there in those years. You wrote to us when others stayed silent; you helped us convene sessions when halls were closed; you lent your names, your reputations, and your belief that Bangladesh still had voices worth hearing. It is because of that collective solidarity that the Bay of Bengal Conversation not only survived, it also matured. It evolved from a gathering of resilience into a symbol of continuity.

Today, as we host the fourth edition of this Conversation, we look around and see how far this platform has come. What began as a regional dialogue hosted by a small think tank in Dhaka is now a meeting ground for over 200 speakers from more than 85 countries, ministers, diplomats, academics, journalists, entrepreneurs, and thinkers, united by one conviction: that meaningful dialogue remains the most credible path toward peace and progress. In the process, the Bay of Bengal Conversation has become something larger than a conference. It is a living record of Bangladesh's democratic endurance, a reminder that ideas can cross borders even when politics cannot. It is also a bridge that connects South Asia with Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean with the Pacific, and the Global South with the rest of the world. It stands as testimony to what a small institution with a big vision can achieve through perseverance, integrity, and global friendship.

This year's theme, "Rivals, Ruptures, Realignments," speaks to the era we inhabit. The global order we once knew is being rewritten in real time. Strategic rivalries are intensifying; new alignments are forming; and the confidence that once surrounded the post-Cold-War system has given way to uncertainty. The world has entered an age of contested multipolarity, where competition is fierce, but cooperation remains indispensable.

At CGS, we believe that such a moment calls for introspection rather than anxiety. The rivalries shaping our age, between major powers, ideologies, and technologies, also invite smaller states to exercise agency, to navigate pragmatically, and to insist that moral courage is still a form of power. The ruptures we are

witnessing, in trust, in institutions, in truth, remind us of the need to rebuild multilateralism from the ground up, not as a slogan but as a working mechanism. And the realignments underway, geopolitical, economic, and digital, challenge us to rethink where Bangladesh and the wider Bay of Bengal region fit within this new geometry of power.

Through the sessions of this year's Conversation, we will examine these questions not from the distant vantage of theory, but from the lived realities of our region:

- How can smaller and middle powers assert agency in a world dominated by great-power competition?
- What lessons do overlapping crises, from Gaza to Myanmar to Ukraine, hold for the future of humanitarian and regional diplomacy?
- How can the weaponization of information and artificial intelligence be managed without eroding the freedoms that define democracy?
- And most urgently, how can nations along the Bay of Bengal confront the accelerating threats of climate change, displacement, and economic fragmentation, not as isolated victims, but as partners in resilience?

The expected outcomes of this year's Bay of Bengal Conversation are not resolutions or declarations; this is not a summit. Its power lies in its capacity to connect the formal with the informal, the diplomatic with the intellectual, and the political with the ethical. Each exchange of ideas here carries the possibility of seeding new collaborations, new research, and new understanding. For Bangladesh, this conference also signals our continued openness to the world. It reaffirms that we are not a peripheral observer in the new Indo-Pacific order, but an active participant determined to chart a course guided by prudence, balance, and principle.

As Chair, I take this opportunity to thank our partners, supporters, and well-wishers, the diplomats who have stood with us; the media colleagues who have chronicled our journey; the scholars and young professionals who have given this platform intellectual depth; and above all, the team at CGS whose dedication has carried this vision from drawing board to global stage. The Bay of Bengal Conversation is no longer merely an event. It is an ecosystem of ideas, a network of trust, and a tribute to the enduring power of dialogue. Its survival and success is a quiet victory for those who believe that conversation itself is an act of courage.

As we begin this year's edition, let us remember how we arrived here: through persistence, through solidarity, and through faith in the spoken word. May this year's discussions help us make sense of the rivalries, bridge the ruptures, and navigate the realignments that define our world today, with clarity, with honesty, and with hope.



Zillur Rahman

President

Centre for Governance Studies

Chair, Bay of Bengal Conversation



PARVEZ KARIM ABBASI

Executive Director, Centre for Governance Studies

As Executive Director of the Centre for Governance Studies, I am immensely privileged and honored to invite you to the Bay of Bengal Conversation 2025. Within a short span of time, this conference has made a name for itself as a forum that has hosted and facilitated impactful, constructive dialogue and exchange of ideas between leading experts, academics, policymakers, statesmen, thought leaders, civil society activists and media personnel from both Bangladesh and around the world. It won't be an exaggeration to state that the Bay of Bengal Conversation has emerged as the largest privately organized geopolitical conference in South Asia, which annually brings some of the best and the brightest from around the world onto a single platform in Dhaka.

We find ourselves in an era of flux and momentous changes. The certainties of the Old World Order is rapidly vanishing, and the outline of a New World Order is still a distant mirage. The cornerstone of the early 21st Century- Multilateralism, Free Trade, adherence to a rules-based Order, Democratic norms and values, vibrant media, and independent judiciary are all subject to immense stress and strain worldwide. Rise of populism and institutionalized authoritarianism has fanned the flames of intolerance and bigotry and is trying to silence dissenting voices. To exacerbate the crisis, we are also witnessing the intensification of a New Cold War which has morphed into a bruising competition in the spheres of trade, technology, rare-earth metals, and semiconductors and concomitant proxy wars and arms race that has engulfed many a nations. The multiple challenges posed by Climate Change, rising income and wealth inequity, burgeoning national indebtedness and

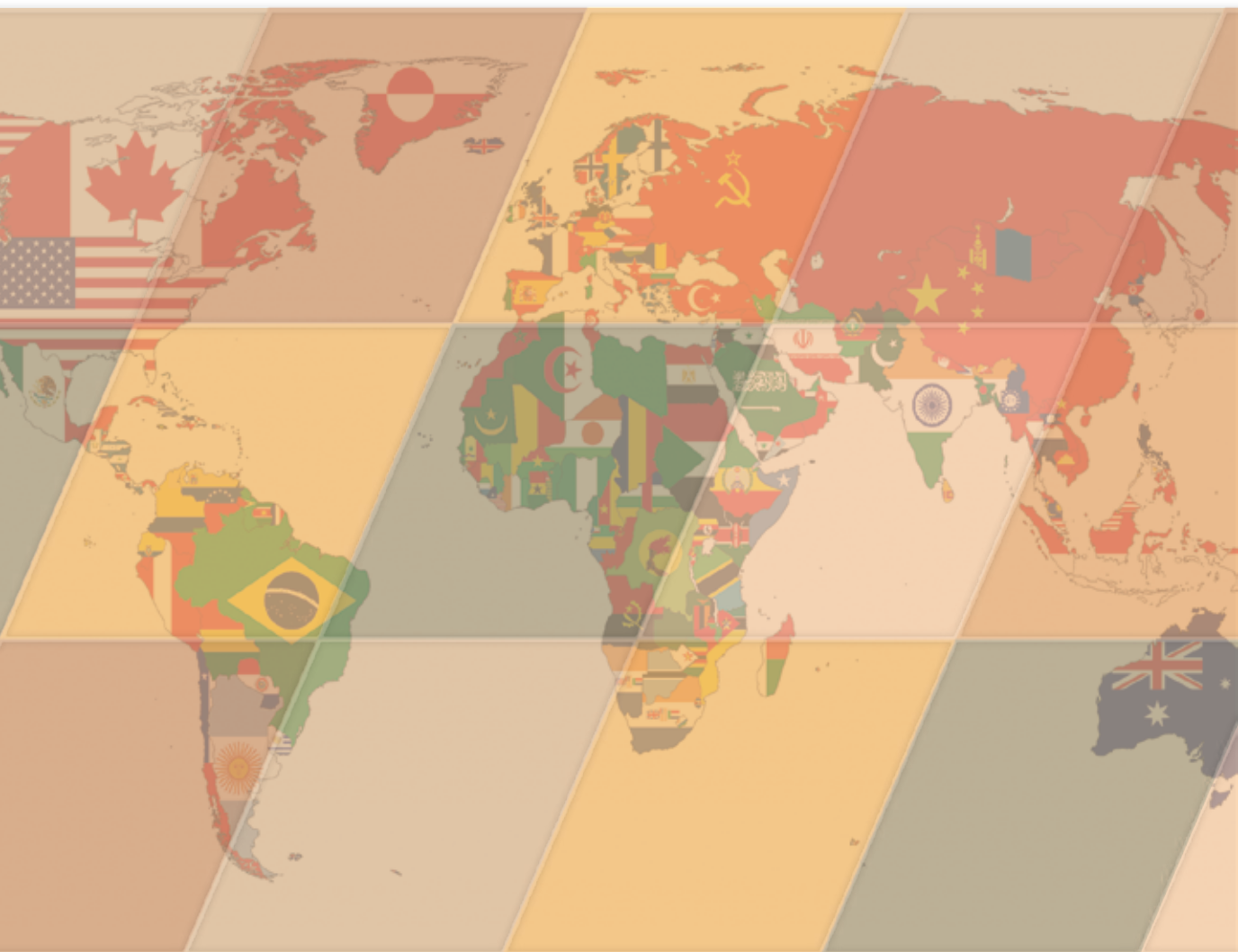
new technologies like Artificial Intelligence are yet to be effectively tackled. Geopolitical and geo-economic forces have acquired an outsized importance, which smaller nations would be foolish to dismiss or trivialize.

Thus, I believe that the fourth iteration of the Bay of Bengal Conversation, appropriately titled **Rivals, Ruptures, Realignments-Navigating Power and Purpose in a Disordered World**, is both topical and timely. Bangladesh itself is in the throes of change, transiting from autocracy to democracy while coping with a complex litany of economic, social, cultural and political challenges. It too finds itself affected by the push and pull of the New Cold War, the adverse effects of regional rivalries, the pernicious effects of climate change and the unresolved issue of the Rohingyas who have been forcibly displaced by Burma.

I look forward to an intellectually rewarding exchange and fruition of new ideas from the confluence of distinguished speakers and participants at Bay of Bengal Conversation 2025. This would hopefully shine a light on the future path and direction that Bangladesh needs to travel to realize its manifest destiny as a strong, prosperous, democratic and inclusive nation which is both respected and admired by its global peers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. K. Abbasi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Parvez Karim Abbasi



PROGRAM

PROGRAM

DAY ONE Saturday November 22 09:30-10:30 Grand Ballroom	INAUGURAL SESSION
	SPEAKERS Zillur Rahman, President, CGS Chair, Bay of Bengal Conversation, Bangladesh Md Touhid Hossain, Advisor Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh Syed Refaat Ahmed, Hon'ble Chief Justice of Bangladesh Parvez Karim Abbasi, Executive Director Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)
10:30-11:00 Oasis	TEA/COFFEE BREAK
11:00-12:20 Grand Ballroom	PLENARY SESSION Fractured Orders, Fluid Loyalties Power Politics in the Post-Alignment Age
	Unpredictable changes are taking place in the world. While new hierarchies without regulations or guarantees are emerging, old ones are silently dissolving. Formerly stable international institutions now feel worn out and uneasy, and those who built them are questioning their legitimacy. As they negotiate survival, nations shift between allies and adversaries and self-righteous certainty. Power now flows through markets, data, and emotion rather than just capital. Diplomacy in this odd new order feels more like improvisation, performed by nations that no longer believe the script, than it does like a theory.

	SPEAKERS A N M Muniruzzaman, President, Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) Julia Roknifard, Senior Lecturer Taylor's University, Malaysia Jovan Ratkovic, Senior Fellow, Agora Strategy Institute Leonardo Paz Neves, Senior Researcher Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV), Brazil Marian Vidaurri, Research Associate, Cornell University, USA David Patrician, RTL Nord, Germany (<i>Moderator</i>)
12:20-12:30 Grand Ballroom	SPEED TALK Mahfuz Anam, Editor, The Daily Star
12:30-12:40 Grand Ballroom	SPEED TALK Debapriya Bhattacharya Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)
12:40-13:50 Grand Ballroom	PLENARY SESSION Beyond Non-Alignment The Bay as the New Middle Ground
	In the past, non-alignment provided solace and a morally sound middle ground between political parties. The world is no longer there. Neutrality now requires more bravery than loyalty ever did. Once considered a backwater in world affairs, the Bay of Bengal is today burdened with conflicting visions, commercial lines, naval corridors, and digital highways. History is now flowing through the waterways of nations that previously viewed it from the sidelines. The Bay has turned into an agitated area of persuasion between Beijing, Washington, and New Delhi. Cooperation must be defined by choice rather than commitment, and its nations must learn to navigate without a harbor.

	SPEAKERS George Cooke, Founder, Awarelogue Initiative, Sri Lanka Joshua Alexander Brien, Founder Maritime Frontiers Ltd, Australia Leo Wigger, Fellow for EU South Asia Relations Mercator Foundation, Germany Priyanka Bhide Mandrekar, Co- founder and Partner Kubernein Initiative LLP, India Yuanzhe Ren, Director and Professor China Foreign Affairs University, China Parvez Karim Abbasi, Executive Director, Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) (<i>Moderator</i>)
13:50-14:00 Grand Ballroom	AMBASSADORIAL REFLECTIONS Michael Miller, Ambassador and Head Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh
14:00-15:00 Oasis	LUNCH
15:00-16:10 Grand Ballroom	PLENARY SESSION Wars Without Ends How Conflicts Outlive Ceasefires Wars no longer come to an end; instead, they pause, reorganize, and then reappear under different guises. Instead of being a resolution, the reconciliation has evolved into an intermission. Today, sanctions, hunger, knowledge, and memory all contribute to the continuation of conflicts. Peace talks happen, but peace itself rarely occurs. As violence becomes the norm, the rest of the world looks on, tired and preoccupied. The lesson is universal: it is simpler to stop the guns than to put an end to the grievance, whether in Gaza, Kyiv, Myanmar, or forgotten frontiers. And in the absence of justice, every pause is merely the start of something new.

	SPEAKERS Carol Christine Fair, Professor of Security Studies Georgetown University, USA Carolina Chimoy, International Correspondent Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany Imtiaz Gul, CEO, Center for Research and Security Studies, Pakistan Krzysztof Zalewski, President, The Michał Boym Institute for Asian and Global Studies Foundation, Poland Navine Murshid, Professor, North South University Gregory Simons, Professor in Journalism Daffodil International University, Bangladesh (<i>Moderator</i>)
16:10-16:20 Grand Ballroom	AMBASSADORIAL REFLECTIONS Ghanshyam Bhandari Ambassador of Nepal to Bangladesh
16:20-17:30 Grand Ballroom	PLENARY SESSION The De-Risking Paradox How Safety Became the New Vulnerability
	The words "safe commerce," "safe data," "safe borders," and "safe bets" are now widely used. However, countries are gradually severing the very interconnectedness that made the modern world function in an attempt to protect themselves from danger. Trust erodes, factories relocate, and every supply chain turns into a suspicious map. We grow more vulnerable the more we fortify. What started as an attempt to safeguard economies is now subtly destroying international collaboration. Ultimately, we might find that the most significant danger of all was assuming that safety would ever be completely guaranteed.

	SPEAKERS Asif Saleh, Executive Director, BRAC Faris Hadrovic, Managing Director, SO.. Quantum Growth Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina Farrukh Irnazarov, Co-Founder and Country Director Central Asian Development Institute, Uzbekistan Kerry Breen, Senior Director, Brummer & Partners Wu Lin, Associate Professor China Foreign Affairs University, China David Morris, CEO (Tasmania) Australia China Business Council, Australia (<i>Moderator</i>)
17:30-18:30 Oasis	TEA/COFFEE BREAK
20:00-23:00 Grand Ballroom	GALA DINNER (By Invitation Only)

DAY TWO

Sunday

November 23

09:30-11:00

Surma

ROUNDTABLE (By Invitation Only)

Dancing with Giants The Art of Small-State Survival

Smaller countries in South Asia have adapted to live in an area where giants rule. Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives continue to negotiate between rival centers of power, the United States, China, and India, each of which demands allegiance and offers opportunities, from the Cold War chessboard to the current Indo-Pacific conflict. This roundtable looks at how these nations maintain their independence in a crowded strategic environment by using diplomacy, delay, and skillful negotiation to find a balance between caution and inventiveness. When every decision has repercussions, survival itself turns into an art form that combines creativity, fortitude, and instinct.

SPEAKERS

Constantino Xavier, Senior Fellow
Centre for Social and Economic Progress, India

George Cooke, Founder, Awarelogue Initiative, Sri Lanka

Parvez Karim Abbasi, Executive Director
Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)

Pramod Jaiswal, Research Director, Institute for International
Cooperation and Engagement, Nepal

Selim Jahan, Professorial Fellow
BRAC Institute for Governance and Development

Shafqat Munir, Senior Research Fellow
Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS)

Touseef Mehraj Raina, Co-founder
Jammu & Kashmir Policy Institute, India

Zahid Shahab Ahmed, Associate Professor
National Defence College, Australia

Zuraida Binti Kamaruddin, Former Minister of Plantation
and Commodities of Malaysia

David Patrician, RTL Nord, Germany (*Moderator*)

09:30-10:30

Meghna

CONVERSATION OVER TEA (By Invitation Only)

**Artificial Trust: Living, Loving, and
Lying in the Age of AI**

These days, algorithms are more aware of our anxieties than our buddies. While technology encourages manipulation, it also offers connection. When trust itself turns into a fabrication, what happens to truth, democracy, and intimacy? This debate explores the unsettling beauty of our connected existence by alternating between the personal and the political, from data addiction to digital love, from surveillance capitalism to the commerce of belief.

SPEAKERS

Narayan Adhikari, South East Asia Lead
Accountability Lab, Nepal

Sushant Kumar, Assistant Professor
O.P.Jindal Global University, India

Tanha Kate, Associate Relationship Manager, City Bank PLC

Pyrou Chung, Director
Knowledge for Development Foundation (Moderator)

09:30-10:30

Chitra

CONVERSATION OVER TEA (By Invitation Only)

**Truth in Exile: Journalism
and the Fight for Credibility**

When technology can manufacture any reality, the journalist becomes both witness and suspect. How can the media rebuild trust when truth itself feels optional? A conversation among editors, reporters, and thinkers on courage, verification, and storytelling in a time of noise.

SPEAKERS

Carolina Chimoy, International Correspondent
Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany

Leo Wigger, Fellow for EU South Asia Relations
Mercator Foundation, Germany

Shamsuddoza Sajen, Special Content Editor, The Daily Star

Zain Khan, Editor, Diplomatic Affairs
Minute Mirror Newspaper, Pakistan (Moderator)

09:30-10:30
Padma

COLLOQUY (By Invitation Only)

Faith, Fear, and the Future of Humanity

People resort to their faith in times of uncertainty, sometimes to justify violence and other times to seek calm. Fear and spirituality are changing how cultures deal with change, from AI prophets to climate pessimism. Whether believing can still provide meaning without becoming dogma is the question posed in this thoughtful discussion.

SPEAKERS

Hadza Min Fadhli Robby, Associate Professor/Deputy Head for the International Program Department of International Relations, Faculty of Socio-Cultural Sciences
Islamic University of Indonesia

Julia Roknifard, Senior Lecturer Taylor's University, Malaysia

Karori Singh, Former Director and Emeritus Fellow, South Asia Studies Center, University of Rajasthan, India

Mehmet Ozkan, Professor of International Relations
Turkish National Defence University, Turkey

Sheela Tasneem Haq, Senior Governance Specialist
UNDP Bangladesh

Vikramdeep Johal, Deputy Editor, The Tribune
India (*Moderator*)

11:00-11:20
Grand Ballroom

SPECIAL ADDRESS

Boris Tadić
Former President of Serbia

11:20-12:35
Grand Ballroom

PLENARY SESSION

**Fragility as the New Normal
States in Permanent Emergency**

Crises used to be disruptions in the political rhythm. They now embody the rhythm itself. Economic shocks, food shortages, floods, panic, and urgency are all used by governments to maintain power; none of these crises is permanent. Continuity-preserving institutions increasingly rely on improvisation to thrive. People become accustomed to living in a state of uncertainty, as though it were the new standard for stability. Everywhere, power feels erratic, tense, and fleeting. Fragility ceases to be an issue and turns into the system when the exception turns into the rule.

SPEAKERS

Ali Riaz, Head of the Constitution Reform Commission

Boris Tadić, Former President of Serbia

Catherine Cecil, Chief of Party, Democracy International

Lulzim Pllana, Ambassador
Republic of Kosovo to Bangladesh

Stefan Liller, UNDP Resident Representative in Bangladesh

Kazi Faisal Bin Seraj, Country Representative
The Asia Foundation (*Moderator*)

12:35-12:45
Grand Ballroom

SPEED TALK

Rehman Sobhan

Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

12:45-14:00
Grand Ballroom

PLENARY SESSION

The Disinformation Republic How Lies Became Governance Tools

Across the world, truth is becoming optional. Governments, political actors, corporations, and digital networks construct their own versions of reality—algorithmically amplified, emotionally persuasive, and difficult to verify. In South Asia and the Bay of Bengal region, fact-checkers have recorded unprecedented spikes in politically motivated falsehoods, synthetic media, and coordinated influence campaigns; in Bangladesh alone, 837 unique false claims were identified in the first three months of 2025.

The session will analyze how mis/disinformation reshapes electoral integrity, public trust in institutions (including Election Commissions), and civic participation; explore institutional, media, and civic responses, including regulatory tools, fact-checking, platform responses, and digital literacy; and discuss regional cooperation in addressing cross-border disinformation and hate speech.

SPEAKERS

Álvaro Beltrán Urrutia, Digital Democracy Analyst
UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

Andres Del Castillo, Chief Technical Advisor
Electoral Support Project, UNDP Bangladesh

Maung Min Thu Aung, Accountability & Innovation Manager
Global Network Initiative

Nurul Kabir, Editor, New Age

Zainul Abidin Rasheed
Former Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Singapore

Anastasia S Wibawa, Project Director
European Partnership for Democracy, Belgium (*Moderator*)

14:00-15:00
Oasis

LUNCH

15:00-15:10 Grand Ballroom	AMBASSADORIAL REFLECTIONS Pranay Verma High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh
15:10-16:30 Grand Ballroom	PLENARY SESSION Borders That Move Migration, Morality, and the Politics of Compassion
	The map no longer tells the full story. Rivers shift, coastlines vanish, and people cross borders that politics refuses to redraw. Climate change, war, and hunger are creating a slow, relentless migration that no wall can stop and no bureaucracy can fully comprehend. Yet compassion remains trapped behind paperwork and fear. Nations debate sovereignty while families search for safety. The question is no longer who belongs where, but how we choose to define belonging itself. In the age of moving borders, humanity, not geography, must decide who we are. SPEAKERS James Angelus, Founder and President, International Security Industry Council Japan (ISIC) Karori Singh, Former Director and Emeritus Fellow, South Asia Studies Center, University of Rajasthan, India Mustafa Osman Turan, Turkish Foreign Relations Advisor to the Mayor, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Turkey Tanvir Mahmud, Senior Governance Specialist UNDP Bangladesh Zuraida Binti Kamaruddin, Former Minister of Plantation and Commodities of Malaysia Narayan Adhikari, South East Asia Lead Accountability Lab, Nepal (<i>Moderator</i>)
16:30-16:40 Grand Ballroom	SPEED TALK Ali Riaz, Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser, Interim Government of Bangladesh

16:40-17:30
Grand Ballroom

PLENARY SESSION

**The Politics of Money: Sanctions, Sovereignty
and the New Economic Iron Curtain**

Money has become the quiet battlefield of our time. Sanctions, trade restrictions, and digital currencies now determine which nations thrive and which are cut off from the global bloodstream. Power once measured in armies is now exercised through markets, payment systems, and access to credit. A country can lose its influence without losing a single soldier. The new iron curtain is made not of concrete but of code, invisible yet impenetrable. And in this divided economy, the real question is whether sovereignty can survive financial dependence.

SPEAKERS

Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury, President
Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI)

Clay Wescott, International Advisor
Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)

Mohammed Parvez Imdad, Consultant &
Policy Advisor, Bangladesh

Peter Aukamp, Entrepreneur, Rigilog AG/OceanSafe AG/
Kingsrock Advisors/Good Carbon, UK

Sheikh Mohammad Daniel, Director
Sonali Life Insurance, Bangladesh

Aarya Nijat, Co-Founder, Program and Policy Lead
Innovation Ticker (iTicker), USA (*Moderator*)

17:30-18:30
Oasis

TEA/COFFEE BREAK

18:30-20:00

Surma

ROUNDTABLE (By Invitation Only)

The Politics of Friendship: Alliances Memory, and Moral Convenience

Frequently, power is concealed by the language of friendship. One day, nations celebrate common principles, and the next, they undermine them. In an era of conflicting truths and shifting allegiances, what does loyalty mean? This discussion looks at how "friends" turn into enemies, how trust is exchanged, and how small countries balance strategy with affection. Who remembers is more important than who wins.

SPEAKERS

Carol Christine Fair, Professor of Security Studies
Georgetown University, USA

K.M. Mozibul Hoque, Chairman, Shah Group

Kallol Bhattacharjee, Senior Assistant Editor
The Hindu, India

Marian Vidaurri, Research Associate
Cornell University, USA

Mustafa Osman Turan,
Turkish Foreign Relations Advisor to the Mayor
Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Turkey

Niloy Ranjan Biswas, Professor
Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka

Pushpan Murugiah, CEO, The Center to Combat Corruption
and Cronyism (C4 Center), Malaysia

Sitara Jabeen, Strategic Communications Advisor
for Humanitarian Emergencies
Doctors Without Borders, Switzerland

Wu Lin, Associate Professor
China Foreign Affairs University, China

Konstantinos Foutzopoulos, Executive Director
Athens Riviera Forum, Greece (*Moderator*)

18:30-20:00

Meghna

SYMPOSIA (By Invitation Only)

Memory and Amnesia: Why the World Keeps Repeating Its Crises

Every generation promises “never again,” yet every decade delivers a new tragedy. Have we lost the capacity to remember, or have we lost the will to learn? This conversation examines how conflict, fatigue, and global distraction render peace unsustainable, and what memory still demands from power.

SPEAKERS

Dominique Rakotozafy, Former Minister of Defense of the Republic of Madagascar

Mehmet Ozkan, Professor of International Relations
Turkish National Defence University, Turkey

Satoru Nagao, Fellow, Hudson Institute, USA

Navine Murshid, Professor
North South University (*Moderator*)

18:30-20:00

Chitra

SYMPOSIA (By Invitation Only)

The Last Safe Place Home, Planet, and the Politics of Care

Everyone is looking for safety—a house, a system, a future that feels livable, as the earth warms and economies break apart. However, is safety possible without justice? This discussion combines ethics, migration, and environment into one pressing query: What does care mean in a heartless world? If we choose to act with empathy rather than just urgency, the Bay of Bengal, which is delicate and stubborn, becomes a symbol for everything we might still be able to conserve.

SPEAKERS

JP Singh, Founder and Managing Director
Starker Global Solutions, India

Leonardo Paz Neves, Senior Researcher
Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV), Brazil

Maneka Khanna, Senior Legal Program Manager
Clooney Foundation for Justice

Ario Bimo Utomo
Head of the International Relations Department
National Development University Veteran of East Java
Indonesia (*Moderator*)

18:30-20:00
Padma

COLLOQUY (By Invitation Only)

Who Owns the Future? Power, People, and the Politics of Hope

Torn between old rivalries, new technologies, and vanishing certainties, the world feels disoriented. A more subdued query, however, reverberates under the cacophony: who really controls the future? People everywhere feel less in charge of their own lives, even as governments create regulations, businesses create systems, and algorithms direct decisions. People from all walks of life are invited to speak at the BoBC Town Hall about hope, exhaustion, and the pursuit of meaning in a chaotic age. It is not about reaching a consensus; rather, it is about having an honest, open, and unpredictable conversation that only comes from public discourse.

SPEAKERS

Abdulla Rasheed Ahmed

Former Minister of State for Education, Maldives

Felix Gerdes, Resident Representative

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Imran Karim, Chairman, Confidence Power & Energy PLC and
Confidence Infrastructure PLC

Kazi Shah Muzakker Ahmadul Hoque, Director

Shah Group and TAS Group

Mashrur Arefin, Managing Director & CEO, City Bank

Syed Nasim Manzur, Managing Director

Apex Footwear Limited

Veronica Portugal, Founder and CEO, Paideia Civica, Mexico

Judith Mwaniki, Director, Development Programmes
Consortium for Economic Research and Development Studies
Kenya (*Moderator*)

20:30-22:30
Pool Cafe

DINNER (By Invitation Only)

DAY THREE

Monday
November 24
09:30-11:30
Surma

REPORT LAUNCHING EVENT

Press Freedom in Bangladesh Lessons from the Digital Security Act

The Digital Security Act (DSA) became a symbol of the suppression of free speech in Bangladesh, following in the footsteps of its predecessor, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act. Enacted in 2018, the DSA was purportedly designed to address cybercrimes but has instead been weaponized by the government to silence dissenting voices and restrict freedom of expression. The law's broad and vague provisions, such as those criminalizing "offensive," "false," or "defamatory" information, have led to the arrest of journalists, activists, and citizens critical of the government. The DSA had been used to harass and intimidate those challenging state narratives, making it a powerful tool for political repression. This law, much like the ICT Act before it, stifled critical journalism and public discourse, creating a climate of fear that undermines democratic principles. Despite recent legal changes, the legacy of the DSA continues to cast a long shadow over Bangladesh's media landscape.

SPEAKERS

Maneka Khanna, Senior Legal Program Manager
Clooney Foundation for Justice

Md Asaduzzaman, The Attorney General for Bangladesh

Sara Hossain, Senior Advocate
Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Sazzad Siddiqui, Associate Professor
Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Dhaka

Roman Uddin, Research Associate and
Youth Outreach Program Coordinator
Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) (*Moderator*)

09:30-10:30

Meghna

CONVERSATION OVER TEA (By Invitation Only)

**The Bay Beneath the Waves
Hidden Ecologies, Forgotten Communities**

Before the climate crisis became a priority on the agenda, it was a daily reality for people who live by the sea. This session examines the invisible frontlines, including coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion, and vanishing islands, as well as the human stories that science often overlooks. The Bay remembers what the world ignores.

SPEAKERS

A N M Muniruzzaman, President
Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS)

David Morris
CEO (Tasmania) Australia China Business Council, Australia

Muhammad Azeem Ali Shah, Director
Blue Green Nexus Pvt Ltd, Pakistan

Priyanka Bhide Mandrekar, Co-founder and Partner
Kubernein Initiative LLP, India (*Moderator*)

09:30-10:30

Chitra

CONVERSATION OVER TEA (By Invitation Only)

**The New Middle Class Anxiety
Hope, Debt, and the Cost of Belonging**

Across continents, the middle class, often regarded as the stabilizing force of democracy, is losing confidence. Caught between aspiration and exhaustion, it now fears falling faster than rising. This session explores what happens to politics when stability no longer feels affordable.

SPEAKERS

Konstantinos Foutzopoulos, Executive Director
Athens Riviera Forum, Greece

Nishan de Mel, Executive Director, Verité Research, Sri Lanka

Simon Kofi Tettey, E-Commerce Dispatch Manager
LOGO Fulfillment GmbH, Germany

Anurag Acharya, Director
Policy Entrepreneurs Inc, Nepal (*Moderator*)

09:30-10:30

Padma

COLLOQUY (By Invitation Only)

Sanctions, Shortages, and the Myth of Economic Neutrality

Nowadays, no economy is entirely neutral. Every currency has a side, and every economic transaction has a flag. How can emerging economies find breathing room as sanctions change global financing and supply chains? An open discussion about strategy, survival, and silent dependencies.

SPEAKERS

Aarya Nijat, Co-Founder, Program and Policy Lead
Innovation Ticker (iTicker), USA

Farrukh Irnazarov, Co-Founder and Country Director
Central Asian Development Institute, Uzbekistan

Jan Rielaender, Head of Division, The Organization for
Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Kerry Breen, Senior Director, Brummer & Partners

M. Shamsul Arefin, Managing Director & CEO, NCC Bank

Faris Hadrovic, Managing Director, SO.. Quantum Growth
Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Moderator*)

11:00-12:30

Grand Ballroom

PLENARY SESSION

The Bay on Fire Climate Change as the New Security Crisis

Storms have always been in the Bay of Bengal, but these days, politics is a part of the storms. In addition to homes, borders, economies, and tenuous peace are all at risk due to rising sea levels. Farmers and fishermen become refugees, and their migrations lead to fresh debates about compassion and sovereignty. The rivers in the area, which were formerly used for connections and trade, are now becoming points of conflict and authority. Climate change has become a slow-moving security crisis rather than just an environmental issue. Here in the Bay, the battle for the destiny of the planet might start or end.

SPEAKERS

Shafqat Munir, Senior Research Fellow
Bangladesh Institute of Peace and
Security Studies (BIPSS)

M. R. Kabir, Vice Chancellor of
Daffodil International University

Monirul Islam Akhand, Managing Director
Summit Power Limited

Muhammad Azeem Ali Shah, Director
Blue Green Nexus Pvt Ltd, Pakistan

Pyrou Chung, Director
Knowledge for Development Foundation

Jan Rielaender, Head of Division, The Organization for
Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (*Moderator*)

12:30-13:40
Chitra

SPECIAL SESSION

Knowledge at Risk: Scholarship, Power and the Future of Democratic Inquiry

In a world where facts compete with fictions and public debate is shaped by emotion, speed, and synthetic narratives, intellectual inquiry has become a frontline of governance. Research is no longer passive, its absence reshapes institutions as much as its presence. Around the Bay of Bengal, democratic transitions, digital authoritarianism, migration shocks, and environmental insecurity demand new forms of knowledge that can guide policy beyond slogans and crisis management. The CGS Journal of Governance, Security & Development emerges in this moment as a space where evidence, critique, and imagination can coexist. This session explores how scholarship can reclaim relevance in an era when states govern through improvisation, societies live in permanent uncertainty, and truth itself feels negotiable.

SPEAKERS

Clay Wescott, International Advisor
Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)

Gregory Simons, Professor in Journalism
Daffodil International University, Bangladesh

Pramod Jaiswal, Research Director
Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement
Nepal

Habib Zafarullah, Adjunct Professor, School of Humanities
Arts and Social Sciences, University of New England
Australia (*Moderator*)

12:30-13:50
Grand Ballroom

PLENARY SESSION

From Growth to Fairness: Re-imagining Prosperity After the Great Inequality

For decades, the world worshipped growth as progress, as if numbers alone could measure human well-being. That illusion has cracked. The pandemic, debt crises, and cost-of-living shocks have revealed a deeper poverty hidden beneath prosperity. Inequality is no longer a social issue; it is a structural wound that shapes politics, anger, and faith in the future. As the Indian Ocean region becomes a central arena of global competition and cooperation, these pressures take on added geopolitical weight. Emerging corridors of trade, energy, and technology offer new opportunities for shared prosperity, yet they also risk reproducing or deepening existing divides. The question now is not only how fast economies grow, but who truly benefits when they do, and how states in this region can balance strategic interests with social fairness. Real progress may depend less on expanding wealth than on rediscovering fairness as the foundation of stability in a shifting geopolitical landscape.

	SPEAKERS Park Young-sik, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Bangladesh Lulzim Pllana, Ambassador Republic of Kosovo to Bangladesh Rüdiger Lotz, Ambassador, German Embassy, Bangladesh James Goldman, Deputy High Commissioner and Development Director, British High Commission Susan Ryle, Australia's High Commissioner to Bangladesh Zillur Rahman, President Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) (<i>Moderator</i>)
13:50-14:00 Grand Ballroom	SPECIAL ADDRESS Ajit Singh High Commissioner of Canada to Bangladesh
14:00-15:00 Oasis	LUNCH
15:00-15:10 Grand Ballroom	SPEED TALK Hossain Zillur Rahman Executive Chairman Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC)

15:10-16:30
Grand Ballroom

PLENARY SESSION

From Silos to Systems Rewiring the Global Data Order

Artificial intelligence is no longer a tool we use; it has become a force that interprets us and increasingly decides on our behalf. From justice and public services to markets, security, and diplomacy, machine intelligence is reshaping how authority works. Yet the systems meant to govern this power, our data frameworks, regulations, and institutions, remain fragmented and slow to evolve. Across the Bay of Bengal region, rapid digitalization has created vast but siloed data ecosystems. As governments, businesses, and platforms adopt AI at scale, they do so atop infrastructures that lack coherence, transparency, and accountability. The result is a widening gap between technological capability and responsible governance. This session examines how societies can move from isolated data practices to integrated, trusted, and future-ready governance systems capable of overseeing intelligence that is no longer human. It brings together global experts, policymakers, technologists, and private-sector leaders to explore what it means to govern synthetic power in a world where data itself has become a strategic resource.

SPEAKERS

Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, Special Assistant to Hon'ble Chief Adviser

Hossain Zillur Rahman, Executive Chairman
Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC)

Masudur Rahman, IT Strategy and
Digital Transformation Leader, Big 4 Consulting Firm

Owais Parray, Country Economic Adviser, UNDP Bangladesh

Subimal Bhattacharjee, Treasurer And Head Critical and
Emerging Technologies, The Society to Harmonise Aspirations
for Responsible Engagement (SHARE)

Veronica Portugal, Founder and CEO, Paideia Civica
Mexico (*Moderator*)

16:30-17:40 Grand Ballroom	PLENARY SESSION The Human Century Building a Moral Economy for a Planet in Peril This century will test not just our intelligence, but our conscience. Progress has come at a cost we can no longer ignore, rising seas, burning forests, broken economies, and the quiet erosion of empathy. Growth without responsibility has left the planet weary and people divided. Yet crisis also brings a rare opportunity to begin again, to build an economy that values care as much as competition, and dignity as much as data. The question is simple but urgent: can we build a future that serves humanity, not just markets? The answer will define whether the next hundred years belong to humans, or just to history. SPEAKERS Adi John Walker, Director, POD International Consulting Constantino Xavier, Senior Fellow Centre for Social and Economic Progress, India Kallol Bhattacharjee, Senior Assistant Editor The Hindu, India Mashrur Arefin, Managing Director & CEO, City Bank Zain Khan, Editor Diplomatic Affairs Minute Mirror Newspaper, Pakistan Nishan de Mel, Executive Director Verité Research, Sri Lanka (<i>Moderator</i>)
17:40-18:00 Grand Ballroom	CLOSING Zillur Rahman, President, Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) Chair, Bay of Bengal Conservation, Bangladesh
18:00-18:30 Oasis	TEA/COFFEE BREAK
20:00-23:00 Grand Ballroom	AFTER EVENT PARTY (By Invitation Only)

STUDIO SESSIONS

DAY ONE

Saturday, November 22

TITAS

11:00-11:30

Empires Without Maps

12:00-12:30

Lines of Loyalty

13:00-13:30

The Middle Power Dilemma

15:00-15:30

When Borders Blur

16:00-16:30

Peace Without Promise

17:00-17:30

Debt as Diplomacy

DAY Two

Sunday, November 23

TITAS

11:00-11:30

The Age of Endless Emergencies

12:00-12:30

The Return of the State

13:00-13:30

The Age of Useful Lies

15:00-15:30

Minds Under Siege

16:00-16:30

The Machine's Moral Code

17:00-17:30

The Bay We Share

DAY Three
Monday, November 24

TITAS

11:00-11:30

Sanctions and Shadows

12:00-12:30

From Growth to Security

13:00-13:30

Lines on Water

15:00-15:30

The Politics of Survival

16:00-16:30

Heat, Hunger, and Human Security



SPEAKERS



A N M Muniruzzaman

President
Bangladesh Institute of Peace
and Security Studies (BIPSS)



Ahsan Habib Bhuiyan

Advocate
Supreme Court of Bangladesh



Aarya Nijat

Co-Founder
Program and Policy Lead
Innovation Ticker (iTicker)
USA



Ajit Singh

High Commissioner of Canada
to Bangladesh



Abdulla Rasheed Ahmed

Former Minister of State for
Education, Maldives



Ali Riaz

Special Assistant to the
Chief Adviser, Interim
Government of Bangladesh



A B M Shamsuddoza Sajen

Special Content Editor
The Daily Star



Álvaro Beltrán Urrutia

Digital Democracy Analyst
UNDP Regional Bureau for
Latin America and the
Caribbean



Adi John Walker

Director
POD International Consulting



Anastasia S Wibawa

Project Director
European Partnership for
Democracy, Belgium





Andres Del Castillo

Chief Technical Advisor
Electoral Support Project
UNDP Bangladesh



Ario Bimo Utomo

Head of the International
Relations Department
National Development
University Veteran of East
Java, Indonesia



Anurag Acharya

Director
Policy Entrepreneurs Inc,
Nepal



Ashok Sajjanhar

President
Institute of Global Studies
India



Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury

President
Bangladesh Chamber of
Industries (BCI)



Asif Saleh

Executive Director
BRAC



Anzar Mehraj Raina

Assistant Producer
Firstpost, Network 18
India



Aziza Sultana

Barrister (England & Wales) &
Transnational Legal
Practitioner



Apon Zahir

Senior Research Associate
Centre for Governance
Studies (CGS)



Boris Tadić

Former President of Serbia





Carol Christine Fair

Professor
Georgetown University
USA



David Morris

CEO (Tasmania)
Australia China Business
Council, Australia



Carolina Chimoy

International Correspondent
Deutsche Welle (DW)
Germany



David Patrician

Moderator
RTL Nord, Germany



Catherine Cecil

Chief of Party
Democracy International
USA



Debapriya Bhattacharya

Distinguished Fellow
Centre for Policy Dialogue
(CPD)



Clay Wescott

International Advisor
Centre for Governance Studies
(CGS)



Di Ma

Director, External Affairs
Green Bridge Tasmania
Australia



Constantino Xavier

Senior Fellow
Centre for Social and Economic
Progress, India



Dominique Rakotozafy

Former Minister of Defense of
the Republic of Madagascar



**Faris Hadrovic**

Managing Director
SO.. Quantum Growth Agency
Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Gregory Simons**

Professor in Journalism
Daffodil International
University, Bangladesh

**Farrukh Irmazarov**

Co-Founder and
Country Director
Central Asian Development
Institute (CADII), Uzbekistan

**Habib Zafarullah**

Adjunct Professor
School of Humanities
Arts and Social Sciences
University of New England
Australia

**Felix Gerdes**

Resident Representative
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Bangladesh

**Hadza Min Fadhli Robby**

Associate Professor and Deputy
Head for the International
Program, Department of
International Relations Faculty of
Socio-Cultural Sciences, Islamic
University of Indonesia, Indonesia

**George Cooke**

Founder
Awarelogue Initiative
Sri Lanka

**Hossain Zillur Rahman**

Executive Chairman
Power and Participation
Research Centre (PPRC)

**Ghanshyam Bhandari**

Ambassador
Embassy of Nepal to
Bangladesh

**Imran Karim**

Chairman
Confidence Power & Energy
PLC and Confidence
Infrastructure PLC





Imtiaz Gul

CEO
Center for Research and
Security Studies, Pakistan



Jovan Ratkovic

Senior Fellow
Agora Strategy Institute
Germany



James Angelus

Founder and President
International Security Industry
Council Japan (ISIC)



JP Singh

Founder and Managing
Director
Starker Global Solutions
India



James Goldman

Deputy High Commissioner
and Development Director
British High Commission



Judith Mwaniki

Director, Development
Programme
Consortium for Economic
Research and Development
Studies, Kenya



Jan Rielaender

Head of Division
The Organization for Economic
Co-operation and
Development (OECD), France



Julia Roknifard

Senior Lecturer
Taylor's University
Malaysia



Joshua Alexander

Founder
Maritime Frontiers Ltd
Australia



K.M. Mozibul Hoque

Chairman
Shah Group





Kallol Bhattacharjee

Senior Assistant Editor
The Hindu, India



Konstantinos Foutzopoulos

Executive Director
Athens Riviera Forum
Greece



Karori Singh

Former Director and
Emeritus Fellow
South Asia Studies Center
University of Rajasthan, India



Krzysztof Zalewski

President
The Michał Boym Institute for
Asian and Global Studies
Foundation, Poland



Kazi Faisal Bin Seraj

Country Representative
The Asia Foundation



Leo Wigger

Fellow, EU South Asia
Relations
Mercator Foundation, Germany



**Kazi Shah Muzakker
Ahmadul Hoque**

Director
Shah Group and TAS Group



Leonardo Paz Neves

Senior Researcher
Getulio Vargas Foundation
(FGV), Brazil



Kerry Breen

Senior Director
Brummer & Partners
USA



Lulzim Pilana

Ambassador
Republic of Kosovo to
Bangladesh





M. R. Kabir

Vice Chancellor of Daffodil
International University



Mashrur Arefin

Managing Director & CEO
City Bank



Mahfuz Anam

Editor
The Daily Star



Masudur Rahman

IT Strategy and Digital
Transformation Leader
Big 4 Consulting Firm, USA



Maneka Khanna

Senior Legal Program Manager
Clooney Foundation for
Justice, USA



Maung Min Thu Aung

Accountability &
Innovation Manager
Global Network Initiative, USA



Marian Vidaurri

Research Associate
Cornell University
USA



Md. Asaduzzaman

Attorney General of
Bangladesh



Mariyam Nasir

Director General
Ministry of Education
Maldives



Md. Touhid Hossain

Adviser for Foreign Affairs of
the Interim Government of
Bangladesh





Mehmet Özkan

Professor of International Relations
Turkish National Defence University, Turkey



Morshedul Alam Chaklader

Managing Director
NCC Bank



Michael Miller

Ambassador and Head
Delegation of the European
Union to Bangladesh



Muhammad Azeem Ali Shah

Director
Blue Green Nexus Pvt Ltd,
Pakistan



Mohammed Parvez Imdad

Consultant & Policy Advisor
Bangladesh



Muhammad Sazzad Hossain Siddiqui

Associate Professor &
Chairman,
Peace and Conflict Studies
University of Dhaka



Monirul Islam Akhand

Managing Director
Summit Power Limited



Mustafa Osman Turan

Foreign Relations Advisor to
the Mayor
Istanbul Metropolitan
Municipality, Turkey



Morshed Hassib

Senior Reporter
Channel 24



Mustafizur Rahman

Chief of Correspondents
New Age





Narayan Adhikari

South East Asia Lead
Accountability Lab, Nepal



Park Young-sik

Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of
Korea in Bangladesh



Navine Murshid

Professor
North South University



Parvez Karim Abbasi

Executive Director
Centre for Governance
Studies (CGS)



Niloy Ranjan Biswas

Professor, Department of
International Relations
University of Dhaka



Peter Aukamp

Entrepreneur
Rigilog AG/OceanSafe AG/
Kingsrock Advisors/
Good Carbon, UK



Nishan de Mel

Executive Director
Verité Research, Sri Lanka



Pramod Jaiswal

Research Director
Institute for International
Cooperation and Engagement
Nepal



Nurul Kabir

Editor
New Age



Pranay Verma

High Commissioner of India
to Bangladesh
Indian High Commission





Priyanka Bhide Mandrekar

Co-founder and Partner
Kubernein Initiative LLP
India



Roman Uddin

Research Associate and
Youth Outreach Program
Coordinator Centre for
Governance Studies (CGS)



Pushpan Murugiah

CEO
The Center to Combat
Corruption and Cronyism
(C4 Center)



Rüdiger Lotz

German Ambassador to
Bangladesh



Pyrou Chung

Director
Knowledge for Development
Foundation, Thailand



Salauddin Ahmed Reza

Senior Reporter
Jamuna TV



Raheed Ejaz

Special Correspondent
Prothom Alo



Sara Hossain

Senior Advocate
Supreme Court of Bangladesh



Rehman Sobhan

Chairman
Centre for Policy Dialogue
(CPD)



Sardar Omar F. A Hossain

Managing Director
Al Maida Pvt Ltd





Satoru Nagao

Fellow
Hudson Institute, USA



Sheikh Mohammad Daniel

Director
Sonali Life Insurance
Bangladesh



Selim Jahan

Professorial Fellow
BRAC Institute for Governance
and Development



Shihab Uddin Khan

Advocate
Supreme Court of Bangladesh



Selma Obarcanin

Co-Founder & Chief Marketing
Officer
SO.. Quantum Growth Agency
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Simon Kofi Tettey

E-Commerce Dispatch Manager
LOGO Fulfillment GmbH,
Germany



Shafqat Munir

Senior Research Fellow
Bangladesh Institute of Peace
and Security Studies (BIPSS)



Sitara Jabeen

Strategic Communications
Advisor for Humanitarian
Emergencies
Doctors Without Borders
Switzerland



Sheela Tasneem Haq

Senior Governance Specialist
UNDP, Bangladesh



Sonia Zaman Khan

Advocate
Supreme Court of Bangladesh





Stefan Liller

UNDP Resident Representative
in Bangladesh



Syed Refaat Ahmed

Chief Justice of Bangladesh



Subimal Bhattacharjee

Treasurer and Head Critical and
Emerging Technologies,
The Society to Harmonise
Aspirations for Responsible
Engagement (SHARE), India



Tanha Kate

Associate Relationship
Manager
City Bank PLC



Susan Ryle

Australia's High Commissioner
to Bangladesh



Tanvir Mahmud

Senior Governance Specialist
UNDP Bangladesh



Sushant Kumar

Assistant Professor
O.P.Jindal Global University
India



Touseef Mehraj Raina

Co-founder
Jammu & Kashmir Policy
Institute, India



Syed Nasim Manzur

Managing Director
Apex Footwear Limited



Verónica Portugal

Founder and CEO
Paideia Cívica, Mexico





Vikramdeep Johal

Deputy Editor
The Tribune, India



Zainul Abidin Rasheed

Former Senior Minister of
State for Foreign Affairs
Singapore



Wu Lin

Associate Professor
China Foreign Affairs
University, China



Zillur Rahman

President
Centre for Governance Studies
(CGS)



Yuanzhe Ren

Director and Professor
China Foreign Affairs
University, China



Zuraida Binti Kamaruddin

Former Minister of Plantation
and Commodities of Malaysia



Zahid Shahab Ahmed

Associate Professor
National Defence College
UAE



Zain Khan

Editor Diplomatic Affairs
Minute Mirror Newspaper
Pakistan





DELEGATES

DELEGATES

- **Abu Jafar**
General Manager
TAS GSA Kuwait Airways
- **Alberto Giovanetti**
Counsellor, Head of Political
Economic & Cultural Affairs
Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh
- **Ali Reza**
Head of Internal Audit
Sonali Life Insurance, Bangladesh
- **Anastasia Nemova**
First Secretary
Embassy of the Russian Federation in
Bangladesh
- **Ankit**
Assistant Public & Welfare Officer
High Commission of India, Dhaka
- **Ann Marry George**
First Secretary (Political & Cultural)
High Commission of India, Dhaka
- **Anwarul Abedin**
Director
TAS Group
- **Asif Chowdhury**
Chief Operating Officer (COO)
TAS Group
- **Atikur Rahman**
Director
TAS Group
- **Baiba Zarina**
Head of Political, Economic, Trade,
Press and Information Section
Delegation of the European Union
to Bangladesh
- **Debra Boyce**
Counsellor & Senior Trade Commissioner
High Commission of Canada in Bangladesh
- **Farzana Sultana**
Development Advisor
High Commission of Canada in
Bangladesh
- **Fauzia Quamrun Tania**
Representative Director
Sonali Life Insurance, Bangladesh
- **Gedela Vinod Kumar**
SA, High Commission of India
Dhaka
- **Glenn Suffolk**
Defence Advisor
Australian High Commission,
Bangladesh
- **H. E. Gabriel. Sistiaga**
Ambassador
Embassy of Spain in Bangladesh
- **H.E. Mr. Pawankuamr Badhe**
Deputy High Commissioner
High Commission of India, Dhaka
- **H.E. Mr. Reto Renggli**
Ambassador
Embassy of Switzerland in
Bangladesh
- **Ilya Lytkin**
Third Secretary
Embassy of the Russian Federation in
Bangladesh
- **Imtiaz Ibne Sattar**
Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
Summit Corporation Limited

- **Iqbal Mahmood**
Deputy Team Leader
PERI Programme
The Asia Foundation-Bangladesh
- **Izlal Husain**
Programme Manager
The Asia Foundation-Bangladesh
- **Joe Goodings**
Head of Development Cooperation
High Commission of Canada in
Bangladesh
- **Kazi Fahim Ahmed**
Trainee
Delegation of the European Union to
Bangladesh
- **Khondoker Rifat Hossain**
Assistant Project Officer
Friedrich- Ebert-Stiftung (FES)
Bangladesh
- **Kohei Hisatomi**
Researcher/Adviser of Economic and
Economic Cooperation Section
Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh
- **Lubain Chowdhury Masum**
Advisor
Political Affairs and Public Diplomacy
Embassy of the Kingdom of the
Netherlands
- **Manu Verma**
High Commission of India, Dhaka
- **Marcus Davies**
Counsellor (Political)
High Commission of Canada in
Bangladesh
- **Matthew H. Tonkin**
Political Officer
U. S. Embassy in Bangladesh
- **Maximilian Hofmann**
PhD Candidate
School of Business and Management
Queen Mary University of London
- **Md Abdul Hannan**
Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
Sonali Life Insurance
Bangladesh
- **Md Manzur Morshed**
Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Sonali Life Insurance, Bangladesh
- **Md Rafiqul Islam**
Managing Director and Acting CEO
Sonali Life Insurance, Bangladesh
- **Md Reaz Uddin**
Managing Director and CEO
Summit Meghnaghat I Power Co Ltd and
Summit Meghnaghat II Power Co Ltd
- **Md. Sayedul Alam**
Managing Director and CEO
Summit LNG Terminal Co (Pvt) Ltd
- **Md. Murad Hossain Khan**
Executive director
Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital
- **Md. Shahidul Alam Ripon**
General Manager
Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital
- **Mir Junayed Jamal**
Director, Program Implementation &
Quality Control
The Asia Foundation-Bangladesh
- **Mizanur Rahman**
Head of Admin and HR
Total Air Services Ltd.
- **Mohammad Nurullah**
Advisor
Bakkah Power and Energy Ltd.

- **Mostafa Quamrus Sobhan**
Shareholder Director
Sonali Life Insurance
Bangladesh
- **Nisar Ahmed**
Political & Economic Advisor
High Commission of Canada in
Bangladesh
- **Nurul Alam**
Country Manager
TAS Aviation Ltd.
- **Philippa Wood**
Delegation of the European Union to
Bangladesh
- **Philippe Bernier**
Male Political Counsellor
High Commission of Canada in
Bangladesh
- **S M Noor Uddin**
Managing Director and CEO
Summit Bibiyana Power Company Ltd.
- **S. Shivaraman**
Second secretary
High Commission of India
Dhaka
- **Sameya Karim**
The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
(CFLI) Coordinator
High Commission of Canada in
Bangladesh
- **Sarwar Jahan Chowdhury**
Political Adviser
Royal Norwegian Embassy in Dhaka
- **Shadhan Kumar Das**
Programme Advisor
Friedrich- Ebert-Stiftung (FES)
Bangladesh
- **Shinju Karasawa**
Head of Economic and Economic
Cooperation Section
Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh
- **Silke Schmeer**
Political Attachée
Embassy of the Federal Republic of
Germany Dhaka
- **Sofia Kutepova**
Press Secretary
Embassy of the Russian Federation in
Bangladesh
- **Stephen Weaver**
Counsellor and Head of Cooperation
High Commission of Canada in
Bangladesh
- **Sumaiya Sadia**
Political and Public Affairs Officer
High Commission of Canada in
Bangladesh
- **Tamjidul Haque Chowdhury**
Chief Business Development Officer
Summit Communications Limited
- **Vimal Kumar Yadav**
SA, High Commission of India, Dhaka
- **Ziad M. H. Hamad**
Deputy Head of Mission
Embassy of the State of Palestine,
Bangladesh



TEAM

Bay of Bengal
Conversation

TEAM BOBC



Abdul Awal Shabuz



Bahauddin Ahmed



Abu Al Sayeed



Debi Karmakar



Anthony Gomes



Depanjali Roy



Apon Zahir



Fahmida Haq



Arman Miah



Julian Angkon Rozario



Kazi Rhid



Prodip Kumar Shil



Marzana Mahnaz



Roman Uddin



Mukhlesur Rahman



Md. Saiful Islam Shanto



Nuzhat Tabassum



Sanjoy Debnath



Parvez Karim Abbasi



Shamsul Arif Fahim



Shurat Rana Rushmi



Thain Shewe Kyaw



Subir Das



Tohfatur Rabbi Piyal



Tanzila Hosin Tonny



Zillur Rahman



Tasfia Rahman

CODE of CONDUCT

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PARTICIPATION AT THE BAY OF BENGAL CONVERSATION

The Bay of Bengal Conversation is an impartial and diverse platform with participants from all walks of life. We priorities making the conference an inclusive and comfortable environment for all attendees, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, race, religion, or impairment. We ask that everyone involved with the Bay of Bengal Conversation, including participants, organisers, and hotel staff, obey our Participation Code of Conduct and understand the consequences of any infractions.

Throughout the conference, our team will also release house rules and updates, which we ask all stakeholders to observe.

The Code of Conduct is neither legal nor prescriptive. It enhances and does not supersede the implementation of any relevant policies, regulations, rules, and laws, including legislation governing the venue of the conference and any applicable host country agreements. Participants agree to abide by the Code of Conduct as well as all relevant event rules and procedures, including health standards.

VIOLATIONS OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

During the conference, we expect everyone to follow our anticipated behaviour rules and to respect our anti-harassment policy. This covers conference-related social gatherings as well as online social media participation. If conference organisers request that you stop engaging in banned behaviour, you must do so promptly. If unacceptable behaviour continues, the conference organisers may take any necessary action, including immediate ejection from the conference and/or reporting to appropriate authorities.

RESOURCES

Reporting Inappropriate Conduct

Please notify a conference organizer if you are subjected to harassment or other unacceptable behaviour. Event organisers will be accessible and present throughout the conference. If you witness or have a grievance and prefer to remain anonymous, please fill out and submit a handwritten/typed complaint and submit it to a member of the organising team.

Law Enforcement

If an emergency arises, please first proceed to notify a conference organiser of the issue. If then the need arises, participants should contact the Dhaka Police by dialling 999 (Emergency Number).

Medical Station

We have a doctor on call and at the station throughout the conference. In the event you need medical attention, please seek out our medical station.

Attendance and Dress Code

We restrict access to the Bay of Bengal Conversation to participants with valid confirmation cards. All participants must attend the conference in formal attire (business formal /national/uniform).

Conference Participation

Please respect fellow participants. You should frame conversations openly and inclusively. Profanity or slurs are prohibited. If you choose to attend a panel discussion, we request you stay seated for the duration.

Drugs and Alcohol

We abide by and enforce all local, state, and central laws and regulations surrounding the possession and/or use of illegal substances. In addition, please limit tobacco use to permitted areas and consume alcohol in moderation.

Safety

We hope our participants accept a shared responsibility for conference safety and notify conference organisers of any danger or misconduct they may witness. The possession of weapons or violence in any form is not permitted.

To ensure order throughout the conference, we do not permit organised demonstrations or disruptions of any kind.

ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

We do not tolerate any form of harassment at the Bay of Bengal Conversation. Our zero-tolerance policy prohibits all forms of harassment, including, but not limited to:

- Making derogatory or demeaning comments about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity;
- Name-calling or using slurs with a gender/sexual connotation;
- Making sexual comments about appearance, clothing, or body parts;
- Rating a person's sexuality;
- Repeatedly asking a person for dates or asking for sex;
- Staring in a sexually suggestive manner;
- Unwelcome touching, including pinching, patting, rubbing, or purposefully brushing up against a person;
- Making inappropriate sexual gestures, such as pelvic thrusts;
- Sharing sexual or lewd anecdotes or jokes;
- Sending sexually suggestive communications in any format;
- Sharing or displaying sexually inappropriate images or videos in any format;
- Attempted or actual sexual assault, including rape.

A participant should never knowingly make a false or misleading claim about prohibited conduct.

PROHIBITION OF RETALIATION

Threats, intimidation, or any other form of retaliation against a participant who has made a complaint or provided information in support of a complaint are prohibited. The organisers will take any reasonable and appropriate action needed to prevent and respond to retaliation in accordance with its applicable policy, regulations, and rules.

MEDIA ADVISORY

ELIGIBILITY

All accredited members of the media, as well as senior journalists, columnists, and commentators who are not accredited, are eligible for participation as long as they are registered.

VENUE AND AGENDA

The “Bay of Bengal Conversation” Dialogue will be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, from November 22-24, 2025, at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon, 107 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka 1215, Bangladesh. The full agenda is available at <https://bayofbengalconversation.cgs-bd.com/>

Please bear in mind that session timings are subject to change.

CONFERENCE ACCESS

Media will have access to all public sessions.

Public sessions can also be viewed live on CGS’s web platform or our YouTube, X, LinkedIn and Facebook handle.

You can also visit our website for various updates on the conference.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Find us on X (@CGSbangladesh) and Instagram (@centreforgovernancestudiesbd), LinkedIn (@centerforgovernancestudies), YouTube (/@CGSBD), Facebook (/@cgs.org), and follow all conference updates with the hashtag <#BoBC2025>.

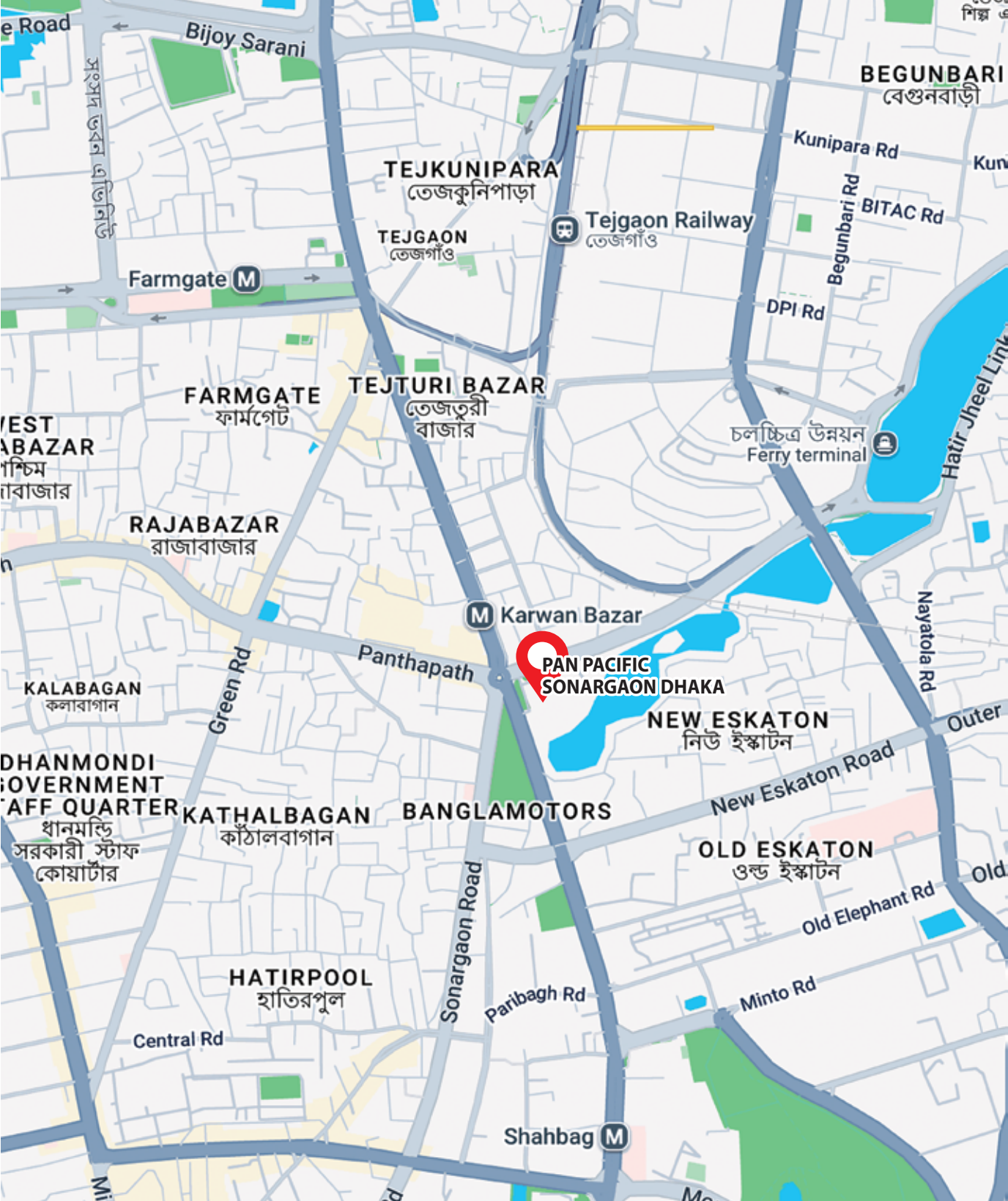
We encourage you to use <#BoBC2025> so that we can identify your message on our social media platforms.

MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT

The Bay of Bengal Conversation Charter of Participation applies to all members of the media. If any media members are found to be in violation of conference rules, their access may be revoked. We expect that the media will be transparent and accurate in its coverage of conference events. “The Bay of Bengal Conversation” and its hosts, “The Centre for Governance Studies,” must be fully acknowledged in all media coverage during and after the conference, including off-stage interactions with speakers and participants. Only active sessions and discussions, as well as mutually agreed-upon interviews, are expected to be covered by the media.

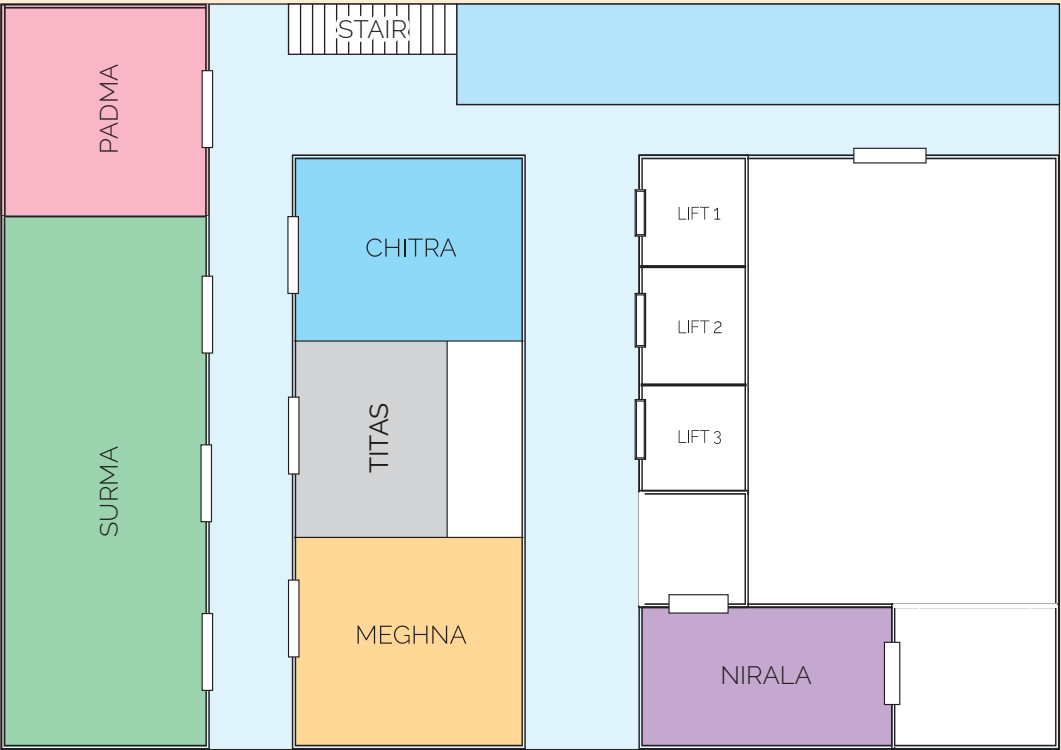
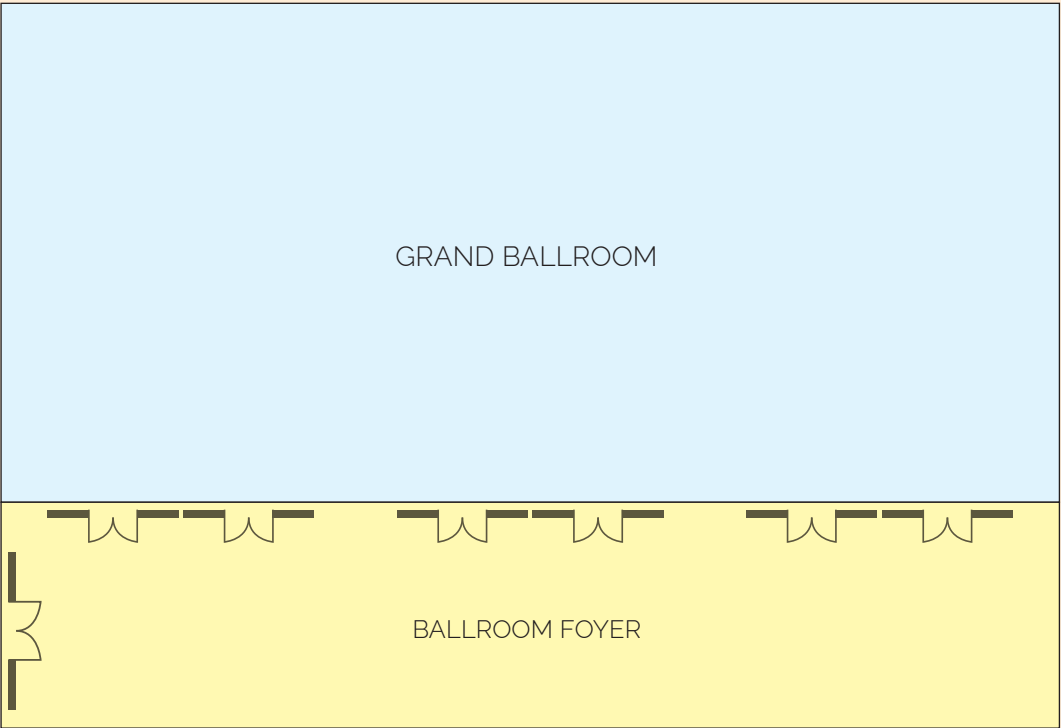
CONTACT

For any queries or assistance, please write to Sanjoy Debnath (sanjoy@cgs-bd.com)



Location: DHAKA, Legend:  CONVERSATION VENUE







2025

PARTNERS



Bay of Bengal Conversation

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2025

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45/1 New Eskaton (2nd Floor), Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh

Tel +880 2 58310217, +880 2 222223109

Website: www.cgs-bd.com