

Bay of Bengal Conversation 2024

Program

Day 1: Saturday, November 16

09:30 – 10:30

Grand

Ballroom

Inaugural Session

Speakers:

Zillur Rahman, Executive Director, CGS; Chair, Bay of Bengal Conversation, Bangladesh

Jorge Fernando Quiroga Ramírez, Former President of Bolivia; Member, Club de Madrid

Mahathir Mohamad, Former Prime Minister of Malaysia

Md. Touhid Hossain, Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Interim Government of Bangladesh

Muhammad Yunus, Chief Adviser of the Interim Government of Bangladesh

Munira Khan, Chair, Centre for Governance Studies, Bangladesh

10:30 – 11:00

Tea/Coffee Break

Oasis

11:00 – 12:20

Grand

Ballroom

Shifting Tides: The Impact of Trump's America on Asia and the Global South

With Trump back at the helm, U.S. foreign policy is poised for a shift that could reshape alliances and strategic priorities across Asia and the Global South. This panel will explore potential policy reversals, from trade relations to security commitments, and their implications for regional actors. Key examples include the anticipated impact on U.S.-China relations, which could intensify tensions in the South China Sea, and potential shifts in U.S. trade agreements with Southeast Asia. Panelists will discuss how these changes might alter the Indo-Pacific strategy, creating new opportunities and challenges for both allies and emerging economies in a fractured global landscape.

Speakers:

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Chairman, Sanobar Institute, Islamabad; Former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan

Ali Riaz, Distinguished Professor, Illinois State University, USA; Head of the Constitutional Reform Commission, Interim Government of Bangladesh

Ashok Sajjanhar, Former Ambassador; President, Institute of Global Studies, India

Christine C. Fair, Professor, Security Studies, Georgetown University, USA

Liping Xia, Professor, Department of Diplomatic Studies, China Foreign Affairs University

Charlie Campbell, Senior Correspondent, TIME Magazine **(Moderator)**

12:20 - 12:30
Ballroom

Grand

Ministerial Speech

Ali Imam Majumder, Adviser, Ministry of Food, Interim Government of Bangladesh

12:30 - 13:50
Ballroom

Grand

From Crisis to Opportunity: Redefining Climate Leadership in a Changing World

As Asia battles rising sea levels, more intense typhoons, and extreme heat, the urgency of climate action has never been clearer. Bangladesh, a country acutely vulnerable to climate change, is developing innovative solutions to adapt, from floating farms to building more resilient infrastructure. At the same time, countries like China and India must balance industrial growth with aggressive emissions targets. This session will highlight how emerging economies in the Indo-Pacific can turn climate crises into opportunities for leadership. It will focus on how nations can spur economic growth through green energy transitions, build climate-resilient cities, and take a leading role in global climate action while navigating domestic economic pressures.

Speakers:

Arjan De Haan, Senior Program Specialist, International Development Research Centre, Canada

Ghanshyam Bhandari, Ambassador, Embassy of Nepal in Bangladesh

Narayan Adhikari, Co-founder and South Asia Representative, Accountability Lab Nepal

Pyrou Chung, Director of Open Development Initiative, East-West Management Institute

Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, Founder, Mantraya Institute for Strategic Studies (MISS), India

Monzima Haque, Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh **(Moderator)**

13:50 – 14:00

Grand

Ballroom

Ministerial Speech

M. Sakhawat Hussain, Adviser, Ministry of Shipping; Ministry of Labor and Employment, Interim Government of Bangladesh

14:00 – 15:00

Lunch

Oasis

15:00 – 16:10

Grand

Ballroom

Resilient Banking, Inclusive Growth: Tackling Inequality and Poverty in a Divided World

The gap between rich and poor is widening, making poverty reduction more challenging and financial systems more vulnerable. This panel will examine the potential of resilient banking and inclusive growth strategies, looking at examples such as Pakistan’s Ehsaas Program for social protection and Japan’s regional economic revitalization efforts. Panelists will discuss how these and similar approaches can create pathways out of poverty, emphasizing the importance of equitable financial systems that address the fractures within economies and societies.

Speakers:

Ana Maria Paraschiv, International Business Consultant; Founder of Ubuntu World Consulting, Romania

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

Kyle Inan, CEO, KI Asset Management Company, Turkiye

Mashrur Arefin, Managing Director, City Bank, Bangladesh

Ghulam Mohammed Alomgir, Chairman, Max Group, Bangladesh

Faris Hadrovic, Managing Director, CBD d.o.o. Bosnia and Herzegovina (**Moderator**)

16:10 – 16:20

Grand

Ballroom

Ministerial Speech

Asif Nazrul, Adviser, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs; Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, Bangladesh

16:20 – 17:30

Grand

Ballroom

Truth in the Crossfire: Navigating Journalism in the Age of Disinformation

In the Indo-Pacific region, disinformation has increasingly become a strategic tool for shaping public opinion and destabilizing political landscapes. The Philippines, for instance, saw waves of disinformation campaigns during its 2022 elections, with fake news targeting candidates and manipulating voter sentiment. Similarly, in Myanmar, disinformation on social media platforms exacerbated ethnic tensions, contributing to the Rohingya crisis. This session will dive into how state and non-state actors in Asia are using disinformation to influence electoral outcomes, stoke unrest, and destabilize societies. Attendees will learn how news organizations and platforms across the region can enhance their resilience, deploy fact-checking mechanisms, and preserve the integrity of information in an increasingly hostile digital environment.

Speakers:

Leo Wigger, Director, South Asia and Eurasia at Candid Foundation; Editor, Zenith Magazine, Germany

Miraj Ahmed Chowdhury, Managing Director, Digitally Right, Bangladesh

Raju Mahajan, Principal & Managing Attorney, Mahajan Law LLC, USA

Sheela Tasneem Haq, Senior Governance Specialist, UNDP-Bangladesh

Siddharth Varadarajan, Founding Editor, The Wire, India

Laura Larocchia, Marketing & Operations Manager, Disal Consulting, Italy (**Moderator**)

17:30 – 18:30

Tea / Coffee

Oasis

20:00 – 23:00

Ballroom

Grand

Gala Dinner (By Invitation Only)

Day 2: Sunday, November 17

09:30 – 10:30

Surma

Conversation over Tea (By Invitation Only)

Money Trails and Broken Promises: Fighting Corruption in Public Service

Illicit finance, bribery, and corruption have long undermined the effectiveness of public service delivery in many regions, diverting resources meant for vital services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. These corrupt practices weaken trust in government institutions, exacerbate inequality, and stifle economic growth. In this session, experts will delve into the complexities of illicit finance networks, explore how bribery impacts service delivery, and identify practical solutions to combat these issues. This session will focus on strategies for strengthening governance, improving transparency, and enhancing accountability in public service sectors. Attendees will learn about cutting-edge approaches to detecting and preventing illicit financial flows, best practices for curbing corruption, and case studies from countries that have made significant strides in safeguarding public service integrity.

Speakers:

Anurag Acharya, Director, Policy Entrepreneurs Incorporated, Nepal

Fayyaz Yaseen Bhidal, Executive Director, Accountability Lab Pakistan

Mushtaq Khan, Professor, Department of Economics, SOAS South Asia Institute, UK

Tanvir Mahmud, Senior Governance Specialist, UNDP Bangladesh (**Moderator**)

Conversation over Tea (By Invitation Only)

Meghna

Choking on Progress: Air Quality and Fossil Fuel Dilemmas in a Growing Indo-Pacific

As the Indo-Pacific region experiences rapid economic growth and urban expansion, it also faces an escalating crisis in air quality, with fossil fuel dependency at the heart of the issue. This panel

will explore the environmental and health impacts of fossil fuel emissions, the competing pressures of industrialization and climate action, and the socio-political challenges of implementing cleaner energy solutions. Panelists will discuss pathways toward sustainable development that balance growth with the urgent need for cleaner air, addressing the fractured priorities of economies, communities, and governments across the region.

Speakers:

A R M Meherab Ali, Executive Director, ARCED Foundation, Bangladesh

Tanzeem Chowdhury, CEO, Omera Petroleum Limited and Omera Cylinders Limited, Bangladesh

Touseef Mehraj Raina, Founder, JK Policy Institute, India

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

Conversation over Tea (By Invitation Only)

Chitra

Supply Chain Disruptions: Navigating Economic Recovery in a Fragile World

Asia is home to some of the world's most critical supply chains, from electronics manufacturing in Taiwan and South Korea to garment production in Bangladesh. However, the region has seen significant disruptions, from semiconductor shortages to shipping bottlenecks, as geopolitical tensions between China and the U.S. escalate. The impact of these disruptions on economies such as Japan, Malaysia, and India underscores the fragility of global supply networks. This session will provide insights into how Indo-Pacific economies are addressing these vulnerabilities and rebuilding stronger, more resilient supply chains, from reshoring production to investing in automation and technology.

Speakers:

David Morris, CEO, Australia China Business Council

Mamun Rashid, Economic Analyst; Chairman, Financial Excellence Ltd, Bangladesh

Simon Kofi Tettey, Shipping Management Business Analyst, World Health Organization (WHO), Global Service Centre, Malaysia

Krzysztof Zalewski, President, Michał Boym Institute for Asian and Global Studies, Poland **(Moderator)**

11:00 – 11:20

Grand

Ballroom

Special Address

Moussa Mara, Former Prime Minister of Mali; Member, Club de Madrid

11:20 – 12:40

Grand

Ballroom

Turbulent Waters: Navigating Maritime Security in a Divided Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific's maritime corridors are vital for global trade but increasingly fraught with security challenges, from territorial disputes to piracy and environmental threats. This panel will explore pressing security issues, such as tensions in the South China Sea and illegal fishing in the Bay of Bengal. Panelists will discuss collaborative approaches, including ASEAN's maritime security initiatives and the Quad's naval cooperation, to promote stability in these contested waters and safeguard economic lifelines in a fractured world.

Speakers:

David Brewster, Senior Research Fellow, National Security College, Australia

Dominique Rakotozafy, Former Minister of National Defense, Madagascar

Nardia Simpson, Acting High Commissioner, Australian High Commission in Bangladesh

Sanjay Kumar Bhardwaj, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Syed Misbah Uddin Ahmad, Director General, Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research and Development

Leonardo Paz Neves, Researcher, International Intelligence Unit, Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil (**Moderator**)

12:40-14:00

Grand

Ballroom

Power Shifts: The Geopolitical Chessboard in a Fragmented World

The Indo-Pacific is at the center of a global power struggle, with China's growing military presence in the South China Sea raising alarm among neighboring nations. India, with its expanding influence in the region, is increasingly seen as a counterbalance to China's dominance. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) between the U.S., Japan, Australia, and India is a key strategic response to China's assertiveness. This session will dissect the shifting power dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, focusing on how nations are responding to China's rise and what it means for regional stability, diplomacy, and global governance.

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

Aamna Khan, PhD Candidate, Jilin University, China

Gregory Simons, Associate Professor, Turiba University in Riga, Latvia

Kazi Faisal Bin Seraj, Country Representative, The Asia Foundation Bangladesh

Sreeradha Dutta, Professor, OP Jindal Global University, India

Parvez Karim Abbasi, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Governance Studies, Bangladesh
(Moderator)

14:00 – 15:00

Lunch

Oasis

15:00 – 15:10

Ballroom

Grand

Ambassadorial Reflections

Pranay Verma, Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh

15:10 – 16:30

Ballroom

Grand

Breaking the News: Freedom of the Press vs. Weaponised Information

In India and Bangladesh, journalists have faced increasing pressure from both political actors and external threats as freedom of the press becomes a battleground. The use of state-controlled narratives, particularly in conflict regions such as Kashmir, highlights how weaponized information can suppress dissent and silence journalists. In Southeast Asia, countries like Cambodia and Thailand are clamping down on press freedom, often by using state-run media to suppress opposition voices. This session will spotlight how authoritarian regimes across the Indo-Pacific are weaponizing information, the critical role independent media plays in challenging these tactics, and how global coalitions can bolster efforts to protect press freedom in the face of disinformation warfare.

Andre Carstens, Chargè D' Affaires, The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh

Biswas Baral, Editor, The Kathmandu Post, Nepal

Stephen Kovats, Director, Agency for Open Culture and Critical Transformation gGmbH, Germany

Suhashini Sherene Haidar, Diplomatic Editor, The Hindu, India

Tanvir Mahmud, Senior Governance Specialist, UNDP Bangladesh

Marcus Davies, Political Counsellor, Canadian High Commission in Bangladesh (**Moderator**)

16:30 – 16:40

Grand

Ballroom

Ambassadorial Reflections

Yousef S. Y. Ramadan, Palestine Ambassador in Bangladesh

16:40 – 17:30

Grand

Ballroom

Fortifying Institutions in an Age of Populism: Strategies for Democratic Resilience and Integrity

In an era marked by the rise of populist movements and leaders across the globe, democratic institutions are facing unprecedented pressures. Populism, often fueled by public dissatisfaction with the political establishment, economic disparities, and cultural anxieties, challenges the very foundations of institutional integrity. Whether in the form of attacks on the judiciary, the erosion of checks and balances, or the undermining of the free press, populism threatens to weaken the institutions that safeguard democracy and the rule of law. This session will explore how institutions can be reinforced against these rising pressures through strategic reforms, innovations, and international cooperation needed to strengthen institutional integrity and ensure democratic resilience.

Speakers:

Hadza Min Fadhli Robby, Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, Islamic University of Indonesia

Hallelujah Wondimu, PhD Researcher, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, UK

Selma Obarcanin, Chief Marketing Officer, SO.. Quantum Growth Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tanyel Bedia Taysi, Country Director-Bangladesh, The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

Touseef Mehraj Raina, Founder, JK Policy Institute, India

Jovan Ratkovic, Senior Fellow, Agora Strategy Group AG, Germany (**Moderator**)

17:30 – 18:30

Tea / Coffee

Oasis

18:30 – 20:00

Surma

Symposia (By Invitation Only)

Beyond the Belt and Road: China's Strategic Ambitions and the Future of BRICS

China's Belt and Road Initiative has already transformed connectivity in Asia, yet its ambitions extend far beyond infrastructure. This session will delve into China's broader goals, from securing supply chains to exerting soft power across the Indo-Pacific. Panelists will discuss the evolving dynamics within BRICS, particularly following the inclusion of new members and how this expansion impacts global power structures. Examples include BRICS' stance on global financial reform and China's increasing influence within the bloc, examining if BRICS can create a cohesive strategy in a fragmented world.

Speakers:

Smruti S Pattanaik, Research Fellow, Manohar Parikkar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, India

Wu Lin, Associate Professor, Institute of Asian Studies (IAS), China Foreign Affairs University

Yoshikazu Kato, Research Fellow, Rakuten Securities Economic Research Institute, Japan

Victoria Panova, Head, BRICS Expert Council, Russia **(Moderator)**

Meghna

Symposia (By Invitation Only)

Emerging Threats: Hybrid Warfare and the Future of Global Security

The Indo-Pacific has become a focal point for hybrid warfare, with cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and economic coercion increasingly employed as strategic tools. Recent cyberattacks on Indian and Australian critical infrastructure, along with China's use of disinformation to influence narratives in Hong Kong and Taiwan, exemplify these threats. This session will unpack how hybrid warfare is reshaping the security landscape in the region and what nations can do to counter these multifaceted threats. Panelists will explore strategic defenses, multilateral cooperation, and the future of security in an increasingly connected and volatile Indo-Pacific.

Speakers:

Arun K Sahni, Former General Officer Commanding in Chief, Indian Army

Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director, Center for Research and Security Studies, Pakistan

Petr Topychkanov, Head of the Section for New Challenges in South and Southeast Asia, Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russia

Shafqat Munir, Senior Research Fellow and Head, Bangladesh Centre for Terrorism Research (BCTR) **(Moderator)**

Symposia (By Invitation Only)

Chitra

The New Global Marketplace: Economic Power, Trade Wars, and Cooperation

With China asserting itself as a dominant force in the global marketplace, trade relations within the Indo-Pacific are being redefined. India has been taking steps to increase its self-reliance, particularly in the tech and pharmaceutical sectors, as part of its “Make in India” initiative. Meanwhile, the U.S.-China rivalry continues to drive global tensions, leading to economic realignment across the region. In this session, panelists will explore how the trade dynamics between emerging Asian economies and global powers are shaping the future of the international economic order. How will these shifting alliances impact industries and supply chains? And how can nations within the Indo-Pacific harness these changes to enhance their economic standing?

Anil Trigunayat, President, Millennial India International Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture, India

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

Sriparna Pathak, Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Northeast Asian Studies, OP Jindal Global University, India

Suthikorn Kingkaew, Advisor, KBU Research Institute, Thailand **(Moderator)**

20:30-10:30

Pool Cafe

Dinner (By Invitation Only)

Day 3: Monday, November 18

09:30 – 10:30

Surma

Conversation over Tea (By Invitation Only)

Silenced: The Rise of Internet Shutdowns in a Divided World

Internet shutdowns and communication blackouts are increasingly used as tools of censorship, stifling dissent and isolating communities. This panel will explore the impact of these shutdowns on democracy and human rights, using examples like India's prolonged shutdowns in Kashmir, Myanmar's internet blackouts during military crackdowns, and Bangladesh's manufactured internet outage during the July mass uprising. Panelists will discuss the social, economic, and human rights costs of these shutdowns, as well as the urgent need for international responses to protect freedom of expression and the right to information in fractured societies.

ABM Shamsud Doza, Journalist, The Daily Star, Bangladesh

Leonardo Paz Neves, Researcher, International Intelligence Unit, Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil

S. M. Shameem Reza, Professor, Department of Mass Communication & Journalism, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

David Patrician, Journalist and International Event Moderator, Poland (**Moderator**)

Meghna

Conversation over Tea (By Invitation Only)

Learning for Liberty: Education as a Pillar of Democracy and Human Rights

Education shapes societies and is crucial for nurturing democratic principles and human rights awareness. This panel will examine how programs like India's constitution-focused school initiatives and Brazil's youth civic engagement projects have empowered young citizens to

participate in democratic processes. Panelists will discuss how similar educational reforms can be adopted to foster a more informed, engaged populace capable of safeguarding democracy and standing up for rights in an increasingly polarised world.

Abdullah Rasheed Ahmed, Former State Minister, Ministry of Education, Maldives

Andrés Chiriboga Zumárraga, Former Vice Minister of Education, Ecuador

Suvojit Bagchi, India Correspondent, Prothom Alo

Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, Professor, Department of Public Administration, University of Dhaka
(Moderator)

Conversation over Tea (By Invitation Only)

Chitra

Defending the Defenders: Solutions for a Safer World for Human Rights Advocates

Description: As authoritarianism rises and civic spaces shrink, protecting human rights defenders has become more urgent than ever. This panel will focus on practical solutions to support activists under threat, discussing cases like the detention of human rights defenders in Egypt, media restrictions in Myanmar, and restrictions on protest rights in Hong Kong. Experts will examine how governments, NGOs, and the international community can collaborate to provide legal protections, emergency aid, and mental health support to those risking their lives to uphold justice and human dignity.

Huma Khan, Senior Human Rights Adviser, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, Bangladesh

Rani Yan Yan, Advisor of the Chakma Circle Chief, Bangladesh

Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, Founder, Mantraya Institute for Strategic Studies (MISS), India

Tasneem Khalil, Editor-in-chief, Netra News, Sweden **(Moderator)**

Conversation over Tea (By Invitation Only)

Padma

The Great Game Reloaded: Power, Policy, and Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific

Description: In a region where economic and military interests overlap, the Indo-Pacific has become a hotspot for strategic rivalry and evolving alliances. This panel will discuss the foreign policy challenges faced by countries navigating between competing influences, such as the U.S., China, and regional players like Japan and Australia. Using examples like the Quad (U.S., Japan, India, Australia) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), panelists will explore how countries can foster connectivity and strengthen security partnerships while managing the complexities of geopolitical competition.

Speakers:

Amena Mohsin, Former Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka

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

Jovan Ratkovic, Senior Fellow, Agora Strategy Group AG, Germany

Javad Heiran-Nia, Director, Persian Gulf Studies Group, Center for Scientific Research and Middle East Strategic Studies, Iran (**Moderator**)

11:00 – 12:40

Grand

Ballroom

Driving Decarbonization in Bangladesh: The Strategic Role of Corporate Power Purchase Agreements

Bangladesh, often called the “Silent Victim” of climate change, has been battling the global environmental issue. The threats are increasing daily as the sea level rises, frequent extreme weather events are occurring, and changing weather patterns are more visible than ever. With multifaceted strategies, Bangladesh is pioneering innovative solutions to address the pressing challenges. Energy is closely linked to climate change as it serves as both a driver and a solution to the challenges posed by a warming planet. Climate-resilient energy supply, diversified energy mix including solar and wind, improved energy efficiency, and cross-border renewable energy trading are essential components to mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. By strengthening energy systems, transitioning to clean and renewable energy sources, and promoting energy-efficient technologies, communities can enhance

their resilience to climate impacts. The session objectives are to highlight the need for Corporate Power Purchase Agreements in Bangladesh to enable a faster decarbonization pathway and to discuss the current challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for establishing a Corporate Power Purchase Agreement framework in Bangladesh.

Speakers:

Alam Hossain Mondal, Deputy, Chief of Party, USAID-BADGE

Syeeda Meer, Director of Energy Procurement and Project Finance, USAID-BADGE

Abdullah Hil Rakib, Former Vice President, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA)

Rezaul Karim, Chairman, Bangladesh Power Development Board

Reed Aeschliman, Mission Director, USAID, Bangladesh

Faisal Rabbi, Energy Specialist, the World Bank

Farhana Islam, Director and Head, ESG, Grameenphone Limited, Bangladesh

Ziaur Rahman, Country Manager, H&M, Bangladesh

Shayan Shafi, Energy Team Leader, USAID Bangladesh (**Moderator**)

12:40 – 14:00

Grand

Ballroom

The Human Cost of Progress: Rights as Pillars of Sustainable Development

In many parts of Asia, development has led to substantial growth but has sometimes compromised essential rights, from labor protections to environmental safeguards. This session will explore examples like Indonesia's palm oil industry, which faces international scrutiny over human rights abuses, and China's Belt and Road projects in the Indo-Pacific, where community rights are often overshadowed. Panelists will discuss how centering human rights in development frameworks can lead to more stable, just, and inclusive societies that reflect the region's commitment to both progress and human dignity.

Speakers:

Sheikh Mohammad Daniel, director of Sonali Life Insurance, Bangladesh

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

David Morris, CEO, Australia China Business Council

Gwyn Lewis, UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh

Ishrat Hossain, Research Fellow, German Institute for Global and Area Studies

Irfan Yar, Founder and Managing Director, Afghanistan Security Institute, Canada **(Moderator)**

14:00 – 15:00

Lunch

Oasis

15:00 – 15:10

Ballroom

Grand

Speed Talks

Debapriya Bhattacharya, Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

15:10 – 16:20

Ballroom

Grand

Narratives of Hope: Media, Civil Society, and the Pursuit of Peace

Amid the fractures of our time, media and civil society serve as beacons of hope and agents of change. This panel explores how truthful reporting, constructive dialogue, and community-driven action can reduce tensions and foster peace. Panelists will discuss how these sectors can reshape narratives around conflict and security, influence public opinion, and advocate for policies that encourage reconciliation in fractured societies.

Speakers:

Arjun Singh Kadian, Assistant Professor, Rishihood University

Debjyoti Chanda, Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Rabindra Bharati University, India

Felix Gerdes, Resident Representative, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)

Navine Murshid, Associate Professor of Political Science, Colgate University, USA

Sohail Mahmood, Director General Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) & Former Foreign Secretary, Pakistan

David Patrician, Journalist and International Event Moderator (**Moderator**)

16:20 – 16:30

Grand

Ballroom

Ambassadorial Reflections

Syed Ahmed Maroof, Pakistan High Commissioner in Bangladesh

16:30 – 17:40

Grand

Ballroom

Beyond Aid: New Models of Collaboration between the Global North and South

As the world becomes more polarised, development partnerships between the Global North and South are evolving from aid dependency to collaborative investment and knowledge exchange. This session will examine innovative examples like the EU's Global Gateway project, which aims to offer a sustainable alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative, and Africa's strategic alliances with both Western and Eastern partners for infrastructure and technology. Panelists will discuss how these new models can bridge development divides, promote equitable growth, and create resilience in a fragmented world.

Keynote:

Boris Tadic, Former President of Serbia; Member, Club de Madrid

Speakers:

Park Young-sik, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Bangladesh

Moussa Mara, Former Prime Minister of Mali; Member, Club de Madrid

Stefan Liller, UNDP Resident Representative in Bangladesh

Kazi Faisal Bin Seraj, Country Representative, The Asia Foundation Bangladesh

Corinne Henchoz Pignani, Deputy Head of Mission / Head of Cooperation - Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh **(Moderator)**

17:40 – 18:00

Grand

Ballroom

Closing

Zillur Rahman, Executive Director, CGS; Chair, Bay of Bengal Conversation, Bangladesh

18:00 – 18:30

Tea / Coffee

Oasis

20:00 – 23:00

Grand

Ballroom

After Event Party (By Invitation Only)

Special Sessions

Day 1: Saturday, November 16

Padma

15:00 – 17:00

Roundtable (Closed Door - Media Only)

Bridging Divides: Navigating the Complexities of India-Bangladesh Relations

Session Overview: India and Bangladesh share a deep and multifaceted relationship shaped by geography, history, culture, and economics. However, despite common interests and a history of cooperation, the bilateral relationship faces a series of challenges that could strain ties if not carefully managed. This session will bring together diplomats, policy experts, and regional analysts to explore the key issues affecting India-Bangladesh relations, examine their implications for regional stability, and propose pathways for strengthened cooperation.

Key Discussion Points:

1. Border Management and Security Concerns:

Despite extensive efforts to manage the India-Bangladesh border, challenges persist in the form of illegal migration, smuggling, and trafficking. This session will examine how both nations can collaborate more effectively on border security while respecting the rights and livelihoods of local communities.

2. Water Sharing Disputes:

One of the most sensitive issues between the two countries is the sharing of transboundary rivers, particularly the Teesta River. Panelists will explore the dynamics of the water-sharing negotiations, the domestic pressures on both sides and the potential for innovative, equitable solutions to this longstanding issue.

3. Trade Imbalances and Economic Cooperation:

While economic ties between India and Bangladesh have grown, trade imbalances remain a source of tension. This discussion will focus on opportunities to enhance trade relations, reduce barriers, and foster more balanced economic cooperation, particularly in light of Bangladesh's emerging economic strength.

4. The Rohingya Refugee Crisis:

The influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh from Myanmar has created a humanitarian crisis with implications for both Bangladesh and India. This session will

analyze the geopolitical ramifications of the crisis and how India and Bangladesh can collaborate to find sustainable solutions while managing their own security and economic concerns.

5. Cultural and Historical Bonds vs. Contemporary Politics:

India and Bangladesh share deep cultural and historical connections, but contemporary political realities can sometimes overshadow these ties. This session will explore how the two nations can leverage their shared history and culture to foster greater trust and understanding in their political and diplomatic engagements.

6. Climate Change and Environmental Cooperation:

Both India and Bangladesh are highly vulnerable to climate change, particularly in terms of rising sea levels and extreme weather events. Panelists will discuss opportunities for cross-border environmental cooperation, focusing on disaster management, climate resilience, and sustainable development.

Speakers:

Ali Riaz, Distinguished Professor, Illinois State University, USA; Head of the Constitutional Reform Commission, Interim Government of Bangladesh

Anil Trigunayat, President, Millennial India International Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture (MIICCIA), India

Arun K Sahni, Former Army Commander, Indian Army, India

Ashok Sajjanhar, Former Ambassador; President, Institute of Global Studies, India

Ataur Rahman, consultant-at large, Booz Allen, Washington DC, USA

Fahmida Khatun, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh

Navine Murshid, Associate Professor of Political Science, Colgate University, USA

Nurul Kabir, Editor, New Age, Bangladesh

Raja Devasish Roy, Chief, Chakma Circle, Bangladesh

Smruti S. Pattanaik, Research Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, India

Sreeradha Datta, Professor, OP Jindal Global University, India

Suhasini Sherene Haidar, Diplomatic Editor, The Hindu, India

Parvez Karim Abbasi, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Governance Studies, Bangladesh
(Facilitator)

Day 2: Sunday, November 17

15:00 – 17:00

Roundtable (Closed Door - Media Only)

SAARC and Beyond: New Pathways for South Asian Unity and Cooperation

As SAARC struggles to meet its goals due to political obstacles, the region is looking toward alternative cooperation models. This plenary session will dive into the structural and political roadblocks that have limited SAARC's impact, exploring the organization's potential to remain relevant in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape. As South Asia's population grapples with common issues, including climate-induced disasters, cross-border migration, and poverty alleviation, panelists will assess the future of SAARC and ask critical questions: Can SAARC be revitalized, or is it time to shift focus toward alternative frameworks for collaboration? How can South Asia strengthen regional unity in an environment marked by national interests and unresolved conflicts? Panelists will also explore the role of track 2 diplomacy, using examples like cross-border environmental dialogues in the Himalayas, to reduce friction and identify opportunities for collective growth, ensuring that cooperation is achievable even in a fractured South Asia.

Key Discussion Points:

1. **Reevaluating SAARC's Role:** Analyzing SAARC's achievements and limitations and exploring its potential for future relevance in a fractured region.
2. **Track 2 Diplomacy as a Bridge:** Showcasing successful unofficial diplomacy efforts that have reduced tensions, built trust, and provided solutions where formal mechanisms have faltered.

3. **Overcoming Political Barriers: Identifying specific actions that governments and civil society can take to address divisive issues like cross-border trade restrictions, security concerns, and resource-sharing conflicts.**

Speakers:

Aamna Khan, PhD Candidate, Jilin University, China

Abdullah Rasheed Ahmed, Former State Minister, Ministry of Education, Maldives

Anurag Acharya, Director, Policy Entrepreneurs Inc, Nepal

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

Irfan Yar, Founder and Managing Director, Afghanistan Security Institute, Canada

M. Shafiullah, Board Member CGS; Former Ambassador of Bangladesh to Libya

Mohammad Amir Rana, President, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), Pakistan

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

Sanjoy K Bhardwaj, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Shafqat Munir, Senior Research Fellow and Head Bangladesh Centre for Terrorism Research (BCTR), Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) **(Facilitator)**

Sohail Mahmood, Director General Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) & Former Foreign Secretary, Pakistan

Sriparna Pathak, Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Northeast Asian Studies, OP Jindal Global University, India

Suvojit Bagchi, India Correspondent, Prothom Alo

18:30 – 20:00

Town Hall

Investing in Tomorrow: The Future of FDI in Bangladesh's Evolving Economy

Description: Bangladesh has seen impressive growth in recent years, but barriers like regulatory hurdles, infrastructure constraints, and political uncertainty continue to pose challenges to attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). This session will explore the future of FDI in Bangladesh, analyzing high-potential sectors such as renewable energy, ICT, and the pharmaceutical industry. Panelists will discuss case studies, including recent investments in the textile and power sectors, and assess how Bangladesh can create a more welcoming investment climate to achieve its vision of becoming a regional economic hub.

Speakers:

Abdul Awal Mintoo, Former President, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Ana Maria Paraschiv, International Business Consultant; Founder of Ubuntu World Consulting, Romania

Ghulam Mohammed Alomgir, Chairman, Max Group, Bangladesh

K.M. Mozibul Hoque, Chairman - Shah Group & TAS Group

Kyle Inan, CEO, KI Asset Management Company, Turkiye

Laura Larocchia, Marketing & Operations Manager, Disal Consulting, Italy

Mir Nasir Hossain, Former President, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Selma Obarcanin, Chief Marketing Officer, SO..Quantum Growth Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tanvir Ahmed, Managing Director, Sheltech Group, Envoy Textiles & Green Textiles

Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, Professor, Development Studies, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh (Moderator)

Studio Sessions

Titas

Day 1: Saturday, 16 November

11:00 to 11:30

Search for Peace in the Middle East

Hadza Min Fadhli Robby, Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, Islamic University of Indonesia

Muhammad Amir Rana, President, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), Pakistan

Javad Heiran-Nia, Director, Persian Gulf Studies Group, Center for Scientific Research and Middle East Strategic Studies, Iran **(Moderator)**

12:00 to 12:30

Human Development: the importance of ensuring Health, Education, and Prosperity for all

Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, Professor, Department of Public Administration, University of Dhaka

Mariyam Nasir, Director General, Ministry of Education, Maldives

Di Ma, Co-Founder & Secretary-General, 1EarthVillage **(Moderator)**,

13:00 to 13:30

States of Fragility: Charting a Path Through Democratic Crisis

Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan, Visiting Research Fellow, Dept of Politics & Int'l Relations, University of Reading, UK

Tanyel Bedia Taysi, Country Director-Bangladesh, The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director, Center for Research and Security Studies, Pakistan **(Moderator)**

15:00 to 15:30

European Escalation and its Asian Fallout

Gregory Simons, Associate Professor, Turiba University in Riga, Latvia

Victoria Panova, Head, BRICS Expert Council, Russia

Petr Topychkanov, Head of the Section for New Challenges in South and Southeast Asia, Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russia **(Moderator)**

16:00 to 16:30

Development with Accountability: How to Ensure Development Projects are People-Centric

Abdullah Al Mamun, Associate Professor, Department of Japanese Studies, Dhaka University

Makhethe Makamase, Researcher, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

Fayyaz Yaseen Bhidal, Executive Director, Accountability Lab, Pakistan. **(Moderator)**

17:00 to 17:30

Pillars of Progress: How to Combine Sustainable Growth, Infrastructure Development, and Cross-Border Collaboration

Kazi Shah Muzakker Ahmadul Hoque, Director, TAS Group, Bangladesh

Madalitso Zililo Phiri, Post Doctoral Fellow, South Africa United Kingdom Bilateral Research Chair in Political Theory, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

Sabyasachi Dutta, Executive Director, Asian Confluence, India **(Moderator)**

Day 2: Sunday, 17 November

11:00 to 11:30

The Future is Green: Exploring the Potential of Startups in Alternative Energy Solutions

Arjan de Haan, Senior Program Specialist, International Development Research Centre, Canada

Krzysztof M. Zalewski , President, Michał Boym Institute for Asian and Global Studies, Poland

Chada El Islam Benmahcene, Founder & CEO, ENTROGX AI Ventures, Algeria **(Moderator)**

12:00 to 12:30

Cost of Development: Leveraging International Trade to Fight Poverty

Faris Hadrovic, Managing Director, CBD d.o.o. Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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

Abdul Haque, President , BARVIDA. **(Moderator)**

13:00 to 13:30

Essential Policies and Reforms for Fighting Corruption

Abdul Majid, Former Chairman, National Board of Revenue (NBR), Bangladesh

Suthikorn Kingkaew, Advisor, KBU Research Institute, Thailand

Narayan Adhikari, co-founder and South Asia representative, Accountability Lab Nepal.
(Moderator),

15:00 to 15:30

Communication for the Masses: Free Speech vs Hate Speech

Leo Wigger, Director, South Asia and Eurasia at Candid Foundation; Editor, Zenith Magazine, Germany

S. M. Shameem Reza, Professor, Department of Mass Communication & Journalism, University of Dhaka

Debjyoti Chanda, Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Rabindra Bharati University, India **(Moderator)**

16:00 to 16:30

Development for all: pathways to inclusive and sustainable growth

Judith Mwaniki, Director, Development Programmes, Consortium of Economic Research and Development Studies, Kenya

Samaha Khan, Lecturer, Department of Development Studies, Daffodil University

Ario Bimo, Assistant Professor, East Java Veterans National Development University, Indonesia **(Moderator)**

17:00 to 17:30

Displaced: Unresolved Fates of Refugees Across the World

Asif Munier, Migration and Refugee Affairs Specialist.

Simon Kofi Tettey, Shipping Management Business Analyst, World Health Organization (WHO), Global Service Centre, Malaysia

Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, Professor, Department of Public Administration, University of Dhaka **(Moderator)**

Day 3: Monday, 18 November

11:00 to 11:30

Redefining Diplomacy in a Divided World

Ario Bimo, Assistant Professor, East Java Veterans National Development University, Indonesia

Sabyasachi Dutta, Executive Director, Asian Confluence, India

Leo Wigger, Director, South Asia and Eurasia at Candid Foundation; Editor, Zenith Magazine, Germany **(Moderator)**

12:00 to 12:30

How to Ensure Regional Integration in Asia

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Chairman, Sanober Institute, Islamabad; Former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan

Wu Lin, Associate Professor, Institute of Asian Studies (IAS), China Foreign Affairs University

Biswas Baral, Editor, Kantipur Media Group, Nepal **(Moderator)**

13:00 to 13:30

Misinformation, Propaganda, and the State of Media Literacy Across the World

Siddharth Varadarajan, Founding Editor, The Wire, India

Tasneem Khalil, Editor-in-chief, Netra News, Sweden

Peace Chikodinaka Eze, Journalist and Head of News, C54 News Channel **(Moderator)**

15:00 to 15:30

Democracy Under Construction: How to Ensuring Progress and Inclusivity

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

Mahbubur Rahman, Professor, Department of Political Science and Sociology, North South University

Arjun Singh Kadian, Assistant Professor, Rishihood University, India **(Moderator)**,

16:00 to 16:30

In Search of Stability: Navigating Geopolitical and Economic Tensions in Asia

Liping Xia, Professor, Department of Diplomatic Studies, China Foreign Affairs University

Mubashar Hasan, Post-doctoral Researcher, University of Oslo, Norway

Yoshikazu Kato, Research Fellow, Rakuten Securities Economic Research Institute. **(Moderator)**

17:00 to 17:30

Ease of Doing Business in a World Divided

Laura Larocchia, Marketing & Operations Manager, Disal Consulting, Italy

Morshedul Alam Chaklader, Managing Director, TAS Group, Bangladesh

Charlie Campbell, Senior Correspondent, TIME Magazine **(Moderator)**