

CONFERENCE

*India's Engagement with  
Bangladesh and Myanmar*

MARCH 6-7, 2014

ORGANIZED BY:

**MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD INSTITUTE OF ASIAN STUDIES  
KOLKATA**

VENUE:

**AZAD BHAVAN, SALT LAKE, KOLKATA**

## INDIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH BANGLADESH AND MYANMAR

### Concept Note

India has a long history of engagement with Bangladesh and Myanmar over a wide range of issues such as sharing of river waters, combating terrorism, promoting economic cooperation and encouraging border trade. During the visit of India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Dhaka in 2011, the two sides had inked historic agreements to settle the land boundary issue that included the exchange of 160 enclaves. Later, in March, 2013, President Pranab Mukherjee during his Dhaka visit stressed the need for to build consensus on the sharing of *Teesta* waters and on the land boundary issue.

India-Myanmar relations too have gathered momentum after the Myanmar general elections in 2010 and more so after the landslide victory of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in the by-elections of April 2012. The results of these elections have reinforced the virtual irreversibility of the political transition in Myanmar. Against this background it is important to note that the two neighbours have agreed to enhance their trade to US\$ 3.0 billion by 2015. Myanmar has agreed to encourage investments by Indian companies, both public and private, in its oil and natural gas sector, Information Technology, fertilizers and other small scale development projects in the border regions. In the maritime arena, the two sides have reiterated their commitment to cooperate in the implementation of the Tamathi and Shwezaye projects on the Chindwin River Basin in Myanmar. The Indian side has further assured Myanmar of the completion of the Kaladaan project by 2014 and the Trilateral Highway by 2016.

From India's perspective, Myanmar is of vital importance for defence and security needs, for stability and development of India's North East, and India's engagement with the Southeast Asia. It is not only where China and India 'meet', Myanmar is also strides across South and Southeast Asia—the gateway between India and ASEAN, and beyond. As Myanmar assumes the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2014 and then in 2015 goes to the polls and it is the appropriate time for New Delhi to work closely with Myanmar for mutual benefit and understanding.

It is important to underline that there are ethnic groups and communities that share common. Only through bilateral and multilateral understanding involving India, Myanmar and Bangladesh such identities can be nurtured from a humanistic standpoint. The cultural aspirations of these groups/communities, their cross-border movements in search of jobs or medical treatment are issues that can be handled only by mutual cooperation amongst the nations concerned.

Since cross-regional cooperation is growing rapidly in Asia, such critical bilateral relations such as India-Bangladesh, India-Myanmar-Myanmar and Bangladesh-Myanmar have assumed greater significance. Given the

larger framework of India's Look East policy India must seek new partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region. It has already worked out an agreement with the ASEAN on free trade and has actively participated in BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) to facilitate rail, road and maritime connectivity with Bangladesh and Myanmar. India and Myanmar share common objectives through the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, the Mekong-Ganga Swarnabhoomi Program (MGCI) and the East Asian Summit (EAS). The Forum on Regional Economic Cooperation among Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM), formerly the 'Kunming Initiative', is yet another shared idea for regional cooperation with 'Benefit All' as its motto. The BCIM deals with issues of transport, border trade, water management, energy and tourism aimed at forging a true collective identity in the region with common cultural and colonial past. While Myanmar has an Observer Status in South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC), reports indicate that it is keen on full-membership of the Association. The proliferation of multiple frameworks of regional cooperation has generated optimism but there are still critical areas of concern that have impeded regionalism in its true spirit. In coordinated transport development, for instance, there are still gaps in selecting corridors to demarcate physical and non-physical barriers, introduction of multimodal transport operation and logistic services, and facilitation of international traffic.

The two-day international seminar on 'India's Engagement with Bangladesh and Myanmar' organized by the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS), Kolkata, aims to examine the possibilities of closer bilateral and regional ties through close examination of economic, strategic, cultural and maritime cooperation.

### **Objective of the Conference**

The conference will provide a platform for academicians, researchers, social scientists and policy makers to examine possibilities of strengthening regional collectiveness by creating an environment of cooperation, development and 'single market' and 'single currency' zones;

The conference will present an opportunity to look into India's role in fostering 'strategic restraint' in its relationship with its smaller yet significant neighbours in the region;

The delegates will get an opportunity to discuss the broader avenues of trade, soft power projections in Bangladesh and Myanmar as both tread the path towards higher economic growth, inclusive development and a broader foreign policy objective;

The conference will facilitate discussion of issues of ethnicity and separatism hindering the economic trajectory and connectivity between themselves and in the region at large.

The conference will make an attempt to identify recommendations for policy makers to strengthen the relations between the three countries.

## **PROGRAMME (Tentative)**

**Thursday, March 6, 2014 (Day 1)**

9.30-10.00 am                      Registration

**10.00- 11-00 am**

**Inaugural Session**

**Guests of Honour:**      **U Kyaw Swe Tint, Consul General of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; Ms. Abida Islam, Deputy High Commission for the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Kolkata.**

**Introductory Remarks:** **Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Director, MAKAIAS**

**Welcome Address:**      **Shri Sitaram Sharma, Chairman, MAKAIAS**

**Keynote Address:**      **Prof. Muchkund Dubey, President, Council for Social Development, New Delhi**

**Vote of Thanks:**      **Dr. Amrita Dey, Research Fellow, MAKAIAS**

**Tea/Coffee Break: 11.00-11.30 am**

**11.30-1.15 pm**

**Session I: Plenary Session**

**Chair: Prof. Radharaman Chakraborti**

**Speakers:**

**Prof. Farooq Sobhan--** President and CEO, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, Dhaka:

**Dr. Khin Zaw Win—** Director, Tampadipa Institute, Yangon, Myanmar: *India-Myanmar Engagement: Moving Towards Specifics*

**Prof. Veena Sikri-** Professor, Ford Foundation endowed Chair, Bangladesh Studies Program, Academy of International Studies, Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi.

**Lunch Break: 1.15 – 2.00 pm**

**2.00-5.35 pm**

**Session II: Socio-Politico Imperatives**

**Chair: Prof. Jayanta Kumar Ray**

**Speakers:**

**General Dhruv Katoch**-Director, Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi:  
*Empowering the North Eastern Region (NER).*

**Major General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed**- Director General, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies: *Bangladesh-India Relations: Deeper Economic and Physical Integration for Attaining New Heights.*

**Thwin Htet Lin**- Assistant Director, Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies: *Contemporary Politico-Security-Ethnic Scenario in Myanmar.*

**Prof. Swapna Bhattacharya Chakraborti**- Department of South & South-East Asian Studies, University of Calcutta: *Social Mobility, Linguistic Plurality, “Alliance Strategy” of the Ancestors of the Modern Chins, Mizos and some other Kuki-Chin Groups: A Historians Understanding.*

**Dr. Mezbah Kamal**- Department of History, University of Dhaka: *Ethno-Religious Conflict in South and South East Asia: The Rohingya Issue*

**Dr. Amrita Dey**- Research Fellow, MAKAIAS: *The Golden Triangle and Myanmar: Implications for India.*

**Soe Myint**- Editor-In-Chief, Mizzima Media: *Democratic Transition in Myanmar and India-Myanmar Relations.*

**Srimanti Sarkar**— Research Assistant, MAKAIAS: *Bangladesh: Experiencing the Democratic Dilemma*

**Cultural Evening & Dinner—7.00 pm onwards**  
**{Venue: Bengal Club}**

## Friday March 7, 2014 (Day 2)

10.00-1.00 pm

### Session III: Economic Cooperation and Engagement

Chair: Prof. Muchkund Dubey

#### Speakers:

**Dr. Nitya Nanda**- Fellow, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi: *India's Economic Engagement with Bangladesh and Myanmar*

**Myo Myo Myint and Tin Htoo Naing**- Program Director, Centre for Economy, Environment and Society (CEES Myanmar); Visiting Lecturer, Yangon Institute of Economics: *Forging Stronger Economic Ties between India and Myanmar* .

**Mr. Khin Maung Nyo**- Senior Research Fellow, CESD-MDRI, Myanmar: *Chinese Investment in Myanmar: Lessons for India*

**Dr. Shebonti Ray Dadwal**: Research Fellow, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi:

**Prof. Pranab Roy**- Director, Professional Institute of Development and Socio-Environmental Management-PRISM, Kolkata: *Treaties on Larger Neighbourhood Policy: Context-India-Myanmar Relations*.

**Satabdi Das**-Assistant Professor, South Calcutta Girls' College: *Shared Water Resources and Climate Change: A significant Concern of India's Security Architecture* .

**Mili Ghose**- Research Fellow, MAKAIAS: *Climate, Migration and Landscape*.

1.00-1.45 pm

**Special Lecture: Prof. Debapriya Bhattacharya**, Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka: *"Triangular Cooperation among Bangladesh, India and Myanmar: The Fourth Angle?"*

**Lunch: 1.45-2.30 pm**

2-30pm-4.15 pm

### Session V: Regional Initiatives

Chair: Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Director, MAKAIAS

#### Speakers:

**Prof. Mustafizur Rahman**- Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka:

**Prof. Amita Bhatra-** School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi:  
*India's Engagement with Bangladesh and Myanmar: Economic Perspectives.*

**Sanjay Pulipaka-** Consultant/Programme Fellow, ICRIER-Wadhvani Chair in India-US Policy:  
*Regional Initiatives: India, Bangladesh, Myanmar.*

**Ms. Sayantani Sen Majumdar-** Research Fellow, MAKAIAS: *Relevance of BIMSTEC IN Regional Integration.*

### **4.15-4.30: Tea/Coffee Break**

**4.30- 5.15pm**

**Concluding Session**

**Concluding Talks: Prof. Partha S Ghosh, Senior Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.**

**Vote of Thanks: Sayantani Sen Mazumdar, Research Fellow, MAKAIAS.**

**CULTURAL EVENING & DINNER**



*Jugalbandhi*

*Dhol*

*Sharod &*

*Tabla*

*Sharod By: Sayam Paja*

*&*

*On Tabla: Bhola Chandra Dey*

*Date: 6-3-2014*

*(7.00 pm onwards)*