

**Stakeholders' Consultative Workshop
on**

THE BCIM (BANGLADESH-CHINA-INDIA-MYANMAR) ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

**Confederation of Indian Industry & Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute
for Asian Studies, Kolkata**

In collaboration with the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi

1-2 May, 2014

1. CONCEPT NOTE

The concept of an overland economic corridor covering the sub-region stretching roughly from Kolkata in West Bengal through Bangladesh, North East India, Myanmar and China's South West province of Yunnan is rooted in the deliberations of meetings of the BCIM Forum for Regional Cooperation, a multi-track regional cooperation forum involving Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar, founded in 1999. Many worthwhile and forward-looking projects for multilateral cooperation were proposed in the BCIM Forum but, in the absence of concrete institutional mechanisms for inter-governmental cooperation, tangible outcomes have been limited. An important exception was the BCIM car rally from Kolkata to Kunming in 2013 which demonstrated the potential of overland connectivity and people-to-people exchange along the arteries of the ancient 'Southern Silk Route'.

With positive changes in the regional geo-political environment over recent decades – the enunciation of India's 'Look East Policy' from the early 1990s, India's growing economic engagement with the ASEAN countries, the fast rising volume of bilateral trade between China and India, the recent political reform process in Myanmar and the improvement in India-Bangladesh bilateral relations – the project of linking the fast-growing economies of East Asia, South East Asia and South Asia through mutual cooperation in the BCIM sub-region has finally garnered the required traction. In May 2013, the leaders of India and China agreed to consult the BCIM partners, Bangladesh and Myanmar, with a view to the developing a BCIM Economic Corridor connecting Kolkata (in India) to Kunming (Yunnan province, China) through Bangladesh and Myanmar. The project is expected to create a thriving economic belt that will promote the common development of areas along the corridor and its interconnected nodes and hubs.

A first step in the planning and activation of the BCIM-EC project was the constitution of a four-country Joint Study Group (JSG). In its first meeting in Kunming on 18-19 December 2013, the JSG resolved to prepare a comprehensive report or vision document to be presented to the respective governments for consideration and action. The Report will

cover issues of multimodal connectivity; sub-regional energy cooperation; investment and financing; trade in goods and services, border trade, and trade facilitation measures; social and human development and poverty alleviation; people-to-people contacts, including tourism development; and the institutional arrangements required to activate the various components of the BCIM-EC.

2. STAKEHOLDERS' CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP ON THE 'BCIM ECONOMIC CORRIDOR'

This Workshop, which will be a critical input into the production of the BCIM-EC Joint Study Group Report, is conceived as a dialogue with stakeholders and experts in the Eastern and North East regions to assess the backward linkages of the BCIM-EC project from the perspective of stakeholders. Beginning with an overview of the BCIM Forum and the BCIM-EC project in the context of the emerging regional integration architecture, the Workshop will seek to elicit the expert opinion of policy-makers, state government officials, and the business and academic communities on the themes outlined above. The emphasis will be on ways and means to translate the BCIM-EC vision into an instrument of the inclusive economic, social and human development of the region.

A collaborative initiative of CII (Eastern), MAKAIAS, and ICS, the proposed Workshop will be held over a day and a half on 1st-2nd May, 2014. The Inaugural session will be held on the afternoon / evening of 1st May (Thursday), and business sessions scheduled for the following day, 2nd May (Friday).
