



British Deputy
High Commission
Kolkata



Towards a Free, Open and Prosperous Indo-Pacific: Cooperation for Balanced Development of Blue and Green Economy in India's Eastern Neighborhood

Roundtable Discussion:
11 February, 2023
ITC Welcomhotel Bay Island Port Blair,
Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Concept Note

The vision of a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific is fast taking center-stage in the collective view of the global strategic community. As nations in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond recalibrate their policies towards the world's most dynamic geography, the ability to build partnerships to secure common interests and channelise resources in creating a shared future will greatly determine how they can maximise their role in shaping the contours of the emerging Indo-Pacific region.

India has long articulated an Indo-Pacific vision and is working together with other partners in the geography such as the United States of America, Australia, Japan, ASEAN, Bay of Bengal nations, Europe, Pacific Island nations and Africa. There is an agreement on several common denominators: that the region is one with great potential for trade, being naturally connected by shared waters, shared civilisation and shared values of respecting sovereignty, trust and freedom for inclusive growth. India shares terrestrial and maritime borders with several nations in her eastern neighbourhood. The maritime distance from the southernmost point of Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India to the northernmost tip of Aceh in Indonesia is just about 206 km, while India's sub-Himalayan eastern region shares land borders with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan. Sustainable development of such borders for increased connectivity, trade and people to people connect can create inclusive benefits for communities along and across the borders and lead to greater regional cooperation towards the common goal of a prosperous and secure subregion in the Indo-Pacific geography. In this context the sustainable development of the blue economy in the maritime borders and green economy in the terrestrial border areas and their interplay in the islands will be a key area of focus.

Like several other nations, the United Kingdom (UK) has articulated its role in the Indo-Pacific region in the policy paper "Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and

Foreign Policy”. In an essay first published in July 2021, in the first volume of the Centre for Defence Studies series on The Integrated Review in Context: A Strategy Fit for the 2020s? Tim Willasey-Wilsey writes “The success of Britain’s Indo-Pacific tilt will not be decided by geo-strategic considerations such as membership of the Quad or the deployment of the Royal Navy in Asian waters. Instead, it will stand or fall on bilateral relations with India where a transformation is long overdue”. Recognizing this vital connect and as India assumes presidency of the G20 of which, it is apt for the UK and India to explore cooperation in the development of green and blue economies in India’s eastern neighborhood towards a prosperous Indo-Pacific.

Towards this objective, Asian Confluence in collaboration with British Deputy High Commission, Kolkata plans to host a roundtable of experts in Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands with the following objectives:

Overall Objectives:

- a. To explore the interplay between blue and green economies at borders: sharing of knowledge between experts on issues such as:
 - i. Impact of connectivity on inclusive development of border areas.
 - ii. Development of trade and tourism in the region.
 - iii. Sustainable tourism development for enhanced people-to-people contact and a rejuvenated maritime awareness.
 - iv. Development of fresh water resources in the region.
- b. To forge deeper cooperation between the strategic community in the Bay of Bengal region.
- c. To build education program that helps build shared thought processes for common action on overarching issues
- d. To seek convergence of India’s Neighborhood First, Act East and Indo-Pacific initiatives with UK’s outlook on the Indo pacific.

Agenda

3:00 pm - 3:15 pm Registration

3:15 pm - 4:00 pm Inaugural Session

Welcome Remarks: **Mr. Sabyasachi Dutta**, Executive Director, Asian Confluence

Opening Remarks: **Mr. M P Bezbaruah**, Chairman Governing Council, Asian Confluence; Former Member, North Eastern Council and Former Minister, Indian High Commission, UK.

Mr Chris Holder Ross, Political Department, British High Commission, New Delhi

Inaugural Remarks: **Shri. Kuldeep Rai Sharma**, Member of Parliament, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Rear Admiral Sandeep Sandhu, NM
Chief of Staff, Andaman and Nicobar Command

4:00 pm - 6:15 pm Round Table Discussion

Distinguished Speakers: (not in any particular order)

Amb. Riva Ganguly Das, IFS Retd, Member Governing Council, Asian Confluence and Former Secretary East, Ministry of External Affairs

Ms. Nandini Paliwal, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Andaman and Nicobar*

Commodore Debesh Lahiri, Executive Director, National Maritime Foundation

Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Professor, O.P Jindal Global University, Jindal School of International Affairs

Dr Imankalyan Lahiri, Professor, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University

Dr K. Yhome, Senior Fellow, Asian Confluence

Dr. Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, Kolkata

Maj Gen Alok Deb, SM, VSM (Retd)

Distinguished Fellow at USI of India, Senior Visiting Fellow at the Peninsula Foundation Chennai, former Deputy Director General of the MP-IDSA, Delhi

Shri Hari Kallikkat, Secretary, Andaman & Nicobar Tourism Board*

Mr. Surendra Prahladka, President, Andaman Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Ms Katy Budge, Minister Counsellor, Political and Press, British High Commission New Delhi

Ms Ajitha Menon, Political Economy Adviser, British Deputy High Commission Kolkata

Mr Arunabha Bhattacharya, Political Analyst, British Deputy High Commission Kolkata

Ms. Samhita Nandi, Director Human Resource and Outreach, Asian Confluence

6:15 pm - 6:25 pm **Closing Remarks**

Mr Sabyasachi Dutta, Executive Director, Asian Confluence

6:30 pm **High Tea**

*TBC

Profile of Speakers



Major General Alok Deb has served the Indian Army for nearly 40 years. He is Distinguished Fellow at USI of India, Senior Visiting Fellow at the Peninsula Foundation Chennai. He was Deputy Director General of the MP-IDSA, Delhi. He holds MSc in Defense Studies from the Defense Services Staff College and two MPhil degrees in Defense and Strategic Studies from Indian institutions. He served as a Force Military Personnel Officer at UNIFIL in Lebanon, gaining knowledge on cross-cultural diversity. After retiring in 2016, he served as Deputy Director General of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses until 2019. Gen Deb has written several articles on security topics and has lectured at several institutions. Currently, he is a Distinguished Fellow at the USI of India and a Senior Visiting Fellow at The Rajaratnam Foundation in Chennai.



Dr. Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury is a Senior Fellow with the Neighborhood Initiative at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and the Editor of ORF Bangla. She has expertise in South Asian regional and sub-regional cooperation, energy politics, forced migration, and women in conflict. Anasua was a Visiting Fellow at The Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris in 2012. She is the recipient of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust Senior Media Fellowship and the Kodikara Award from the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies. She is the author of "The Energy Crisis and Sub-regional Cooperation in South Asia." She is the editor of IAAPS Perspective, co-editor of Journal of Development Policy Review and a member of the Editorial Board of Borders in Globalisation Review and Journal for Indian Ocean Research. Her recent publications include "New futures of BIMSTEC: connectivity, commerce and security," "India-Myanmar Borderlands: Ethnicity, Security and Connectivity," and "The State of Being Stateless in South Asia."



Mr. Chris Holder Ross is a United Kingdom diplomat at the British High Commission in New Delhi, India. He works on the Political Team at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office having previously worked in the Policy Roles vertical in London, United Kingdom. He completed his MPhil in Public Policy from the University of Cambridge in June 2015. He also is a Raisina Young Fellow in the Asian Forum for Global Governance which was issued by Observer Research Foundation (ORF). He also is a Pacific Forum Young Leader.



Commodore Debesh Lahiri, Executive Director, National Maritime Foundation. An alumnus of the Naval Engineering Course (NEC), Naval Engineering College, INS *Shivaji*, Lonavala and College of Defence Management (CDM), Secunderabad, Commodore Debesh Lahiri was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 25 Nov 1988. He is a Marine Engineer by profession and has completed his Master's (MTech) from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Chennai. He is a fellow of the Institute of Marine Engineers (FIMarE) and his papers have been published by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), International Naval Engineers Conference (INEC), Indian National IC Engines Conference and the *Journal of Marine Engineering*. He has also authored service papers on matters of importance to the Indian Navy and has written a dissertation on Comprehensive National Power. His articles and poems on Shipbuilding in Ancient India, Energy, Emissions, Environment, Quality Techniques, Leadership

and Personnel Management have been published in *Naval Despatch*, and *Personnel Update*, among several other magazines and periodicals.

Shri Hari Kallikkat is the Secretary of the Andaman and Nicobar Tourism Board.



Dr Imankalyan Lahiri is the Professor in the Department of International Relations, at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India. His areas of Specialisation are Southeast Asia, Asia-Pacific, Northeast India, non-traditional security issues, Political Economy, New Media and Human Rights. He has received several national and international awards. He has authored and edited several books namely, *Mahathir's Islam: A Socio-Political Construal*, *Malaysia's Foreign Policy under Mahathir bin Mohammad*, *The Challenge of Terrorism (edited volume)*, *India's Constructive Engagement in Asia and Around (edited volume)*, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Mythical Founder of a Universal Culture (edited volume)*.



Dr K Yhome is Senior Fellow and Editor, Asian Confluence. He has done his PhD from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His research interest is around issues of regionalism and sub-regionalism in South Asia and Southeast Asia. He has authored books/monographs and contributed chapters in edited volumes and published research articles in reputed international and national journals including Asian Survey, India Review, Strategic Analysis, Rising Powers Quarterly, and Global Asia. His op-eds have appeared in national newspapers such as The Hindu, The Indian Express, Business Standard, and The New Indian Express.



Ms. Katy Budge has been serving as the Minister Counsellor for Political and Press in India since August 2020. Before that, she was the head of the Asia cross-government Unit in the Cabinet Office from 2017 to 2020. She also led the Joint Anti-Corruption Unit, representing the UK at the G20 and OECD, and preparing for the UK's Anti-Corruption Summit and Syria Conference. In 2015, she worked on the Civil Service Reform agenda for the Head of the Civil Service. Katy has also served as Head of Operations at the Stabilization Unit and Head of the FCO's CT Strategy Department. Throughout her career, she has focused on Asia and previously held the position of Private Secretary to the Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Office Minister.



Shri Kuldeep Rai Sharma is Member of Parliament of Andaman & Nicobar Islands. UNICEF awarded him with PGC Awards 2020 for his work to protect child rights. He has completed his BE in Mechanical, MOT Educated at Jadavpur University and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd. (GRSE), Kolkata. He has been awarded the prestigious "Sansad Ratna Award 2022" and has been proactive in the Parliament and has raised various issues with utmost sincerity.



Mr. M P Bezbaruah is a Member of Governing Council, Asian Confluence and belongs to an illustrious family with a civil service background. He has held important government positions in the North Eastern Council – of Assam and Meghalaya and the Government of India. He was Secretary to the Government of Assam in the Departments of Education, Health, Industries and Finance, Chairman of the Assam State Electricity Board and the Home Secretary of Assam from January 1986 to August 1990. From 1990 to 1994, he was Minister (Economic) at the High Commission of India, London. From 1997 to 2001, he served as the Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism, and the Government of India. He also served as the Principal Adviser in the Planning Commission of India and was the Banking Ombudsman for the Reserve Bank of India. After retirement, he has conferred the Honorary Permanent Representative of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO).

Ms. Nandini Paliwal, IAS is the Commissioner-cum-Secretary in Andaman and Nicobar Administration.



Ambassador Riva Ganguly Das is a highly experienced diplomat who has served in various capacities in the Indian Foreign Service. She was previously the Secretary (East) of India and is now a governing council member of the Asian Confluence. Prior to her role as Secretary (East), she served as the High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh and was previously the Director General of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). Her wealth of experience and expertise make her a valuable asset to any organization she is a part of.



Mr. Sabyasachi Dutta is the Founder-Director of the ‘Asian Confluence’, India East Asia, Center. Born in Shillong, a social entrepreneur, educationist, artist and a student of Indian history and international relations, Sabyasachi has had a successful career spanning 12 years in the Silicon Valley, California USA in cutting edge technology, innovation and entrepreneurships in large corporations such as SONY Corp. as well as several successful startups, and holding several patents.



RAdm Sandeep S Sandhu, took over as Chief of Staff of Andaman & Nicobar Command on 01 Dec 22. He was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 Jul 1991. The Flag Officer is specialised in Navigation and Direction and is a qualified naval diver. He has held a range of command, training and staff appointments, and has served on most classes of ships of the Indian Navy including the aircraft carrier Viraat. The Flag Officer’s sea command appointments include Command of two missile vessels, one missile corvette and a destroyer. He has commanded his Alma Mater, i.e., Navigation & Direction School in 2013-15. The Flag Officer has attended courses at Defence Services Staff College at Wellington in 2005-06, Higher Defence Management Course at College of Defence Management, Secunderabad in 2012-13 and the Royal College of Defence Studies, London in 2017-18. The Admiral was awarded the Nau Sena Medal in 2018.



Dr Sreeradha Datta is Professor at Jindal University. Before joining the Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P Jindal Global University, she was a Senior Fellow and heading the Neighbourhood Studies Centre of the Vivekananda International Foundation. She is also a non-resident Senior Fellow with the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore. Prior to that she was director of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata for six years and held fellowships with Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, among other institutions. She has a PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and an MPhil degree from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. Her recent works are titled, *Act East Policy and Northeast India* and an edited *BIMSTEC: The Journey and Way Ahead* and co-edited, *Bangladesh at 50: Development and Challenges*. She has also published over 150 articles in journals, edited volumes, newspapers and academic websites.



Mr. Surendra Prahladka is the President of Andaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He was National Council Member of Confederation of Indian Industry Member (CII), New Delhi and Director of Andaman & Nicobar Island Integrated Development Corporation Ltd (ANIIDCO) (A Govt. Enterprises). He completed his graduation from St. Xavier College, Kolkata and LLB from University College of Law, Kolkata.

About Asian Confluence

Asian Confluence is a think-tank situated in North East India. Asian Confluence is known for its research, training, advocacy and global exchange programs of the Eastern South Asian region in the larger framework of the Indo-Pacific region. It works to develop an improved understanding of the region as a confluence of ideas and geographies. Asian Confluence initiates, stimulates and accelerates the revival of the shared civilisational values between the peoples of India and South East and East Asia to strengthen our ecological, intellectual, economic, technological, political and security ties and thus ensure a better future of dependable and involved partners for the growth of all countries in emerging Asia. The vision is a stable and prosperous Asia where ecology is honoured, diversity is celebrated, prosperity is shared, sovereignty is respected, and boundaries become connectors.

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