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Third India-Japan Intellectual Conclave

North East India, Bangladesh and the Bay of Bengal in the Indo-Pacific

Building on Partnerships: The Way Forward

Agartala, Tripura

April 11-12, 2023

Concept Note and Agenda



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North East India, Bangladesh and the Bay of Bengal in the Indo-Pacific Building on Partnerships: The Way Forward, Agartala 11-12 April 2023

Concept Note

Lying at the underbelly of the mighty Himalayas and the littoral of the Bay of Bengal, India's Eastern and North Eastern states, together with immediate neighbours, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Myanmar together comprise a geographically compact and ecologically fragile region. It is commonly agreed that greater connectivity within the region, cooperation in ecologically sustainable practices for management of fragile natural resources along with quality infrastructure development, developing larger regional trade and fostering people to people relations within the region are required enablers for inclusive growth and shared prosperity for all the states and nations in the region.

India and Japan have been civilizational partners since time immemorial. However, as recent times have seen a strategic convergence of India's "Act East" and "Neighbourhood First" policies and Japan's vision of "Free and Open Indo-Pacific". With the relationship deepening in manifold dimensions, India-Japan relations have seen a new "high" in recent times. The creation of the "Act East Forum" at the highest level of government in India was a follow up of the political will at the very top. Developing collaboration between India and Japan towards development of the North Eastern region of India has been one of the key components of this strategic convergence.

The North-eastern states are as such landlocked. But the region put together, enjoys close proximity to the Bay of Bengal. It is ecologically connected to the Bay of Bengal through a unique "mountain to sea" contiguous landscape. Connectivity and cooperation with the nations of the Bay of Bengal, in particular Bangladesh thus hold enormous possibility for trade, investment, cultural contacts and efforts towards holistic conservation of the fragile biodiversity of the region. A connected Bay of Bengal is also a key component of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. Such a connectivity would be a concrete convergence of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and Japan's Free and Open Indo Pacific (FOIP) and BIG-B Initiative. It could also be a concrete milestone progress in BIMSTEC regional connectivity and be in total harmony India's "Act East" and "Neighbourhood First" policies.

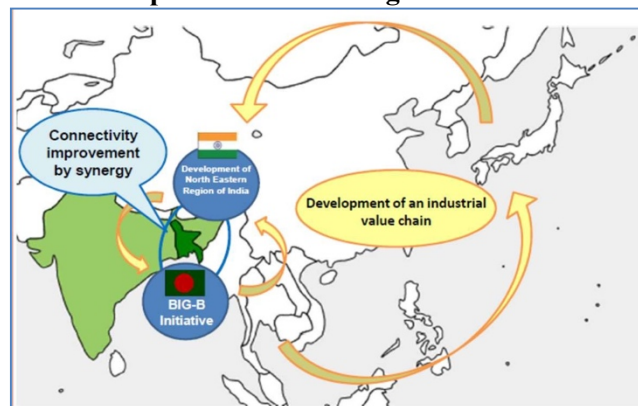
Japan is the most trusted common development partner of the region and closely working in Indian North east states, Bangladesh and Bay of Bengal nations in promoting connectivity development, cross- border infrastructure, trade integration, financial links, and

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other regional public goods. India too has been driving several ongoing development projects (connectivity, education, disaster resilience, power, etc.) within this region. These can be a stable pathway to shared peace and prosperity. Towards this, Japan has been actively engaged in several projects of connectivity, livelihood generation and capacity building in the North-eastern states. For example, the Japanese funded Matarbari deep sea port in Bangladesh which is expected to be operational in 2027 has the potential to become a regional hub for industrial value chain connecting North East through Tripura with Bangladesh and onward to the larger Bay of Bengal region. Likewise, there are several connectivity projects also underway in the North-eastern Indian states. However, it would not be enough just to build physical connectivity, but to go beyond to establish transboundary value chains which can enable bottom up, inclusive economic growth, which in turn can help to ensure sustainable economic growth and political stability in the region. Establishing organic linkages between institutions and people of the region will be the key for this. There is great potential in delving deeper on how development cooperation between India, Bangladesh and Japan can further deepen and extend to multiple sectors that are in tune with the economic and social aspirations of the region as a whole.

Map 1: NER and Bangladesh in BIG-B



With the aim of development of Northeast India states, the Asian Confluence, in collaboration with the Embassy of Japan organized virtual dialogues in March 2021 and March 2022. These intellectual dialogues complemented other activities undertaken by the Asian Confluence in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs such as the NADI 2022 dialogue and the Imphal Dialogue which brought out the potential of collaboration based on the unique and diverse characteristics of each state in the region and ways to promoting interstate collaborations. Various universities and institutions across all the states participated.

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Building on these initiatives already underway, there is large scope and benefits from exploring ways and means to further deepen cooperation between Japan and North-east Indian states and Bangladesh by convening intellectual, commercial, and cultural exchanges with vibrant exchange of ideas, skills, and experiences. This can connect institutions, ideas and champions on the ground and further people to people interactions to unleash the full benefits of connectivity. The role of the policy makers in synergy with intellectuals, young entrepreneurs and other stakeholders from the region will be key to this effort. The third edition of the dialogue will bring experts and policymakers to ideate on building industrial and people connectivity over the physical connectivity projects underway. It would make an assessment of

- the current state of connectivity and gaps between Bangladesh and Northeastern part of India;
- border connectivity and facilitation, and identification of specific challenges;
- identification of specific issues that need to be addressed on a timeline to overcome these challenges;
- how to connect businesses, entrepreneurs, and local community stakeholders; and
- exploring India-Japan-Bangladesh collaboration in the region.

Asian Confluence proposes that this third edition of the dialogue be a launch pad to gather the relevant parties spanning government, industry and civil society to brainstorm on these issues and develop a work plan for the future which can provide “third space” recommendations for further action in forums like the Act East Forum.

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AGENDA

(Subject to Last Minute Changes)

DAY 1: April 11th 2023

4:00 – 4:30 pm: Registration and Welcome

4:30 – 6:20 pm: Inaugural Session

- **Introduction: Sabyasachi Dutta**, Executive Director, Asian Confluence
- **Inaugural Remarks: Amb. Hiroshi Suzuki**, Hon. Ambassador of Japan to India
- **Special Address: Smt. Santana Chakma**, Industries Minister of Tripura
- **Special Address: H.E. Shahriar Alam**, Hon. Minister of State, Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh
- **Special Address: H.E. Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh**, Hon. Minister of State, External Affairs and Education, India
- **Special Address: Shri. G Kishan Reddy**, Hon. Minister, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Culture and Tourism

Release of Report (Assessing Connectivity between Northeast India and Bangladesh: Towards a Prosperous Bay of Bengal Region) and Group Photo

6:30- 7:00 pm: Panel Discussion on the Report: Northeast India and Bangladesh: Seizing the Opportunity

Chair: Amb. Riva Ganguly Das, Hon. Member Governing Council, Asian

Confluence

Panelists:

- **Dr. Prabir De**, Professor, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, (RIS), New Delhi
- **Dr. Selim Raihan**, Professor, Department of Economics University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Executive Director SANEM
- **Dr. Kazutoshi Tamari**, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Economics, Chukyo University
- **Mr. Kentaro Orita**, Counselor, Political Section, Embassy of Japan, New Delhi

Q&A

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7:00- 8:00 pm: Signature Conversation: India, Japan and Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal: New Horizons

This Conversation aims to highlight the larger framework of cooperation between ongoing bilateral cooperation between India and Japan and Bangladesh and how that can be leveraged for cooperation to secure a prosperous Bay of Bengal Neighbourhood.

Chair: Amb. Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa, Hon. Member Governing Council, Asian Confluence

Panelists

- **Prof. Shahidul Haque**, Bangabandhu Chair Professor, Delhi University
- **Dr. Sumit Seth**, Joint Secretary, PP&R, Ministry of External Affairs
- **Mr. Takeo Konishi**, Country Director, Asian Development Bank

DAY 2: April 12th 2023

9:15 – 11:00 am: Cluster Session 1: (Close Door) Annex Hall-1

Chair: Amb. Riva Ganguly Das, Hon. Member Governing Council, Asian Confluence

Introduction: **Mr. Ichiguchi Tomohide**, Chief Representative JICA Bangladesh

- **Md. Nahim Razzaq**, MP & Member of MOFA Parliamentary Committee
- **Amb. Hiroshi Suzuki**, Hon. Ambassador of Japan to India

Lead Discussants (Not in particular order)

- **Mr. Hajime Taniguchi**, Senior Representative, JICA India
- **Mr. Takashi Suzuki**, Chief Director General JETRO India
- **MK Pragna Deb Barman**, Royal Family Tripura
- **Mr. Nilaya Mitash**, Principal Operations Coordination Specialist, ADB India
- **Dr. Samudragupta Kashyap**, State Information Commissioner, Assam
- **Mr. Susumu Wakamori**, President JCCII, President & CEO Marubeni India
- **Mr. Tsuneya Katagiri**, Country Manager All Nippon Airways Co., Ltd.
- **Mr. Kenji Minemura**, Senior Research Fellow, The Canon Institute for Global Studies
- **Prof. Syed Ferhat Anwar**, University of Dhaka
- **Dr. Selim Raihan**, Executive Director SANEM, Bangladesh
- **Mr. Biswajit Chakrabarty**, Senior Director, FICCI

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9:15 – 11:00 am: Cluster Session 2: (Close Door) Main Hall

Chair: Mr. Ajay Sethi, Hon. Member Governing Council, Asian Confluence

Introduction: **Mr. Mitsunori Saito**, Chief Representative of JICA, India

Lead Discussants (Not in particular order)

- **Mr. Tatsuya Machida**, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh
- **Mr. Toshihiko Kurihara**, Chief Representative, JBIC
- **Shri Ajeet Kumar Singh**, Director (Operations), Land Ports Authority of India
- **Mr. Soumya Chattopadhyay**, Senior Programs Officer, ADB India
- **Mr. Yoji Taguchi**, Executive JCCII, Chairman & Managing Director Mitsubishi Corporation India Pvt. Ltd.
- **Mr. Kenji Sugino**, Secretary General, JCCII
- **Mr. Yuki Shoji**, Manager, Deloitte Haskins, and Sells LLP Manager
- **Mr. Shinichi Nagata**, Country General Manager for Bangladesh, Sumitomo Corporation, Asia Pacific Representative
- **Mr. Katsuhito Kobayashi**, Regional General Manager, Nippon Express India
- **Prof Srabani Roy Choudhury**, Center for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies JNU, New Delhi
- **Prof. Indraneel Bhowmik**, Tripura University, Agartala
- **Dr. Md. Yunus**, Senior Fellow, BIDS, Dhaka
- **Dr. Shristi Pukhrem**, India Foundation, New Delhi
- **Mr. Pradip Phanjouban**, Journalist, Manipur

11:00- 11:15 am: Tea/Coffee Break

11:15-11:30 am: Brief Recap

11:30 – 12:45 pm: Development Partnerships in the North-east, Bangladesh and the Bay of Bengal: The Way Forward

Chair: Amb. Rajiv Bhatia, Hon. Member Governing Council, Asian Confluence

Panelists

- **Mr. Machida Tatsuya**, DCM of Japan, Bangladesh
- **Mr. Edimon Ginting**, Country Director, ADB Bangladesh
- **Shri K. Moses Chalai**, NEC Secretary
- **Prof. Ashok Chawla**, Advisor, Japan, MEA
- **Prof. Shahidul Haque**, Bangabandhu Chair Professor, Delhi University
- **Mr. Swadesh Roy**, Journalist, Bangladesh

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12:45 – 1:00 pm: Valedictory Address by H.E Khalid Mohammad Chowdhury, Minister of Shipping, Bangladesh

1:00 – 1:30 pm: Valedictory Panel

Chair: Amb. Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa, Hon. Member Governing Council, Asian

Panelists

- **H. E. Mr. Md. Mustafizur Rahman, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India**
- **Amb. Hiroshi Suzuki, Hon. Ambassador of Japan to India**

Vote of Thanks

- **Mr. Sabyasachi Dutta, Executive Director, Asian Confluence**

1:30-2:00 pm: Lunch



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