
Joint Press Release

BIMSTEC and Asian Confluence Jointly Launch Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies in Shillong to Bolster Regional Cooperation in Bay of Bengal Region

Shillong, India | 3 November 2025: The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Asian Confluence, one of the leading think tanks of Northeast India, jointly launched the new Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies at the Asian Confluence in Shillong, Meghalaya, on 30 October 2025. The Centre aims to strengthen research, policy dialogue and regional cooperation among countries connected by Bay of Bengal. It will also serve as a platform to promote academic and policy exchanges and facilitate “third-space cooperation” among regional stakeholders.

BIMSTEC Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, graced the ceremony for inauguration of the Centre, which was attended by representatives from the Ministry of External Affairs and State Government of Meghalaya, senior diplomats, policy experts and representatives from academia, think tanks and youth organisations.

In his keynote speech, Secretary General commended Asian Confluence for its timely and visionary initiative to advance research, dialogue, and collaboration on regional cooperation. He underlined the leading role that the Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies can play in presenting the interests and priorities of India’s North Eastern States, who are considered key players as well as major beneficiaries of regional cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region.

Secretary General also commended the commitment of the Centre to engage in studies, analysis and facilitate dialogue amongst various stakeholders in security and development of the Bay of Bengal region, with a view to inform and guide regional cooperation endeavours under BIMSTEC and other regional platforms. He highlighted the vision, goals and priorities of BIMSTEC and the progress made in regional cooperation under BIMSTEC.

Shri C.S.R. Ram, Joint Secretary (BIMSTEC and SAARC) in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, underlined India’s policy thrust on regional cooperation through initiatives such as Neighbourhood First, Act East Policy and MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) frameworks.

Mr Sabyasachi Dutta, Executive Director, Asian Confluence, noted that India’s Northeast serves as a natural bridge between the Himalayan economies and the Bay’s maritime economy, making it a vital space for fostering integration, connectivity and ecological stewardship. The Centre will work to study, research and advocate the resilience of the Bay that acts as a unifying force in the region, he added.

Asian Confluence also hosted an Exhibition on the Bay of Bengal and unveiled the Inaugural Souvenir of the Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies, a compendium of articles exploring the region's diverse dimensions.

Following the inaugural event, a high-level panel discussion, titled "Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal: Envisioning a Resilient and Prosperous Future," brought together senior diplomats, policy experts, and media representatives to deliberate on opportunities for deeper cooperation. The discussion centred on BIMSTEC's pivotal role in fostering regional cooperation and promoting resilience and prosperity among its member States, with emphasis on trade and investment, connectivity, climate action, blue economy, and people-to-people exchanges.

Asian Confluence is a Shillong-based think tank that promotes constructive dialogue, research, and collaboration among countries of South and Southeast Asia, with a special focus on India's Northeast. Through its initiatives, Asian Confluence aims to enhance connectivity, cultural exchange and policy cooperation across the Bay of Bengal region. Through both online and in-person engagements with policymakers, businesses, universities, research institutions, and think tanks, the Centre seeks to enhance regional understanding, promote trust and catalyse collective action on the manifold issues shaping the Bay of Bengal.

BIMSTEC comprises seven countries of the Bay of Bengal region: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. It pursues regional cooperation in 7 broad sectors: Agriculture and Food Security; Connectivity; Environment and Climate Change; People-to-People Contact; Science, Technology and Innovation; Security; and Trade, Investment and Development. The cooperation also covers 8 sub-sectors: Blue Economy, Mountain Economy, Energy, Disaster Management, Fisheries and Livestock, Poverty Alleviation, Health, and Human Resource Development.

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