09:30 - 11:00
CIAO

THE INNER FORUM (BY INVITATION ONLY)

BEYOND THE SAFETY NET

Ten Years of Social Protection Reform and What Comes Next

A decade of social protection reform has reshaped how Bangladesh thinks about welfare, inclusion, and the responsibilities of the state. With the National Social Security Strategy now reaching an important point of evaluation, this dialogue will examine what has worked, where institutional and coordination gaps remain, and what lessons should guide the next generation of social protection. Bringing together government, parliament, experts, and development partners, the session will explore how a more responsive, integrated, and trusted social protection system can strengthen social cohesion and governance in a rapidly changing economic and social landscape.

SPEAKERS

Ahmed Jamsheed Mohamed, Representative in Bangladesh
World Health Organization

Mariyam Nasir, Director General, Ministry of Education, Maldives

Max Tuñón, ILO Country Director, Bangladesh

Md. Nurul Haque, State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and
Overseas Employment of Bangladesh

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, Chairman, RAPID, Bangladesh

Nazneen Ahmed, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue
Bangladesh

Syed Haider, Head of Development Cooperation
Australian High Commission in Bangladesh

Zahir Uddin Swapon, Political Adviser to the Prime Minister, Bangladesh

Zuraida Kamaruddin, Former Minister of Plantation Industries and
Commodities, Malaysia

Anowarul Haq, Assistant Resident Representative
UNDP Bangladesh *(Moderator)*

09:30 - 11:00
SURMA

THE INNER FORUM (BY INVITATION ONLY)

ELECTIONS IN THE AGE OF DISRUPTION

Technology, social media, foreign influence operations, and declining public trust have transformed electoral politics worldwide. This session explores how electoral systems can remain credible, inclusive, and resilient amid new challenges.

SPEAKERS

Aishath Rafiya, Regional Director, Global Peace Institute, UK

Anastasia S. Wibawa, Project Director, European Partnership for Democracy, Belgium

Andre De Mello e Souza, Tenured Researcher and Policy Analyst Institute for Applied Economic Research, Brazil

Come Bastin, Reporter, Medipart, France

Jathindra Ariyapala, Founding Director Trinco Centre for Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka

Matiul Alam, Former Faculty and Honorary Research Scholar, University of British Columbia, Canada

Touseef Mehraj Raina, Co-Founder Jammu Kashmir Policy Institute, India

Zahin Ahmed, UK Political Strategist and Adviser to the UK Deputy Prime Minister, London

Suvojit Bagchi, Consulting Editor, ABP Online, India

Zain Tauqueer Khan, Former Editor of Diplomatic Affairs Minute Mirror News, Pakistan *(Moderator)*

09:30 - 10:30
MEGHNA

THE AUTHOR'S TABLE (BY INVITATION ONLY)

CAN BANGLADESH BREAK THE CYCLE?

Bangladesh has travelled through repeated democratic openings, reversals, and unfinished transitions. This Author's Table explores the central questions raised in A Fractured Path: why past efforts failed, who the key actors are, what structural obstacles remain, and whether the current transition can produce a more durable democratic order.

The conversation connects Bangladesh's experience with lessons from other countries that have succeeded, or failed, in similar transitions.

SPEAKERS

Ali Riaz, Distinguished Professor, Illinois State University, USA

Michael Lidauer, Senior International Advisor
European Partnership for Democracy, Germany

Sreeradha Dutta, Professor, OP Jindal Global University, India

Mohammad Sajjadur Rahman, Adjunct Faculty
Independent University, Bangladesh *(Moderator)*

09:30 - 10:30
CHITRA

THE MORNING SALON (BY INVITATION ONLY)

THE CLIMATE SECURITY CENTURY

Climate change is no longer solely an environmental challenge. It is increasingly shaping national security, economic stability, migration patterns, and geopolitical competition. As one of the world's most climate-vulnerable regions, the Bay of Bengal offers important lessons on adaptation, resilience, and international cooperation in an era of mounting environmental pressures.

SPEAKERS

Sabyasachi Dutta, Executive Director, Asian Confluence, India

Saimum Parvez, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister of
Bangladesh for Environment, Forests, and Climate Change

Tara Marwah, Policy Advisor, The Asia Foundation
The Asia and the Pacific

Judith Mwaniki, Director, Development Programmes, Consortium for Economic Research and Development Studies, Kenya *(Moderator)*

09:30 - 10:30
PADMA

THE STRATEGIC TABLE (BY INVITATION ONLY)

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN AN ERA OF CONSTANT CRISIS

Today's societies face overlapping crises-from natural disasters and cyber disruptions to economic shocks and political instability. This session examines how governments, communities, and institutions can strengthen resilience and maintain public trust during periods of uncertainty.

SPEAKERS

Emma Leslie, Founder, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and Southeast Asian Women Peace Mediators, Cambodia

Felix Gerdes, Resident Representative of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Bangladesh

Indra Mani Panday, Secretary General, The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

James Angelus, Chairman, International Security Industry Council Japan

Mia Hyun, Gender Disability and Social Inclusion Lead, Aus4Growth, Boston Consulting Group/DFAT, Thailand

Parvez Karim Abbasi, Executive Director Centre For Governance Studies, Bangladesh

Sonam Yangchen, Health Systems Researcher Institute of Health Partners, Bhutan

Konstantinos Foutzopoulos, Executive Director Athens Riviera Forum, Greece *(Moderator)*

11:00 - 11:20
GRAND BALLROOM

BOBC SPOTLIGHT

FIVE SEAS, ONE GATHERING STORM

Conflict, Supply Routes and the Search for Peace

Could the separate fires surrounding the Black, Mediterranean, Caspian, Red and Arabian seas converge into a wider conflict-drawing the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal into its path? This strategic address examines the struggle over supply routes, Iran's emerging role, and the Gulf's security challenges amid concerns over declining American influence. It explores the potential for BRICS to help chart a path towards peace through political and diplomatic engagement. At its heart is a question of direct relevance to this forum: how can the Bay of Bengal remain a space of connection rather than become the next frontier of conflict?

SPEAKER

M. J. Akbar, Journalist & Former Minister of State for External Affairs, India

11:20 - 11:30
GRAND BALLROOM

THE DIPLOMATIC LENS

Michael Miller, Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation in Bangladesh

11:30 - 12:10
GRAND BALLROOM

BOBC SPOTLIGHT

NEW WORLD. OLD HUMANS.

Humor, Humanity, and What Still Sets Us Apart

AI is changing how we work. Technology is changing how we communicate. Geopolitics is changing how we see the world. Everything around us is moving faster. And yet, for all this change, people remain remarkably human.

We still want to be understood. We still crave connection, recognition, and belonging. We still make irrational decisions, misread situations, tell stories, laugh at the wrong things, and find ways to turn even the most serious moments into something absurd.

In this plenary, a world-renowned comedian, executive coach, and educator explore what the craft of stand-up comedy can teach us about influence, creativity, adaptability, and communication in a rapidly changing world.

Drawing on decades of performing across cultures and continents, he offers a fresh perspective on leadership, human behaviour, and the skill that becomes more valuable as technology becomes more powerful.

Because perhaps the most important question about the future isn't what technology will become, but what we will remain.

SPEAKER

Papa CJ, Comedian, Educator, Thought Leader
Executive Coach, Live Learn Laugh LLP, India

12:10 - 13:10
GRAND BALLROOM

THE GRAND CONVERSATION

WHO GETS TO LEAD?

Women, Local Power, and the Future of Democratic Governance

Local elections are where democratic participation becomes most immediate and where questions of representation, access and leadership are often most visible. In Bangladesh, women participate widely in local political life, yet significant barriers remain to competing for general seats, chairperson positions and other leadership roles. This conversation will examine the institutional, financial, social and security constraints

that shape women's participation across the electoral cycle and ask what is needed to move from representation to meaningful political influence. It will also explore how electoral institutions, political actors, civil society, media and communities can help create a safer, more inclusive and trusted environment for women's leadership in local governance.

SPEAKERS

Abul Fazal Md. Sanaullah, Election Commissioner
Bangladesh Election Commission

Gitanjali Singh, Country Representative in Bangladesh, UN WOMEN

Md. Abdul Alim, Former Member
Electoral Reform Commission, Bangladesh

Rezwana Karim Snigdha, Professor of Anthropology at
Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh

Stephen Rodriques, Resident Representative, UNDP Bangladesh

Catherine M Cecil, Democracy Governance and Election Expert
USA *(Moderator)*

13:10 - 13:20
GRAND BALLROOM

THE DIPLOMATIC LENS

Sarah Cooke, British High Commissioner in Bangladesh

13:20 - 13:30
GRAND BALLROOM

THE CATALYST

DO WE KNOW HOW TO GOVERN?

Governance is often discussed in terms of institutions, elections, and public policy-but the deeper question is whether societies truly know how to exercise power responsibly, build trust, and make institutions work for citizens. This Catalyst asks what good governance actually demands beyond laws and structures: accountability, competence, restraint, public reasoning, and the willingness to listen. In an age of political polarisation and declining trust, it challenges us to consider whether the real crisis is not only who governs but also how we govern-and whether we have learned to do it well.

SPEAKER

Mahfuz Anam, Editor, The Daily Star, Bangladesh

13:30 - 14:30
OASIS

THE MIDDAY TABLE

14:30 - 15:30
GRAND BALLROOM

THE GRAND CONVERSATION

WHO DECIDES WHEN THE MODEL DECIDES?

Artificial Intelligence in the Machinery of the State

Governments across the Bay of Bengal are increasingly using artificial intelligence in public services, health, courts, taxation, social protection, and other functions of the state. Much of this promises greater efficiency and wider access. But a sharper question emerges when a model, rather than a person, begins to make judgments about individuals - who receives a benefit, who is audited, or whose application is approved. This dialogue explores the point at which efficiency and accountability begin to come apart and asks what must remain human when the machinery of the state becomes increasingly automated.

SPEAKERS

Rehan Asif Asad, Advisor to the Prime Minister, Bangladesh

Nicola Nixon, Executive Director, InsightWorks
The Asia Foundation, Asia and the Pacific

Susan Vize, Head of Office and Representative in Bangladesh, UNESCO

Waruna Sri Dhanapala, Secretary, Ministry of Digital Economy, Sri Lanka

S. M. Ziauddin Hyder, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister
on Health Affairs, Bangladesh

Kazi Faisal Bin Seraj, Country Representative
The Asia Foundation, Bangladesh *(Moderator)*

15:30 - 15:50
GRAND BALLROOM

BAY OF BENGAL LECTURE

BETWEEN POWER AND PRINCIPLE

Leadership, Reconciliation, and Strategic Choice
in a Fragmented World

How should countries navigate a world in which great-power competition is intensifying, alliances are shifting, and domestic divisions increasingly shape foreign policy? Drawing on the experience of democratic transition, regional reconciliation and strategic balancing in the Balkans, this lecture reflects on the difficult choices leaders face when national

interest, historical memory, international pressure and the need for cooperation pull in different directions. It asks what responsible statecraft looks like in a fragmented world-and whether political courage can still create space for reconciliation, strategic autonomy and durable peace.

SPEAKER

Boris Tadić, Former President, Republic of Serbia

15:50 - 16:00
GRAND BALLROOM

THE CATALYST

JOURNALISM AFTER THE TURNING POINT

Hope, Reform and the Reality of Change

Bangladesh's political transition created expectations of change across institutions, including the media. Reform commissions were formed, recommendations were made, and hopes rose for greater freedom, accountability and professional security. Yet months after the election, many of those expectations remain unmet, while concerns over laws, safety, institutional protection and media independence persist. This Catalyst asks where Bangladesh journalism stands today, why promised reforms have been slow to materialise, and whether the moment for meaningful change is still within reach. Recent public debate has continued to focus on media independence, journalist safety, legal reform and the gap between reform proposals and implementation.

SPEAKER

Matiur Rahman, Editor, Prothom Alo, Bangladesh

16:00 - 17:00
GRAND BALLROOM

LEADERSHIP FORUM

THE DEMOCRACY CONVERSATION

Rebuilding Trust in an Age of Polarization

Many societies are experiencing declining trust in institutions, growing political polarization, and increasing pressure on democratic norms. This session explores practical pathways for strengthening democratic resilience, social cohesion, and public confidence.

SPEAKERS

Ashok Sajjanhar, President, Institute of Global Studies, India

Debapriya Bhattacharya, Distinguished Fellow Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh

Moussa Mara, Former Prime Minister, Republic of Mali

Sergejs Potapkins, Former Member of Parliament, Latvia

Zuraida Kamaruddin, Former Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, Malaysia

Biswas Baral, Senior Journalist and Editor, Nepal *(Moderator)*

17:00 - 17:30
OASIS

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

18:00 - 19:30
CIAO

THE INNER FORUM (BY INVITATION ONLY)

WHY PROJECTS FAIL

Cost, Delivery and Accountability in Infrastructure

Infrastructure can transform economies, but too many projects are weakened by delays, escalating costs, poor coordination, weak project management and failures of accountability. Bringing together engineers, planners, project managers, policymakers and industry leaders, this dialogue will examine why major projects so often struggle between design and delivery-and what reforms in procurement, oversight, professional standards and institutional coordination can help infrastructure be completed faster, better and at lower cost.

SPEAKERS

Anurag Acharya, Director, Policy Entrepreneurs Incorporated, Nepal

Fahmida Khatun, Distinguished Fellow
Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh

Ghulam Mohammed Alomgir, Chairman, Max Group, Bangladesh

M. A. Baqui Khalily, Dean, School of Business, University of Asia Pacific

Morshedul Alam Chaklader, Director, NCC Bank, Bangladesh

Ohid Ahmed, Former Statutory Deputy Mayor of Tower Hamlets, London

Pushpan Murugiah, Founder & Executive Director, Southeast Asia Institute for Accountability, Governance & Economics, Malaysia

Shah Mohammad Naheeaan, Head of Office
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangladesh

Shamim Z. Basunia, Emeritus Professor, Department of Civil Engineering
University of Asia Pacific, Bangladesh

Tanvir Mahmud, Senior Governance Specialist
UNDP Bangladesh *(Moderator)*

18:00 - 19:30
SURMA

THE INNER FORUM (BY INVITATION ONLY)

REWIRING GLOBAL TRADE

Geopolitical tensions, economic nationalism, and supply-chain vulnerabilities are reshaping international commerce, and businesses are adapting to a rapidly changing global trading environment. This has created the need for adaptation of firms to a rapidly changing global environment.

SPEAKERS

Anwarul Alam Chowdhury, President
Bangladesh Chamber of Industry, Bangladesh

Dibya Mani Rajbhandari, Former Member of Parliament, Nepal

Imran Karim, Chairman, Confidence Power & Energy PLC, Bangladesh

Nicolas Weeks, Ambassador of Sweden in Bangladesh

Nikolaos K. Margaropoulos, President
World Federation of Consuls, Greece

Showkat Aziz Russell, President, Bangladesh Textiles Mills Association

Simon Kofi Tettey, Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Artificial Intelligence Training Expert, Micro1 Inc, France

Smruti S Pattanaik, Research Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies & Analysis, India

Sriparna Pathak, Professor, O.P. Jindal Global University, India

Suthikorn Kingkaew, Advisor, KBU Research Institute
Thailand *(Moderator)*

18:30 - 19:30
MEGHNA

THE EVENING SALON (BY INVITATION ONLY)

THE INDO-PACIFIC AFTER REALIGNMENT

The Indo-Pacific has become the central theatre of global strategic competition. Yet regional actors are increasingly pursuing flexible partnerships rather than rigid alliances. This session examines emerging alignments, strategic autonomy, and the future of regional security architecture.

SPEAKERS

Dominique Jean Olivier Rakotozafy, Former Minister of Defence
Republic of Madagascar, Madagascar

Pradeep K Taneja, Deputy Associate Dean
The University of Melbourne, Australia

Zeba Fazli, Research Analyst, Henry L. Stimson Center, USA

Shafqat Munir, Senior Research Fellow
Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies *(Moderator)*

18:30 - 19:30
CHITRA

THE EVENING SALON (BY INVITATION ONLY)

TRUTH UNDER ATTACK

Disinformation in the Digital Age

The battle for influence is increasingly taking place online. Deepfakes, coordinated misinformation campaigns, and algorithmic manipulation challenge democratic institutions and public trust. This session examines how societies can defend information integrity while protecting freedom of expression.

SPEAKERS

Kallol Bhattacherjee, Senior Assistant Editor, The Hindu, India

Pyrou Chung, Director, East West Management Institute, Australia

Raju Mahajan, Founder & Principal Attorney, Mahajan Law LLC, USA

Irfan Yar, International Relations and Security Analyst, Canada *(Moderator)*

18:30 - 19:30
PADMA

THE STRATEGIC TABLE (BY INVITATION ONLY)

CRAFTING PRAGMATISM IN THE BAY OF BENGAL

Bangladesh's Foreign Policy in an Era of Global Realignment

This session introduces Crafting Pragmatism: Bangladesh's Foreign Policy in an Era of Global Realignment, a policy research endeavour examining how Bangladesh converts structural vulnerability into diplomatic agency amid intensifying great-power competition. Anchored in the Bay of Bengal's growing strategic salience, the discussion traces Bangladesh's evolution from doctrinal non-alignment toward pragmatic multi-alignment, diversifying partnerships across soft power, migration, pharmaceuticals, climate diplomacy, and supply chains rather than binding itself to a single power bloc. The session's significance lies in

bridging theoretical innovation, including meta geopolitics, graduated autonomy, and strategic pluralism, with policy-relevant empirical findings from selective in-depth studies, offering scholars and practitioners a shared framework for understanding how small and middle powers navigate global fragmentation. Particular attention goes to maritime security, connectivity, and energy dependence as emerging fault lines increasingly shape Bangladesh's foreign policy calculus within the wider Bay of Bengal and Indo-Pacific space.

SPEAKERS

Felix Gerdes, Resident Representative
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Bangladesh

Hafizur Rahman, Professor, Department of Environmental Science and Management, Independent University, Bangladesh

Marufa Akter, Associate Professor, Independent University, Bangladesh

Mashfee Binte Shams, Former Rector
Foreign Service Academy, Bangladesh

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, Chairman, RAPID, Bangladesh

Shadhan Kumar Das, Program Advisor, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung , Bangladesh

Syeda Rozana Rashid, Professor, Department of International Relations University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Niloy Ranjan Biswas, Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka *(Moderator)*

19:30 - 23:00
POOL CAFE

BY THE WATER (BY INVITATION ONLY)