CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF JHARKHAND
RANCHI, JHARKHAND, INDIA

TWO-DAY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
on

Indian Knowledge Traditions and Sustainable Connectivity Vision: South and South-East Asia as Conduit for Regional Integration and Development

During 19th – 20th March 2025

Venue: University Auditorium, Academic Block-I

Organised by
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
School of Social Sciences
Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Co-sponsored by

Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi
Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata
Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

The Central University of Jharkhand was established through the Central University Act, 2009. The University started with a vision to specially focus on relevant present age educational drives with an emphasis on research in cutting edge technologies. It offers Under Graduate, Post Graduate and Ph.D. programmes. The University is open to new ideas in course curricula and research proposals, collaboration, interaction and capacity building programmes. Being located in Jharkhand, the study of culture is the thrust area of the University as manifested in Centre for Indigenous Culture Studies, Centre for Tribal & Customary Law, Centre for Tribal Folklore, Language & Literature, and Music & Performing Arts. The CUJ Faculty have been awarded National and International Fellowships, Project funding and Recognition and are constantly contributing to the Government, Public and Private Sector organisations through teaching and consultancy. The students have also won accoldes in national level academics and extramural activities.

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

The Department of International Relations was established in the year 2012. Initially it was offering 5-year Integrated M.A. course till 2016-2017 and at present, Department is offering M.A. in Political Science with Specialization in International Relations and Ph. D Research Programme in International Relations since 2015.

This department is dedicated to promote teaching skills and research development in the emerging areas of South Asia, Central Asia, South East Asia, West Asia, Indo-Pacific, Environment, Human Rights, International laws and Organizations, Indian Politics and Government, Political Thought, Good Governance, Comparative Politics, and so on. While the Department organize the National and International seminar/conferences, special lectures, annual activities and discussion among the students with faculty. Since its inception, the department has been concentrating on maintain at the global standard in the class, teaching and research programmes. The Department is committed to provide a new vision, new directions, new ways and devoted to the academic activities, which remain the unique opportunities in the discipline of Politics and International Relations. In papers like India's Strategic Thinkers and Indian Political Thought the department curiously endeavours to the proud indigenous knowledge system of India and its diversity.

Master's Course curriculum has been very carefully designed which caters to the needs of the students in the present context. Both the core areas of International Relations and Political Science have been incorporated in the curriculum. This Department has endeavoured to include sufficient amount of literature and modules from different regions of the globe. The faculty has represented the Department at both international and national level. The Department is also offering teaching and learning medium in both languages English and Hindi.

CONCEPT NOTE

South and Southeast Asia are comparatively more significant regions of Asia than others. Significance lies owing to their distinct geographical, cultural, and historical characteristics. South Asia includes countries such as India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives. It's characterized by its vast population, diverse cultures, rich history, and vibrant ancient knowledge traditions. South Asia is credited as birth place of four great religions of the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Islam, Christianity, and Judaism stands assimilated with lateral entry into the region.

Culturally India stood connected with the rest of the world since ancient days. Buddhism travelled both eastwards and westwards from Myanmar, China, Thailand to the vast reaches of Central Asia and Europe including nearly 42 countries of the contemporary world. Today, Buddhism is soft power of India which is endeavoring to attract the global community for pilgrimage tourism. Spice routes of India have been famous as it facilitated reach of Indian spices from ports in Kerala and Tamil Nadu to rest of the world. Foreign travelers came to India for Buddhism to Indian Spices and that speak volume about India's connectivity through maritime silk route and spice routes.

Economically, South Asia is diverse, with India being the largest economy in the region. Myanmar is South Asia's gateway to Southeast Asia which comprises of eleven countries: Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, Cambodia, Brunei, and Timor-Leste. This region is known for its tropical climate, lush rainforests, and stunning beaches. It has a rich history of maritime trade, influenced by Indian, Chinese, and Islamic civilizations. Like South Asia, Southeast Asia too is culturally diverse, with home to religions ranging from Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, to Christianity. Economically, Southeast Asia is one of the fastest-growing regions in the world. Countries like Singapore and Malaysia are developed economies, while others are rapidly industrializing. Both regions carry strong regional personality within Asia and on the globe. They have played significant roles in trade and culture; as well as have contributed towards maintaining peace and security within the region and in the larger world.

According to Kenichi Yokoyama, Director-General, South Asia Department, Asian Development Bank, "connectivity is the key building block of convergence and cohesion in any regional integration initiative. Development of connectivity across any region—especially of transportation linkages, energy pipelines, and information and communication technology—contributes to integration by reducing transaction costs and facilitating intraregional trade and investment. Road, rail and communication connectivity ease the movement of people, goods, and vehicles thereby enhancing means of livelihoods even in hard-to-reach areas; and promote trade and economic exchanges among countries. Asian Development Bank (ABD) is committed to promoting safe, accessible, and green transport infrastructure and services of developing member countries." This is an inclusive statement that highlights different dimensions of significance of connectivity for any region.

South Asia and Southeast Asia is no exception to rules and necessities of connectivity and have accordingly been working for the same. For instance, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral

Highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project aim to link India with Southeast Asia. Given the strategic location of South and Southeast Asia, maritime connectivity is also crucial. Initiatives such as the India-ASEAN Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement and the development of ports like Singapore, Port Klang in Malaysia, Sittwe in Myanmar, Chittagong in Bangladesh, and Colombo as well as Hambantota in Sri Lanka facilitate maritime trade. Connectivity is also key to energy security. Project such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline has potentials to transform the face of the region. Regional organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), SAARC, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) carry tremendous potentials to promote connectivity. China's ambitious BRI has already been building cob-web network of infrastructure projects in South and Southeast Asia, aiming to enhance connectivity and promote economic cooperation.

Connectivity projects have also raised issues such as: China's expanding maritime outreach; South China Sea becoming hotbed of international and regional politics and security; debt-trap diplomacy of China; geopolitical concerns in the region; China grooming itself as net security provider in the region; and concerns for environment etc. Thus, several challenges have thus been noted over last couple of decades: lack of regulatory regimes and escalating political and diplomatic tensions are becoming bottlenecks to connectivity projects. Such Challenges are required to be addressed in right earnest. Major imperatives for coordinated efforts among governments, regional organizations, and the private sectors are being highlighted.

India thus has significant role to play amid evolving geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economic situations within these regions. India's regional connectivity with Southeast Asia has been evolving on two pillars: northeast India for multimodal and intermodal operations, and southern India for multimodal operations. India has articulated a comprehensive vision for sustainable connectivity in South and Southeast Asia, focusing on enhancing economic integration, fostering regional cooperation, and promoting sustainable development. This vision is embodied in several initiatives and policies aimed at bolstering connectivity across the region while ensuring environmental sustainability and social inclusivity.

India's vision on sustainable connectivity in South and Southeast Asia includes: Neighborhood First Policy, Act East Policy, Project Mausam, International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), BIMSTEC, Infrastructure Development, Renewable Energy Cooperation, and Digital Connectivity. India has been actively pursuing connectivity projects in the region to maximize its regional engagement and strategic interests. Apart from above-mentioned projects India is also aggressively pursuing BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) Motor Vehicles Agreement, Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Framework, Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), and Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Initiatives and other minilateral initiatives such as International Solar Alliance, and Global Biofuel Alliance, etc.

India has many success stories to its cap: Neighbourhood first policy has helped strengthen its relations with neighbours both on land and littorals in Indo-Pacific; Act East Policy has deepened economic and strategic relations South, East and Southeast Asia. It is been able to advance physical infrastructure through ports, rail, road and multimodal connectivity within the region. Cost-effective connectivity is at the core of India's policy interventions.

India is a civilizational state like China and thus been building cultural linkages too through showcasing of 'soft power' assets to the region and the world. Given India's vast arrays of ancient knowledge traditions mired in connectivity experiences, trade and businesses, India has enough leverages to prevail in the contemporary world. Expansion of Digital infrastructure too has provided leverages to India to expand its outreach in the region given its huge resources of software expertise in the contemporary world.

India's role has made it increasingly relevant towards fostering regional cooperation, market integration through enhanced economic engagement ensuring inclusive development. Cross-border rail connectivity with Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan; Border *Haats* near Indo-Bangladesh borders; and partnered surveillance of the maritime zone are some of the innovative programs of India facilitating its outreach in the region. Obviously enough both India and China are two major giants in the region and they compete, cooperate and engage themselves economically in the region. They are also at loggerheads on many counts and keep competing for greater engagement with the countries of South and Southeast Asia. This makes it imperative for debate, discussion and research toward knowledge creation about the social, cultural, political, and economic phenomenon of both these regions. It is in this backdrop that Department of International Relations proposed to organise an International Conference with following objectives:

- To assess the ancient Indian knowledge traditions, trade and businesses which contributed towards India's connectivity with the world;
- To make an assessment of contributions of connectivity projects in the realm of economic engagement, growth of trade and commerce between and among the countries of these regions;
- To explore the contributions of the on-going connectivity projects on bilateral and multilateral relations among the countries of these regions;
- To explore the behavioural patterns and imperatives of the countries of these regions amid Sino-India competition, conflict and cooperation;
- To explore the economic, social, and environmental impacts of connectivity projects in the region;
- To explore and discuss India's strategic initiatives towards enhancing sustainable connectivity in both the regions;
- To foster dialogue among stakeholders from government, policy leaders, policy analysts, academia, industry, and civil society possessing knowledge and expertise about the issues;
- To identify challenges and opportunities in implementing sustainable connectivity projects and to develop actionable recommendations for policy makers and practitioners.

These themes and sub-themes shall provide a comprehensive framework for exploring India's vision of sustainable connectivity in South and Southeast Asia, facilitating a holistic and in-depth discussion at the conference.

Note: The above themes are only indicative. Authors may opt other topics also relevant to the main theme of the Conference.

Important Dates		Abstract Submission
Submission of Abstract	March 01, 2025	Academicians, scholars, policy experts, and other interested participants are encouraged to submit an abstract of around 250 words. The abstract must contain a clear statement of the problem being addressed, the principal research questions guiding the research, the research objectives, and a summary of key findings.
Confirmation of Abstract	March 03, 2025	
Last date of Registration for Conference	March 05, 2025	
Submission of Full Paper	March 15, 2025	
1. The paper may be composed in MS-Words format, Times New Roman font with heading in Font Size 14 and the remaining text in the font size 12 with 1.5 spacing. Full paper length 6000 words. 2. Notes should be numbered consecutively, superscripted in the text and attached to the end of the article.		

Submit Abstract Here	Click on the Link OR Scan Here	Registration Fee	
	https://forms.gle/3e46NMdAFqVqg36R8		
Conference Convenor **Dr. Bibhuti Bhusan Biswas** Assistant Professor Department of International Relations School of Social Sciences Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India		Students & Research Scholars	700 INR*
		Faculty/Professional/ Diplomat	2000INR#
		Foreign Delegate	150 USD#
		SAARC-ASEAN	100USD#

*Accommodation in Hostel or in a modest place, Conference kit, Lunch and one dinner
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How to reach:

- ✦ **By Air:** Nearest airport is Birsa Munda International Airport, Ranchi (IXR) (25 km from University)
- ✦ **By Rail:** Connected via Ranchi Junction Railway Station (RNC) (23 km) and Hatia Railway Station (HTE) (25 km)
- ✦ **By Road:** Nearest bus stands: Kanta Toli Bus Stand (23 km), ITI Bus Stand (12 km) and Ranchi Govt. Bus Stand (21 km)