

The logo for the Bay of Bengal Conversation 2023 features a blue geometric network of nodes and lines on the left. To its right, the text "Bay of Bengal" is in a black serif font, "Conversation" is in a blue sans-serif font, and "2023" is in a black sans-serif font. Below this, the phrase "Rising Tides" is written in a brown cursive script.

Bay of Bengal
Conversation 2023
Rising Tides

Opening speech by Zillur Rahman | Bay of Bengal Conversation 2023

Speaker- **Zillur Rahman**, Executive Director, Centre for Governance Studies

Zillur Rahman, “thank you good morning mr prime minister Moussa Mara, CGS chairman Dr Monjur Ahmed Chowdhury, Mr President Boris Tadic, ladies and gentlemen honored guests and dear friends it gives me great pride and joy to announce the beginning of our second ever edition of the Bay of Bengal Conversation. Hosting this international conference on an annual basis has been a dream of mine for at least a decade. Now I must say I’m living the dream this year’s conference comes upon us at a most auspicious time the focus of this year’s conversation track to diplomacy in the indo-pacific is now more important than ever. Currently a dark shadow of doubt is lingering over every one of us who count ourselves as regional stakeholders due to war, pandemic and global recession. The world is becoming more and more divided nothing has been a bigger wake up called to use than the ongoing world. In Europe we have come to fear that a long era of peace may soon come to an end. However even in this chaos there is hope and there is opportunity for nations that are just rising from the third world the geopolitical multi plurality has allowed space to make significant national development. As the prominence of the global south rises in all the largest multinational frameworks. We are beginning to catch a glimpse of a world where nations who traditionally never had a voice in geopolitics gradually develop into veritable bases of soft power. Just a few months back Bangladesh announced its own indo-pacific outlook such an outlook is just one of the many initiatives and doctrines that various nations have adopted. There is now a collective understanding that to move forward towards prosperity and peaceful coexistence. We require a fresh new approach to regional diplomacy a paradigm shift in regional security architecture and a brand-new method of track to diplomacy. All to ensure that we are not no easy to brand each other’s as enemies. And that brings us to this conference today the result of more than a year of work we have learned many lessons since last year we have also received a lot

of questions about our intention especially from our own government. I would like to take this opportunity to relate who we are we do not support or condone any political party of any nation-Bangladesh or abroad. Our organization the Centre for Governance Studies is an independent think tank and we know very well the price of independence. Even as we try to be more inclusive in our programs many do not accept us due to their affiliations was still many attributes to us when we are just trying to promote Bangladesh as the ideal nation to conduct track to diplomatic activities. Even in the face of all such obstacles our very young and small team has managed to prevail and bring us all together for the next 3 days. Now a little bit more about the conference this year's the Bay of Bengal Conversation will focus on identifying and aspects of the various indopacific strategies of different nations and delving into perspectives of regional stakeholders, academicians and diplomats to expound on trends and trajectories of regional development and challenges. The multitudes of conversations will cover five different perspectives in particular when analyzing geopolitical development in the indo-pacific. One the indo-pacific as a convergence of foreign policy paradigms, two the indo-pacific as a new theater of great power competition, three the indo-pacific as a geopolitical tinder box, four the indo-pacific as a frontline climate action and five finding the narrative for the indo-pacific in the new world order. We'll explore all these topics and more throughout the various plenary sessions, parallel sessions and as well as our studio sessions. Ladies and gentlemen i'm eager to get this new chapter of the Bay of Bengal Conversation started therefore i will take any more of your time i'll just end my remarks by thanking all of you and our partners who have stayed with us through thick and thin. My gratitude goes to USAID, UK AID, UNDP Bangladesh, the Asia Foundation, the Australian High Commission and the German Embassy in Bangladesh. I would like to introduce to you our esteemed inaugural speaker this year honorable Moussa Mara is the former prime minister of Mali. He is also a member of the esteemed

club the Madrid the world's largest forum of democratic former presidents and prime ministers. Prime minister mara is currently a member of Malian parliament a teacher in advance accounting at CESAG Senegal and a member of the international think tank. Resources he has served as an international consultant in the fields of governance institutional organizational and operational studies assistance to countries and intergovernmental organizations has carried out numerous interventions in Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal but also for the benefit of CESAG social security 17 member countries, sea food security 13 member countries UAE, 8 member countries eco 15 member countries. It is my great privilege to ask Mr Moussa Mara to take the podium and give his much-anticipated space Mr. Prime minister.”