

**An Assessment of the Power Needs of the Bay of  
Bengal Region of South Asia  
November 22, 2024  
Kolkata, India**

**Good Morning, Ladies and Gentlemen!**

**2. I am delighted to welcome you to today's meeting on assessing the power needs of countries in the Bay of Bengal region.**

**3. This gathering is an important step toward our understanding to build a sustainable and resilient power infrastructure that will meet our future energy demands, which is increasing by the day and is expected to increase exponentially over time.**

**4. Today our focus is on the subregion consisting of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal. Except Nepal, their per capita energy consumption is much below the global average and even that of the developing world. In our everyday life, we see how power shortages impose economic losses and it is a no-brainer that for sustained economic growth to address poverty and inequality, energy consumption must increase. Without a collaborative, regional approach, our path would be arduous to say the least.**

**5. Also, and equally important, due to a heavy reliance on fossil fuels to generate power, the region faces substantial climate change concerns. All of them rank high on climate vulnerability.**

**6. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal have significant variations in their energy resources, and have varying demand patterns. Bangladesh primarily depends on natural gas (53.86%) and furnace oil (27.18%) for power, but its gas reserves are depleting. Bhutan and Nepal primarily rely on hydropower, while India generates most of its electricity from coal (54.59%), with renewables rising to 24.95%.**

**7. While India suffers from power deficit in summer and monsoon due to high demand, Bhutan and Nepal face power shortage during winter as the rivers dry up. In case of Bangladesh, there is frequent shortage of power due to non-availability of generating resources.**

**8. Therefore, enhanced cooperation among them can:**

- **Unlock the untapped potential of this region,**
- **Enable the generation of cost-effective electricity,**
- **Address seasonal energy shortages,**
- **Diversify the energy mix by promoting clean energy to tackle climate change concerns, and**
- **Improve regional energy security.**

**9. As examples,**

- **Electricity export from Assam and Meghalaya, which are rich with coal, oil and hydro resources, can ensure an uninterrupted supply to northern Bangladesh.**
- **Hydropower export from Bhutan and Nepal to India and Bangladesh could reduce their dependence on fossil fuels.**

**10. Now, given this context, it is heartening to note that cross-border electricity trade is already happening in this region through bilateral arrangements such as those of Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal with India. Additionally, Bangladesh, India and Nepal has recently signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding to import hydropower from Nepal using India's transmission lines.**

**11. Therefore, our deliberation is to explore how we can create a sustainable and resilient power infrastructure in this subregion to address the present and future power needs of these countries. Ultimately, our aim is to benefit our people by enhancing their energy consumption.**

**12. Another critical point that I would like to mention is the importance of low-carbon, climate-resilient energy solutions. As this subregion is particularly vulnerable to climate risks, our power infrastructure in future must be capable of withstanding this challenge.**

**13. We need stable policies and regulatory frameworks that reduce investment risks and attract financing for projects, which will sustain our power infrastructure.**

**14. To conclude, I look forward to actionable steps for building a sustainable and resilient energy roadmap for this subregion with a focus on power. I encourage all of you to share your insights openly so that we can identify and address the most pressing needs.**

**15. Finally, I express my gratitude to the Chintan Research Foundation for entrusting with this responsibility and for your participation and the expertise that you bring to the table.**

**16. As a global policy research and advocacy think- and action-tank, CUTS International is committed to supporting initiatives that foster sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in the developing world with a focus on South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.**

**17. I look forward to productive sessions over the day and a future where the BBIN subregion of Bay of Bengal region is both energy-secure and economically resilient.**

**18. I thank you, and hand over to my colleague Bipul Chattopadhyay to take forward the proceedings.**