

WELCOME REMARKS

PSM

I cordially welcome everybody to the inaugural workshop under the Defense News Conclave Project.

This project is being implemented by CUTS International, with the support of the U.S. Department of State, and with knowledge support from the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC).

At the outset, I extend a warm welcome to ADRIAN PRATT, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Consulate General Kolkata and Director of the American Center, Kolkata; PUSHAN DAS, India Head, Aerospace & Defense at USIBC; and JYOTI MALHOTRA, Senior Consulting Editor, ThePrint, who has kindly agreed to moderate today's session.

A warm welcome also to our distinguished panelists – SANJAYA BARU, COMMODORE SUJEET SAMADDAR and INDRANIL BANERJIE, all of whom are eminent strategic experts with decades of experience thinking and writing about the Indo-Pacific and maritime issues.

As we are all well aware, with the global pivot to the Indo-Pacific in the past few years, the focus on the region has gained new momentum.

Parallely, over the years, the strategic engagement between India and the U.S. has been on an upwards trajectory.

It was not without reason that Secretary Blinken, in his visit to New Delhi last year, termed ties with India as “one of the most consequential relationships we have with any country on Earth.”

In the same vein, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar observed in his opening remarks at the 2+2 dialogue that the India-U.S. relationship has "grown well beyond its bilateral scope".

The two sides are navigating closer cooperation on a range of issues, and the defense relationship is no exception.

The nuclear deal, India's designation as a Major Defense Partner of the U.S., and strategic convergence in the Indo-Pacific region have taken the defense relationship to new heights.

Through this project, we aim at creating awareness about the importance of U.S.-India defense relations, particularly in the context of contemporary developments in the Indo-Pacific, and among our media community.

Therefore, this series of workshops will cover the entire gamut of India-U.S. bilateral defense and strategic relations.

Their purpose is to act as a capacity-building initiative for young media professionals, and to facilitate a meaningful dialogue to understand how media stakeholders are thinking about defense-related issues.

The participants today are primarily media professionals from diverse backgrounds. Our objective is to ensure that participants have a more informed view of important defense and strategic matters after attending these sessions, and realise that the India-US relationship can be a pillar of stability in an increasingly unsteady and uncertain world.

Thus, to conclude, I once again welcome everybody to this inaugural workshop, and thank the State Department and the Kolkata Consulate, and USIBC for their continued support.

I look forward to a productive session. Thank you.