



One-Day Seminar on
'Decoding India's Neighbourhood'
Organized by
Rabindra Bharati University
Centre for Distance and Online Education
Department of Political Science
In collaboration with IQAC, RBU
March 19, 2026

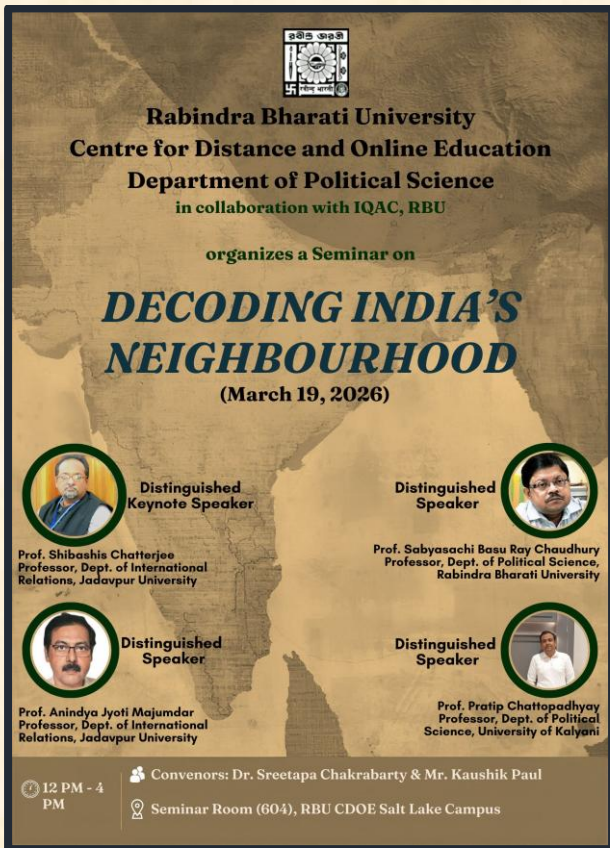


Image 1: Seminar Banner

India is now South Asia's undisputed anchor. It is the fourth largest economy in the world and a critical driver of regional stability. India continues to account for roughly 80% of South Asia's total GDP. In fact, India's GDP is projected to grow by 7.4% in the Financial Year 2025-2026, much higher than her neighbours. India is no more a standalone market to a regional energy hub. It now provides a fuel lifeline to Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka through different initiatives. India's defence spending remains the highest in the region by a massive margin, though it faces a complex two-front strategic challenge from China and Pakistan. Moreover, several "Neighbourhood First" initiatives of India face headwinds, which are sometimes more concerned about India's

growing influence. Nevertheless, there seems to be a classic dilemma in Indian foreign policy. The dilemma is about being a 'regional hegemon' or a 'net security provider.' This is probably due to a complex mix of historical baggage, structural power imbalances, and the evolving role of China in India's neighbourhood. It appears to face a struggle for moving from a transactional relationship to a transformational one with her neighbours. In the light of this kind of this changing global politics, the Department of Political Science, Centre for Distance and Online Education, Rabindra Bharati University organized a One-Day Seminar on '**Decoding India's Neighbourhood**' on **March 19, 2026**

to debate on these key issues. The esteemed keynote speaker of the seminar was **Prof. Shibashis Chatterjee, Professor, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University** and the three distinguished speakers were – **Prof. Anindya Jyoti Majumdar, Professor, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Prof. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Professor, Department of Political Science, Rabindra Bharati University, and Prof. Pratip Chattopadhyay, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Kalyani.** The other esteemed dignitaries who graced the occasion with their august presence were Dr. Kiran Sankar Chakraborty, Director, Rabindra Bharati University - Centre for Distance and Online Education, Dr. Kousik Bhattacharya, Deputy Registrar, RBU-CDOE, and Shri Ramkrishna Mal, OSD Finance, RBU-CDOE and Prof. Sikha Sengupta, Retired Professor and former HOD, Department of Political Science, HMM College, West Bengal, India.

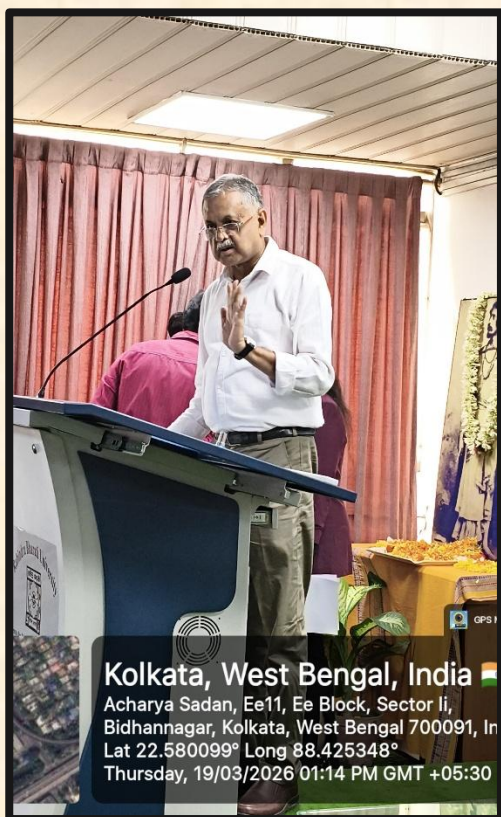


Image 2: Inaugural Address being delivered by Dr. Kiran Sankar Chakraborty, Director, RBU-CDOE



Image 3: Distinguished speakers and dignitaries on stage and Joint Convenor Dr. Sreetapa Chakraborty sharing welcome remarks

The welcome remarks were shared by Dr. Sreetapa Chakraborty, Joint Convenor of the seminar, which was followed by the felicitation ceremony. After this, Dr. Kiran Sankar Chakraborty, esteemed Director, RBU-CDOE delivered the inaugural address. The inaugural session was followed by the keynote address

which was delivered by Prof. Shibashis Chatterjee and chaired by Prof. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury. Prof. Chatterjee highlighted the significance of South Asia as a region in the global world order and also talked about the role of political economy in the growth of South Asia. He observed that communitarian thought has played an integral role in the history of development of South Asia. He further delved deep into the increasing influence of United States and especially China in the region. He also observed that the basis of democracy in South Asia is not very stable and further discussed about the conflict between state and political culture in South Asia.



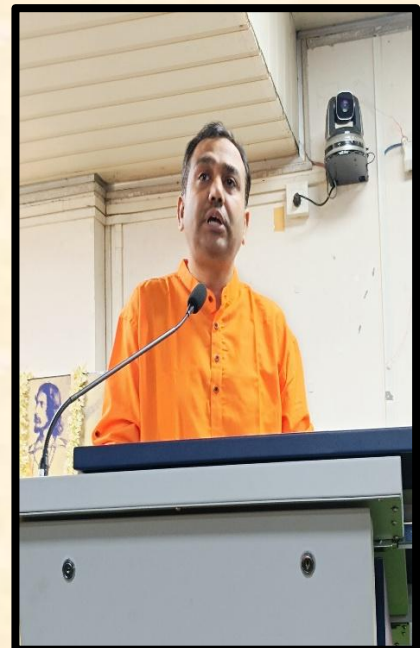
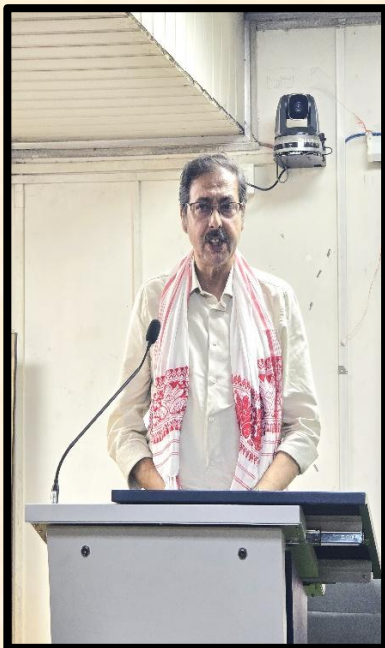
Image 4: Prof. Shibashis Chatterjee delivering the keynote address



Image 5: The audience

The keynote lecture was followed by deliberations by the three distinguished speakers. Prof. Pratip Chattopadhyay highlighted that the influence of borders, cooperation and different approaches has been observed especially with regard to the growth of the nation-state in South Asia. He focused on the role of India as a powerful representative of South Asia in the world order and also brought into discussion the relations of India with her neighbours. In this context, he further talked about blue economy and highlighted the role and significance of India as the “*Vishwaguru.*” He further pointed out that national interest is intricately linked with regime interest and shared the references of two books in this context – Shashi Tharoor and Samir Saran’s *The New World Disorder and the Indian Imperative* (2020) and Roger

M Smith's *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Membership* (2009). Prof. Anindya Jyoti Majumdar in his lecture brought into focus the rising influence of China in the South Asian region and highlighted the conflict between India and China surrounding the Line of Actual Control (LAC). He further reflected on the 5 principles of the Gujral Doctrine in India: Non-reciprocal cooperation, no use of territory against regional interests, non-interference in internal affairs, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of disputes. He also discussed about the fading significance of SAARC and the worsening impact of India-Pakistan conflict on the same. Prof. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury shed light on the cultural relations and communication between the states in South Asia and highlighted the significance of a nation's peace, prosperity and culture. He also pointed out how that the bilateral or multilateral relations among nations depend on symmetries of power, language of trust building and competitive nature of actors. He highlighted how even in post-colonial nations the tendency to glorify European perspectives and approaches looms large till today in every arena of analysis. He further talked about the rising economic clout of the USA and its impact on the rest of the world.



Images 6, 7 and 8: Distinguished speakers Prof. Anindya Jyoti Majumdar, Prof. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury and Prof. Pratip Chattopadhyay delivering their lectures

The sessions concluded with reflections from the esteemed chair, which was in turn followed by another round of insightful discussion, questions and answers. With these, the seminar concluded with a formal vote of thanks. Prof. Sikha Sengupta asked about the meaning of “Decoding” in the context of

neighbourhood. Other questions from the audience and/or students included the reasons of change in India's relations with her neighbours, the reasons of insecurity or fear due to China, the stance of India in the context of US dollar imperialism, the significance of normative/value-laden approach of India in case of India's neighbourhood policy and the possibility and significance of bilateralism instead of multilateralism with regard to India's approach towards her neighbours.



Images 9, 10 and 11: Glimpses from the Q and A and discussion session after seminar



Image 12: Shri Kaushik Paul, Joint Convener of the seminar delivering the formal vote of thanks



Image 13: Joint Conveners with esteemed dignitaries of the seminar



Image 14: Joint Conveners Dr. Sreetapa Chakrabarty and Shri Kaushik Paul with student volunteers at the end of the seminar