Preface

Two interlinked and yet contrasting trends form the basis of the present volume: first, the information and communication technology (ICT) revolution and globalisation-induced trade expansions that have offered Asia unprecedented opportunities for growth, complemented by access to and effective management of knowledge and technology; second, as a counter trend, negative impacts of climate change that stand to significantly retard the growth opportunities in the region in the future. It is also widely recognised that as far as the coastal regions of Asia are concerned, climate change tends to threaten the coastal belt of the Bay of Bengal most, especially because the latter is characterised by high population density and pervasive poverty.

Thus, as far as Asia is concerned, the following issues are regarded as relevant for climate change: how and to what extent will climate change affect the growth of Asia, especially the coastal regions? Does climate change stand to take away the further growth opportunities of these countries? In the evolving scenario, what should be done, that is, within the context of perceived climate change risks, what preparedness, mitigation and adaptation plans should be adopted to ensure the sustainable growth of the region?

It has been well established that the Bay of Bengal region (southern India and Bangladesh) has enjoyed high to moderate growth over the last decade. The growth of India has been about 8–9 per cent and in Bangladesh it has been 5–6 per cent until the global financial crisis (GFC) hit in 2007. This region has also seen improved living standards during the final quarter of the twentieth century. What made this prosperity possible? It is now widely accepted that globalisation enhanced international trade and newly found trade allowed this region to prosper further.

While the region has been making strong progress in the early part of the twenty-first century, new challenges have also emerged. The most important among them is climate change and the devastating impact it brought to this region in recent years with the occurrence of frequent cyclones, floods and the rise in sea level over the last three decades. It has recently been noted by the media that the New Moore/South Talpatti Island on the Bay of Bengal has disappeared under a metre of water due to sea-level rise.
Like globalisation, the effect of climate change has no boundaries and, therefore, issues of climate change need to be debated globally, regionally and nationally. With this in mind, the editors organised an international workshop at Griffith University, Australia, on the subject of Climate Change and Growth in Asia in September 2009. Representing diverse institutions and experiences, this workshop brought together a panel of experts that included economists, social scientists, management specialists and political scientists from Bangladesh, New Zealand and Australia to brainstorm issues. Indeed, the task was challenging.

Griffith University’s Vice Chancellor, Professor Ian O’Conner, made the opening remarks at the workshop and the Pro Vice Chancellor (Business), Professor Michael Powell, chaired the opening session and welcomed the international participants to Griffith. Their support for the workshop was crucial for organising the gathering at Griffith immediately before the UNFCCC Summit in Copenhagen (COP15). We sincerely acknowledge their cooperation.

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