

INDIA-ASEAN RELATIONS

Dr. Kanchan Mishra

Associate Professor, Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, V.S.S.D. College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT: India's relationship with ASEAN has emerged as a key cornerstone of our foreign policy. The relationship has evolved from the 'Look East Policy' enunciated in early 1990s which led India to become a Sectoral Partner of ASEAN in 1992, a Dialogue Partner in 1996 and a Summit-level Partner in 2002. The up gradation of this partnership to Strategic Partnership during the celebration of 20th anniversary Commemorative Summit at New Delhi in 2012 was a natural corollary to the growth of India-ASEAN relationship during last two decades. The India-ASEAN Strategic Partnership acquired a new momentum with the announcement of "Act-East Policy" in the 12th Summit in 2014. It conveyed a clear intent on the part of India to up-scaling its engagement with the ASEAN Member States. During the cold war, India preferred to engage bilaterally with Southeast Asian countries than engage ASEAN directly. This tack shifted after 2000 as new security challenges arrived, particularly the need to secure the Indian Ocean. India's overtures with ASEAN and ASEAN states grew alongside defense cooperation, which are now being renewed and renegotiated under the "Indo-Pacific" rubric despite differences over how India and ASEAN states regard the concept. Economic liberalization changed India's calculus in the 1980s, which led to a series of overtures to economically tether India to the ASEAN. India-ASEAN trade grew dramatically over the last decade but fears abound over whether India's rejection of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement will reverse its economic footprint in Southeast Asia. Given both security and economic differences between India and the ASEAN, opportunities exist in joining to address shared transnational challenges like cybersecurity and counterterrorism.

KEYWORDS: India, ASEAN, relations, policy, economic, security, partnership

I. INTRODUCTION

Prime Minister attended the 15th ASEAN-India Summit on 14 November, 2017 at Manila, Philippines. The significant initiatives announced during the Summit were as follows:

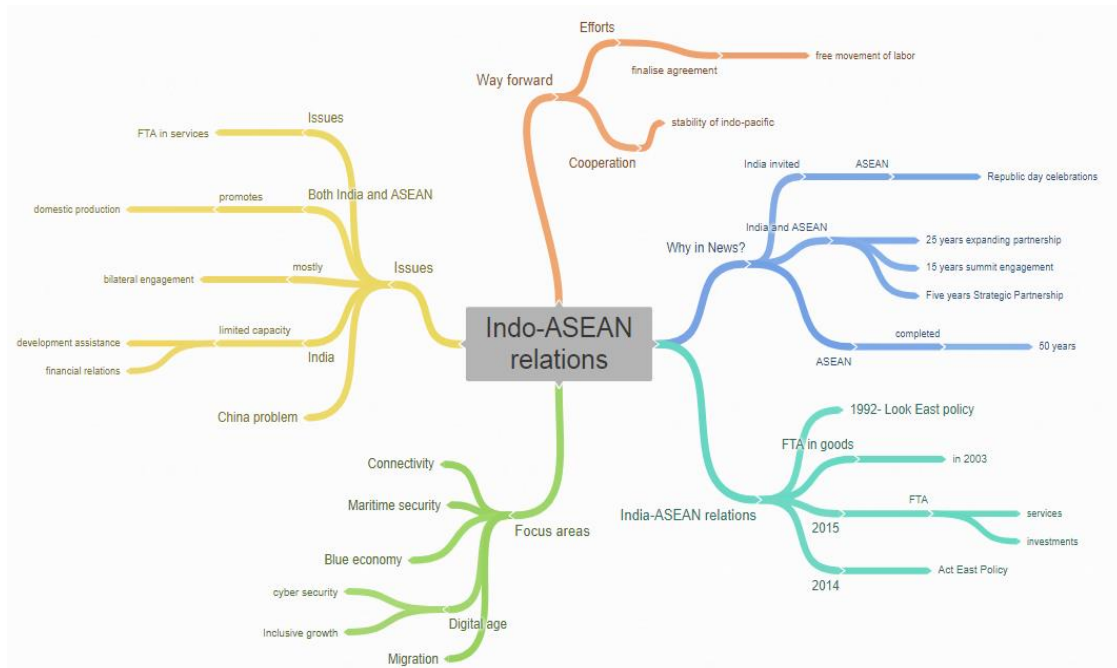


- Enhance our strategic partnership by designating security and economic cooperation in maritime domain as a focus area.
- Offer of joint exercises and fleet review by navies of ASEAN countries and India.
- Offer of coordinated patrols to address traditional and non-traditional maritime threats and undertake exercises to effectively coordinate our response to natural disasters.
- Offer of stepping up our economic cooperation in shared maritime domain by enhancing maritime connectivity and by working towards a Protocol on Blue Economy.
- Organize a Start Up Festival in India to encourage digital commerce among ASEAN-India youth[1]
- Organize an ASEAN-India Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on the theme, "Ancient Route, New Journey : Diaspora in the Dynamic ASEAN-India Partnership "
- Host a Business Summit and an ASEAN India Business Council event in January 2018.
- Host ASEAN India Connectivity Summit in India

- i. Host the first working group meeting on Civil Aviation at New Delhi.
- j. The ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting
- k. The ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting was attended by Minister of State for External Affairs H.E General (Retd.) V.K.Singh on 6 August, 2017 at Manila. India announced its plan to host the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit on 25th January, 2018.



- l. Commemorative Summit 2017
- m. India and ASEAN have celebrated 25 years of their Dialogue Partnership, 15 years of Summit Level interaction and 5 years of Strategic Partnership in 2017, in India and ASEAN Member States, leading to a ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in India to be held on 25th January, 2018 at New Delhi on the theme "Shared Values, Common Destiny". ASEAN Heads of States/Governments would be Guests of Honour on the Republic Day Parade on 26th January, 2018. The silver jubilee of our dialogue partnership was launched by organizing the 2nd ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilizational Conference at Jakarta on 19th January, 2017. Various other activities are being conducted during the year both in India and the ASEAN Member States on this occasion. The activities had a noticeable focus on the youth of India and ASEAN countries in view of the demographic dividend of youthful populations being witnessed on both sides.
- n. Activities conducted in ASEAN Member States in 2017 included ASEAN-India Biztech Conference at Kuala Lumpur, ASEAN-India Trade Expo at Bangkok, ASEAN-India ICT Expo at Jakarta, alongwith a number of activities undertaken by our Missions in ASEAN countries to commemorate the event, such as ASEAN-India mountaineering expedition, ASEAN-India Family Fun Run at Jakarta, ASEAN-India Prabasi Bhartiya Diwas at Singapore, cultural programs, etc. These activities have brought focus to ASEAN Community in ASEAN member states in line with the ASEAN Vision 2025 and its 3 Community Blueprints.
- o. Commemorative activities completed in India include, among others, the ASEAN participation in Telecom Expo in New Delhi and 6th Global Economic Summit in Mumbai, Act East Dialogue, North-East Business Summit, ASEAN-India Youth Summit, ASEAN-India MSME Summit, ASEAN-India Connectivity Summit, ASEAN-India Music Festival, 4th ASEAN-India Agriculture & Forestry Ministers Meeting etc.
- p. Forthcoming commemorative activities include ASEAN-India Business Summit in New Delhi, ASEAN-India Film Festival, , ASEAN-India Youth Awards, ASEAN-India Film Festival, ASEAN-India Stamps issue etc. In particular, forthcoming ASEAN-India Start-up Festival and Hackathon would strengthen regional digital connectivity and support the growth of e-commerce.[2]



II. DISCUSSION

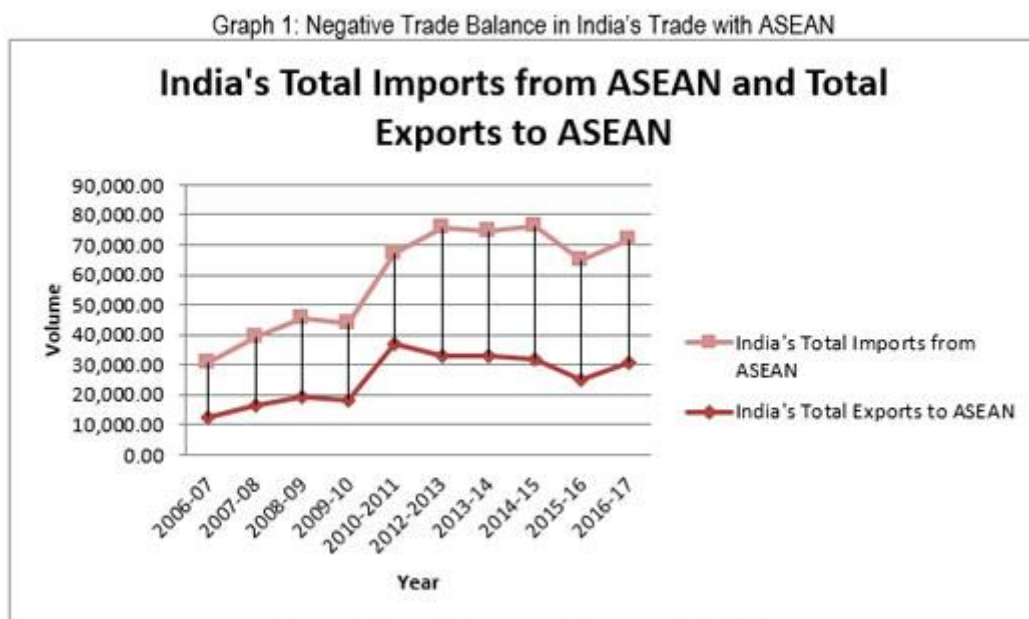
Strengthening Connectivity, including land and sea connectivity, with ASEAN is one of the strategic objectives of India and ASEAN Member States. Regular exchanges take place between ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) and India on Connectivity. Prime Minister announced a line of credit of \$ 1 Billion for facilitating projects in connectivity at the 13th ASEAN-India Summit in 2015.



The signal effort under the ASEAN-India Connectivity initiative is the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, which when completed, will provide seamless connectivity between Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand. The length of the Trilateral Highway is approximately 1360 kms. India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Task Force on Connectivity and Infrastructure has been set-up to undertake time bound work on completion of the Trilateral Highway and also undertake negotiations on the Motor Vehicles Agreement to put soft infrastructure in place simultaneously with the completion of the Trilateral Highway and other connectivity linkages.

India and ASEAN are holding consultations on extension of Trilateral Highway to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. India and ASEAN are also working to strengthen the Maritime Connectivity.

Source: Department of Commerce, Export Import Data Bank, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India⁸



Source: Ministry of Commerce, Government of India⁹

Functional cooperation in the ASEAN-India strategic partnership is now across a variety of sectors spanning 30 dialogue mechanisms, including Ministerial meetings, Senior Officials Meetings and Working Group Meetings in foreign affairs, trade, tourism, agriculture, new and renewable energy, environment and telecom. All these feed into an Annual Summit.

As a reflection of the interest of ASEAN and India to intensify their engagement, the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity, which sets out the roadmap for long-term ASEAN-India engagement, was signed at the 3rd ASEAN-India Summit in 2004 in Vientiane. The Plan of Action (POA) for the period 2004-2010 was also developed to implement the Partnership. The 3rd POA (2016), which is in currency now, was adopted by the ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting held in August 2015. ASEAN and India have also finalised a list of priority areas for the period of 2016-2018; 70 out of 130 activities identified in the 3rd Plan of Action have been implemented.[3]

III. RESULTS

India-ASEAN functional cooperation is financed under four funds, as follows:

- i. ASEAN-India Fund: India announced a contribution of USD 50 million to ASEAN-India Fund at the 14th ASEAN-India Summit in 2016, to support implementation of the ASEAN-India Plan of Action 2016-20.

- ii. ASEAN-India Science & Technology Fund: Set up in 2007 with an initial corpus of US\$ 1 million, this fund was increased to US \$ 5 Million in the 13th Summit in 2015.
- iii. ASEAN-India Green Fund: This fund was also established in 2007 with US\$ 5 million for funding pilot projects to promote adaptation and mitigation technologies in the field of climate change.
- iv. ASEAN-India Project Development Fund: A Rs. 500 crore Special Purpose Vehicle, later designated as Project Development Fund, was announced at the 12th India-ASEAN Summit at Nay Pee Taw, Myanmar in 2014 to develop manufacturing hubs in CLMV countries.
- v. PM announced a line of credit of US \$ 1 Billion for projects in connectivity at the 13th ASEAN-India Summit in 2015.



The ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement signed in August 2009 has paved the way for the creation of one of the largest FTAs. The ASEAN-India Trade-in-Services and Investment Agreements have also come into force in July 2015. With the signing of these Agreements, the ASEAN-India FTA is now complete. ASEAN-India trade for 2016-17 rebounded USD 70 billion after a period of stagnant growth due to global slowdown of trade.

Cumulative FDI inflows into India from ASEAN between April 2000 to December 2016 are US\$ 54.97 billion, The major sources of FDI from ASEAN countries are Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. Cumulative FDI outflows from India to ASEAN countries, from April 2007 to March 2015 was about US\$ 38.67 billion with Singapore being at the top of the list, followed by Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar.

The AIBC was set up in March 2003 in Kuala Lumpur with the 1st meeting held in Malaysia in 2005. A Secretariat for AIBC was established in Malaysia in 2015 at the 4th meeting of AIBC which was held in Kuala Lumpur in August 2015. The AIBC consists of eminent Leaders of Business in ASEAN Member States and India. They meet on the sidelines of ASEAN- India Economic Ministers' Meeting. [4]

ASEAN-India cooperation in the field of Agriculture is diverse and covers a variety of sectors such as food security, exchange of information and technology, research and development projects, agriculture and forestry-related industries, and human resources development. It has scaled new heights in few years of its operation with the establishment of a Working Group in 2011. An annual ASEAN-India Agriculture Ministers Meeting (AIMMAF) has been formalized and has met regularly since 2011. A Medium Term Plan of Action for cooperation for the period 2016-20 was reviewed and endorsed in 4th AIMMAF held on 12 January, 2018. The 4th AIMMAF exchanged views on the priorities of cooperation in the agriculture and forestry sector between ASEAN and India, focusing on the following points:

- Networking and cooperation between government authorities concerned, together with agriculture and food experts, laboratories, and agriculture and food-related academic institutions, farmers, farmers organizations communities and traders of ASEAN and India.
- Investment, capacity building, sharing of information, experience and best practices, research and development, agricultural technology, management and innovation.
- Cooperation in implementing the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework, the Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region (SPA-FS) 2015
- Enhanced resilience of natural systems and improve the adaptive capacities of human communities to cope with environmental hazards, and
- Climate change and its adverse impacts on socio-economic development, health and the environment in ASEAN and India.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

In the field of Space cooperation, ISRO is implementing a project proposal for (i) establishment of Tracking and Data Reception Station and Data Processing Facility at Ho Chi Minh City; (ii) up-gradation of Tracking Telemetry and Command (TTC) Centre at Biak, Indonesia; and (iii) Training of ASEAN Personnel in Space Science and Technology at the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific (CSSTEAP).



Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) convened the 1st ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting on New & Renewable Energy in New Delhi on November 7, 2012 which discussed (a) policy and regulatory framework across countries for facilitating, promoting and mainstreaming renewable energy; (b) facilitating finance for renewable energy applications; and (c) cooperation in research and development, technology transfer and resource assessment, including developing institutional linkages. The meeting adopted a 'New Delhi Declaration on ASEAN-India Cooperation in Renewable Energy'. Both sides agreed to meet alongside appropriate ASEAN Energy Ministers Meeting and develop further development programmes. The Ministerial meeting was preceded by a Workshop on New and Renewable Energy jointly organized by Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, the Department of Science & Technology and Global Innovation and Technology Alliance.

India has been cooperating in SME sector with ASEAN Member States through a Joint Working Group. Prime Minister announced at the 13th India-ASEAN Summit in 2015 that

- India has created a Project Development Fund to develop manufacturing hubs in CLMV countries.
- India also intends to set up an ASEAN-India Innovation Platform to facilitate commercialization of low cost technologies, technology transfer and collaborative R&D projects. The platform has since been discussed at the meeting of ASEAN-India Working Group on Science & Technology in New Delhi in August, 2016.
- ASEAN-India organized a Biznet Conference in Kuala Lumpur in 2017 as one of the commemorative activities in SME sector.

Regular interaction takes place between the SME sectors of India and ASEAN Member States as well as between the authorities involved in promotion of SME sectors.



The 1st Meeting of the ASEAN-India Environment Ministers held on September 6-7, 2012 was preceded by a workshop on 'Capacity Building on the Nagoya Protocol and Access and Benefit Sharing and Traditional Knowledge and Digital Library for ASEAN, East Asian and South Asian countries' from 4-5 September, 2012. The Ministers adopted the New Delhi ASEAN India Ministerial Statement on Biodiversity.[5]

ASEAN and India have collaborated on Green Fundprojectson "Climate Change Projections and Assessment of Impacts; Modelling and Capacity Building Programme-India-ASEAN region" and on'Enhancing Climate Change Adaptationin SoutheastAsia(Phase1)'.IISc, Bangalore has worked with its partners in ASEAN Member States on these projects. Talks to initiate a phase 2 of the project are on.



India-ASEAN cooperation in Tourism Sector is conducted through ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers Meeting. The 3rdATM+India meeting in 2012 signed a MoU on Strengthening Tourism Cooperation thereby making India the first Dialogue Partner to sign an MoU on Strengthening Tourism Cooperation with ASEAN. It is envisaged to serve as the key instrument for more action-oriented cooperation, encouraging both parties to cooperate in facilitating travel and tourist visits and further strengthen the close tourism partnership. The functional cooperation in tourism sector has included, among others:

- i. ASEAN Promotional Chapter for Tourism (APCT): It was established and started operations in Mumbai in 2011.
- ii. ASEAN-India Car Rally: It was held from 26 November – 21 December 2012. It marked another meaningful step forward in ASEAN-India tourism cooperation and at the same time reflected the existence of land route connectivity that would facilitate tourism exchange between ASEAN and India.
- iii. Visa on arrival facility: It now stands extended to all south-east Asian countries.
- iv. Buddhist Circuit: It has been established to support ASEAN tourists to visit the Buddhist sites in India.
- v. ASEAN were invited as “Guest of Honour” at the International Buddhist Conclave held in Varanasi, India in October, 2016.
- vi. Regular meetings of ATM+India in Working Group and Ministerial formats.

V. CONCLUSION

At the Commemorative Summit held in 2012, the Heads of the Government recommended establishment of ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) to undertake policy research, advocacy and networking activities with organizations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN, with the aim to promote the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership. The AIC was established in 2013 and has since been serving as a resource centre for ASEAN Member States and India, for strengthening ASEAN-India strategic partnership and promoting India-ASEAN dialogue and cooperation in the areas of mutual interests. AIC has provided some very valuable inputs to policy makers in India and ASEAN on implementation of ASEAN-India connectivity by organising seminars, roundtables etc. AIC also organizes workshops, seminars and conferences on various cross-cutting issues relevant to ASEAN-India strategic partnership. It undertakes regular networking activities with relevant public/private agencies, organizations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN and EAS countries, with the aim of providing up-to-date information, data resources and sustained interaction, for promoting ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership. A formal MOU for establishment AIC at New Delhi has been negotiated and is undergoing ratification process in India and ASEAN countries.



People-to-people connectivity is high on India-ASEAN agenda. Several projects on people-to-people connectivity are held annually to increase interaction between India and ASEAN Community. Projects which have been carried out on this front are as follows:

- i. ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks: ASEAN-India Network of Think-Tanks Roundtable, established since 2009-10, held its 5th Meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia on 6-7 January, 2018. The Meeting was composed of 5 sessions

on following topics, apart from inaugural session addressed by External Affairs Minister of India, Foreign Minister of Indonesia and Secretary General of ASEAN:



- Session I: Maritime security and cooperation
- Session II: Services, trade and investment
- Session III: Cultural heritage
- Session IV: Educational cooperation
- Session V: Way Forward: AEC 2025 and India

The meeting made far reaching recommendations for future follow-up.

- i. Exchange of Parliamentarians: Indian parliamentary delegations have been regularly attending the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) since 2010.
- ii. ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme: Forty media personnel visit AMS and India annually under the ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme.
- iii. Students Exchange Programme: A Student Exchange Programme has also been institutionalized under which 250 ASEAN Students visit India annually from ASEAN Member States.
- iv. ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Lecture Series: AIEPLS is an annual event where Eminent Persons from ASEAN Countries and deliver lectures on topics of relevance and similarly Eminent Persons from India visit the ASEAN Member States to deliver the lectures.
- v. Special Course for ASEAN Diplomats: Annually 30 ASEAN Diplomats including 3 Officials from the ASEAN Secretariat are provided special training at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in New Delhi.

Delhi Dialogue is a premier annual track 1.5 event since 2009 to discuss politico-security and economic issues between ASEAN and India. Partners from ASEAN Member States include the Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore (ISAS); the SAEA Group Research, Singapore; the Institute of Strategic and International studies, Malaysia (ISIS); ASEAN-India Center, New Delhi; the Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Jakarta; and the Institute of Security and International Studies, Thailand. Nine editions of Delhi dialogue have been held so far. The ninth edition of Delhi Dialogue was hosted on 4-5 July 2017 in New Delhi. The theme for Delhi Dialogue IX was "Charting the course for India-ASEAN relations for the Next 25 Years", and included a Ministerial Session, a Business Session and an Academic Session.[6]

REFERENCES

- 1) C. Joshua Thomas. 2017. "Synergising North East with Act East policy", in Pankaj Jha and Rahul Mishra (Eds.), Integrating North East in India's Act East Policy, New Delhi: ICWA, pp. 117.

- 2) C. Joshua Thomas. 2017. “Synergising North East with Act East policy”, in Pankaj Jha and Rahul Mishra (Eds.), Integrating North East in India’s Act East Policy, New Delhi: ICWA, pp. 116-123.
- 3) Government of India. 2017. Lok Sabha Question No.1743 Act East Policy (July 26, 2017), New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs.
- 4) Government of Manipur. 2017. Manipur Sangai Festival-2017, Directorate of Tourism. Nani Bath. 2017.
- 5) “Look East to Act East: Arunachal Pradesh as a connect between India and Southeast Asia”, in Pankaj Jha and Rahul Mishra (Eds.), Integrating North East in India’s Act East Policy, New Delhi: ICWA, p. 101.
- 6) Teiborlang T. Kharsyntiew. 2017. “The potential of pilgrimage & Buddhist tourism to India’s Act East Policy: A study of Sikkim tourism”, in Pankaj Jha and Rahul Mishra (Eds.), Integrating North East in India’s Act East Policy, New Delhi: ICWA, pp. 24-43.