

ASEAN-India Centre

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 7 No. 1, January-June 2021

Policy Dialogue

Connectivity Cooperation for a Free, Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific



The Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at RIS jointly with the Embassy of Japan (EoJ) in New Delhi and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India organised a Seminar on Connectivity Cooperation for a Free, Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific in virtual mode on 18 March 2021. Welcome Remarks at the seminar was made by Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS and the Opening Remarks was given by Dr

Mohan Kumar, Chairman, RIS. Special Remarks was given by H.E. Mr Satoshi Suzuki, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Embassy of Japan, New Delhi. Smt. Riva Ganguly Das, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) delivered the Inaugural Address. There were two technical sessions: Session I: Good Practices of Connectivity Projects, and Session II: Rulesbased Connectivity Cooperation. The Session I was chaired by Mr Rajat Nag, Distinguished Fellow, NCAER and Former

MDG, Asian Development Bank (ADB), New Delhi. Speakers of this session were Mr Takeo Konishi, Country Director, Asian Development Bank (ADB), New Delhi; Mr Jagjeet Singh, Vice President, International Solar Alliance (ISA), Gurugram; and Dr Yose Rizal Damuri, Research Director, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jakarta. The second session was chaired by Dr Prabir De, Professor, RIS, New Delhi. The panelists of this session were Prof. Fukunari Kimura, Kyo University, Tokyo, and

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Chief Economist, Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Jakarta; and Dr Jayant Menon, Visiting

Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore. Seminar explored

the connectivity opportunities that persist in the region and identified future cooperation to mitigate the challenges. ■

International Economic Forum on Asia - Digitalisation and Development: Reflections from Asia

The Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) in collaboration with OECD Development Centre and Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Jakarta organised a webinar on the theme 'Digitalisation and Development: Reflections from Asia' on 5 March 2021. In the Inaugural Session, Mr. Seshadri Chari, Member, Governing Council, RIS, New Delhi delivered the Welcome Remarks and Dr. Mario Pezzini, Director of OECD Development Centre, Paris made the Opening Remarks. The Special Remarks was given by Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, India. The webinar also saw the India launch of OECD Economic Outlook for Southeast Asia, China and India 2021: Reallocating Resources for Digitalization. Dr. Kensuke Tanaka, Head of Asia Desk, OECD Development Centre, Paris presented the Key Findings of this report.

The event has covered two technical sessions. The first session was on Digitalization and Sectoral Focus and was chaired by Prof. Nagesh Kumar, Director, UNESCAP, SSWA Office, New Delhi. Distinguished



panelists of the session were Prof. Rajat Kathuria, Director and Chief Executive, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi; Dr. Miguel Exposito Verdejo, Deputy Head of Unit, Science, Technology, Innovation and Digitalisation & DG International Partnerships, European Commission; Prof. Keshab Das, Professor, Gujarat Institute of Development Research, Ahmedabad; Ms. Anita Gurumurthy, Executive; Director, IT for Change, Bengaluru; and Prof. Saikat Sinha Roy, Professor of Economics, Jadavpur University, Kolkata.

Dr. Bhaskar Balakrishnan, Former Ambassador of India and Science Diplomacy Fellow, RIS chaired the second technical

session, which was on Digital Health. The speakers of the session were Dr. Antonio Villanueva, Senior Advisor for Healthcare Policy, ERIA, Jakarta; Mr. Pranjal Sharma, Economic Analyst and Writer, New Delhi; Prof. Vajira H. W. Dissanayake, President, Health Informatics; Society of Sri Lanka (HISSL), Colombo; Mr. Mongal Singh Gurung, Sr. Research Officer, Ministry of Health, Bhutan; and Mr. Muhammad Abdul Hannan Khan, Team Leader, Health Information Systems Program (HISP), Dhaka. Summary and Vote of Thanks were extended by Dr. Priyadarshi Dash, Associate Professor, RIS, India and Dr. Mario Pezzini, Director of OECD Development Centre, Paris. ■

Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue 2021



The AESAN-India Centre (AIC) at RIS jointly with SANEM, Bangladesh; Centre for Research on Bhutanese Society (CRBS), Bhutan; South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal; Pathfinder Foundation, Sri Lanka; and Chulalongkorn University, Thailand organised the Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue 2021-“Post-COVID-19 Challenges in the Bay of Bengal Region” on 8-11

February 2021. The programme had the following sessions: Digital Connectivity and E-Commerce; Trade and Regional Value Chains; Paper presentation sessions on trade, regional cooperation, health and education, employment challenges and cross-cutting issues; Regional connectivity in Bay of Bengal Region; Institutional Challenges for post-COVID-19 Recovery; Deepening Health Sector Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal Region; Tackling post-COVID Challenges in the Bay of Bengal Region; and Strengthening People to People contacts. The dialogue aimed at promoting greater integration, cooperation and shared economic prosperity within the Bay of Bengal region with the help of six organized discussions between eminent panelists and 15 presentations by scholars, practitioners and students from the region. Professor Rehman Sobhan was the keynote speaker of the dialogue. H.E. Dr A. K. Abdul Momen, MP, Hon’ble Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, was the Chief Guest and H.E. Mr Tenzin Lekphell, Secretary General of BIMSTEC, was the Special Guest of the inaugural session. ■

Tapping Solar Energy: Sharing India's Experience and Forging Partnership with Asia, Pacific Island Countries

The Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi in partnership with the Global Development Centre (GDC) organised a webinar on solar energy titled ‘Tapping Solar Energy: Sharing India’s Experience and Forging Partnership with Asia, Pacific Island Countries’ on 17 June 2021.

Welcome Remarks was delivered by Ambassador Amar Sinha, Chairman, Advisory Committee - GDC and Distinguished Fellow, RIS. Dr. Ajay Mathur, Director General, International Solar Alliance (ISA), India made the Keynote Address. The panel discussion was chaired by Mr. Chandra Kishore Mishra,

Former Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India. The eminent speakers of the session were Mr. Midhun Ajaykumar, Director of Energy, Department of Climate Change and National Resilience (DCCNR), Government Office, Nauru; Dr. Tevita Tukunga,

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Director for Energy Department, Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and

Communications (MEIDECC), Tonga; Mr. Kireua Bureimoa Kaiea, Head - Energy Department, Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable

Energy (MISE), Kiribati; and Dr. Christopher Vehe, Permanent Secretary of the Solomon Islands - Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification (MMERE), Solomon Islands. Vote of Thanks was extended by Ms. Sadhana Relia, GDC Fellow, RIS. The session had an enriching discussion on Indian practice to untapped potential of solar energy. The session also discussed the prospects of solar energy cooperation with other Asian and Pacific Island countries. ■

Trips Waiver: Issues and Challenges for South East Asia

The Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi in collaboration with the South Centre, Geneva organised a series of webinars on the subject TRIPS Waiver. Under this series, South East Asian perspective was discussed on 26 June 2021 and the theme was TRPIS Waiver: Issues and Challenges for South East Asia. Welcome and Opening Remarks were made by Dr Krishna Ravi Srinivas, Senior Fellow and Consultant, RIS and Professor Carlos Correa, Executive Director, South Centre, Geneva. The session was chaired by Professor Philips J. Vermonte, Executive Director, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Jakarta. The distinguished panelists of the session were Mr. Chalernsak Kittitrakul (Jockey),



Executive Director of AIDS Access Foundation, Thailand; Dr. Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economics), Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore; Dr. Tran Kien, School of Law, Vietnam National University, Hanoi and School of Law, University of Glasgow; and Mr Tony Salvador, Third World Network, the Philippines. Mr Nirmalya Syam, Senior Programme Officer,

Health, Intellectual Property and Biodiversity Programme at South Centre, Geneva was the discussant of the session. Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks was delivered by Dr Viviana Muñoz Tellez, Coordinator, Health, Intellectual Property and Biodiversity Programme, South Center, Geneva. The webinar discuss the topical issue of TRIPS waiver in perspective of Southeast Asian countries and try to highlight challenges faced by these countries. ■

India and International Development

The ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at RIS organised a week-long online public lectures on India and International Development during 14 - 19 June 2021. A total 12 lectures were delivered by Dr Prabir De, Coordinator, AIC at RIS on various aspects of foreign policy, trade and regional integration. The lecture sessions had covered following subjects- Indian Foreign Policy: Achievements, Challenges and Outlook; India's Foreign

Trade Policy: Contemporary Strategic Dynamics of India's Trade; Trade and Integration: Theory and Applications; Regional Integration and Trade: Development, Priorities and Way Forward; Trade and Connectivity: Global and Regional Programmes and India; Trade Facilitation and India: Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities; ASEAN-India Economic Integration: Achievements, Challenges and

Opportunities; Bay of Bengal Integration: Current Status and Prospects; South Asian Integration: SAARC and BBIN; India-Japan Partnership for Development; Indo-Pacific Cooperation: Challenges, Opportunities and Way Ahead; Post Covid-19 Challenges and Shared Responsibilities. The presentations enlightened the subjects covered in this lecture series. Over 250 participants attended this lecture series. ■



ONLINE PUBLIC LECTURES ON INDIA AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

14-19 June 2021 (in virtual mode)

Day	Time (IST)	Lecture ID	Lecture Particulars
Day 1 14 June 2021	10.00 am - 11.30 am	L.1	India's Foreign Policy
	2.00 pm - 3.30 pm	L.2	India's Foreign Trade Policy
Day 2 15 June 2021	10.00 am - 11.30 am	L.3	Trade and integration
	2.00 pm - 3.30 pm	L.4	Regional integration
Day 3 16 June 2021	10.00 am - 11.30 am	L.5	Trade and connectivity
	2.00 pm - 3.30 pm	L.6	Trade facilitation priorities and Sustainability
Day 4 17 June 2021	10.00 am - 11.30 am	L.7	India-ASEAN integration
	2.00 pm - 3.30 pm	L.8	Bay of Bengal integration
Day 5 18 June 2021	10.00 am - 11.30 am	L.9	South Asian integration
	2.00 pm - 3.30 pm	L.10	Glaring bilateral: India-Japan cooperation
Day 6 19 June 2021	10.00 am - 11.30 am	L.11	Indo-Pacific cooperation
	2.00 pm - 3.30 pm	L.12	Post Covid-19 challenges and way forward
	3.45 pm - 4.00 pm	L.13	Closing remarks

ASEAN-India Hackathon

The ASEAN-India Hackathon was organised by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on 1-4 February 2021. The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) implemented this important initiative with the support of nodal agencies from all ten ASEAN countries, which included their Education Ministries and prominent universities. The Hackathon emanates from Prime Ministers' announcement at the 16th ASEAN-India Summit in Bangkok in November 2019. The Hackathon was inaugurated by Minister of Education Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' along with other dignitaries from ASEAN and India on 1 February. For 36 hrs, 330 students and 110 mentors from the 10 ASEAN countries and India

worked together online and competed as 55 teams to come up with innovative solutions to 11 problem statements. The Problem Statements covered two major themes - Blue Economy and Education. The multinational character of each team was meant to forge collaborative spirit, exposing the participants to get acquainted with diverse cultures, values and work ethics. External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Minister of Education Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' attended the Prize Distribution Ceremony on 4 February, 2021 and commended the hard work, team spirit, and creativity of the participants. Speaking at the Ceremony, External Affairs Minister stated that ASEAN-India Youth Cooperation is a key component of ASEAN-India

Strategic Partnership and the Hackathon complements India's other youth centric initiatives for ASEAN. He underlined the importance of 'Blue Economy' and 'Education' in ASEAN-India engagement and commended their inclusion as the two themes of the Hackathon. Reflecting the shared desire to promote ASEAN-India youth cooperation, the Prize Distribution Ceremony from ASEAN side was attended by Senior Ministers from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. Winners in all 11 problem statements were announced on the occasion. ■

(Excerpted from www.mea.gov.in on 05 February 2021)

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Bilateral Relations Review Meeting between India and Brunei Darussalam

Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs Dr. S. Jaishankar and H.E. Dato Seri Setia Haji Erywan bin Pehin Datu Pekerma Jaya Haji Mohd. Yusof, Hon'ble Minister of Foreign Affairs-II of Brunei Darussalam held a meeting on virtual platform on 18 February 2021 to take stock of the bilateral relations. The meeting was a follow up to the 7th Round of Foreign Office Consultations held between the two countries, in New Delhi in June 2019. The two Ministers discussed the whole gamut of bilateral relations as well

as regional and global issues of mutual interest. The two Ministers expressed satisfaction at the current state of bilateral relationship and agreed to boost bilateral cooperation and trade & investments in areas identified by the two sides. These include agriculture, food processing, ICT, ITeS, e-governance, S&T, education, automotives, energy, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, construction, textiles and garments, jewellery, leather goods and tourism. Bilateral cooperation on defence also came up for discussion. The two

Ministers also agreed to push for early conclusion of the various MoUs and Agreements under discussion for strengthening bilateral mechanisms and to take measures to boost bilateral trade. Discussions were also held on utilization of India's offer of assistance to Brunei's capacity building programme and India's continued commitment to Brunei in this regard. ■

(Excerpted from www.mea.gov.in on 18 February 2021)

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23rd ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting

Secretary (East) Amb. Riva Ganguly Das co-chaired the 23rd ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting on 28 April 2021 with Permanent Secretary of Thailand H.E. Mr. Thani Thongphakdi. The virtual meeting saw the participation of Senior Officials from all ten ASEAN Member States and India. The meeting reviewed the status of ongoing ASEAN-India cooperation under the whole spectrum of political-security, economic, socio-cultural and developmental cooperation. The meeting also deliberated on the steps to implement the ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2021-2025) and discussed ways to further strengthen the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership. Ways and means to strengthen cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic along with important

regional and international issues of mutual concern were also covered during the meeting.

Secretary (East), in her remarks, welcomed the strong and supportive role played by Thailand as the Country Coordinator of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations for the last three years and looked forward to working with Singapore as the next Country Coordinator. Underlining the centrality of ASEAN in India's Indo-Pacific vision, she mentioned that India wants to see a strong, unified and prosperous ASEAN playing a central role in the Indo-Pacific region contributing to Security and Growth for All. Secretary (East) also emphasised upon exploring the synergies between India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP)

to strengthen the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership. The ASEAN Senior Officials welcomed India's proposal to celebrate the year 2022 as ASEAN-India Friendship Year as it marks the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-India sectoral partnership, 25th anniversary of dialogue partnership, 20th anniversary of Summit-level partnership and 10 years of Strategic Partnership. They also appreciated India's support to ASEAN and ASEAN-led architecture in the region. The strong cultural, economic and political ties between India and ASEAN are the stepping stone to achieve our vision of a more connected India and ASEAN. ■

(Excerpted from www.mea.gov.in on 28 April 2021)

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6th India-Indonesia Foreign Office Consultations

The sixth round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between India and Indonesia was held on 25th June, 2021 through virtual mode.

Ms. Riva Ganguly Das, Secretary (East) led the Indian delegation while the Indonesian side was led by Mr Abdul Kadir Jailani, Director General for Asia Pacific and Africa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the consultations, both sides reviewed the entire gamut of

bilateral relationship, under the framework of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Cooperation in diverse areas - including political, defence, security and strategic, economic and cultural, were discussed. They also exchanged views on ways to further promote people-to-people contact, and strengthen their Shared Vision of Maritime Co-operation in the Indo-Pacific. The two sides exchanged views on regional

and international issues of mutual interest. This included strengthening cooperation between ASEAN and India, the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), multilateral cooperation, International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). ■

(Excerpted from www.mea.gov.in on 25 June 2021)

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Vietnam and ASEAN to Help India Cope with Devastating COVID-19 Surge

The COVID-19 pandemic is raging in India, crippling its health system. Hundreds of thousands of new cases are reported each day with thousands of deaths. As a result, apocalyptic scenes show ordinary Indians turning to makeshift funeral pyres to burn the bodies of the dead. In light of this situation, the Government of Vietnam, with the help of ASEAN, announced that it is prepared to help India. Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyễn Quốc Dũng made the pledge to Indian Ambassador Pranay Kumar Verma during a meeting in the Vietnamese capital on 27 April 2021. The Indian diplomat thanked Vietnamese authorities

and people for their support, noting that his government would ensure “favourable conditions” for Vietnamese who study and work in India. For his part, Vietnam’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Lê Thế Thu Hèng noted that “India is in dire need of oxygen supplies, medical equipment, drugs and other equipment” and must “speed up the vaccination campaign.” With this in mind, Vietnam plans to “share and support the Indian people in this difficult time” in order to stabilise the pandemic and bring it under control. India's Deputy Foreign Minister Riva Ganguly Das thanked ASEAN for its show of solidarity and expressed renewed support

for cooperation and strategic partnership between the two parties, in particular sharing information about the pandemic experience, diagnostics, treatment, as well as vaccine production and distribution.

Despite its health emergency, India pledged again a million dollars for the ASEAN fund to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, ASEAN members states pledged to work closely with India to promote a global and sustainable recovery for the region and Asia as a whole. ■

(Excerpted from www.asianews.it on 30 April 2021, authored by Thanh Thao)

© AsiaNews.it

Indian Ambassador Requests Lifting of Meat Products Ban

Indian Ambassador Dr Devyani Khobragade has asked that the temporary ban on import of buffalo meat and other meat products from India be withdrawn immediately. In virtual meeting with Minister of Economy Aun Pornmoniroth on June 3, Dr Khobragade said the Pasteur Institute of Cambodia, which has collected and tested the samples, has already certified that all the samples are Covid-19 negative and fit for human consumption. It was also conveyed that in the absence of any scientific basis to prove

that Covid-19 virus spreads through food and packaging material, the temporary ban is becoming a non-tariff barrier. Dr Khobragade said the ban was also harmful for business sentiments, especially when both sides are trying to negotiate a Bilateral Free Trade Agreement. Mr. Aun Pornmoniroth assured her that this is only a temporary measure and would be reviewed expeditiously. ■

(Excerpted from www.khmertimeskh.com on 9 June 2021)

© Khmer Times

2nd India - Vietnam Maritime Security Dialogue

India and Vietnam held their second maritime security dialogue in a virtual format on 6 April 2021. The consultations involved exchanges on developments in the domain of maritime security, regional cooperation activities and opportunities for cooperation between the two countries. ■

(Excerpted from www.mea.gov.in on 6 April 2021)

© Ministry of External Affairs, India

India Funding to Spur New Projects

India's Ambassador to Cambodia Devyani Khobragade met Minister of Public Works and Transport Sun Chanthol to discuss the two countries' deep and growing relationship and identify sectors primed to expand with the use of a \$1 billion line of credit offered by India to all ASEAN countries. According to the Indian embassy in Phnom Penh, Khobragade discussed aid for projects that would further link India and Cambodia with the potential construction of roads through Vietnam and Thailand.

Ambassador suggested building eastward expansions of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway into Cambodia via Laos and building more roads to connect Vietnam and Thailand. Mr. Sun Chanthol was receptive

to the idea, saying a physical link to India would enhance trade and increase people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. He added that he would assign ministerial officials to research potential infrastructure projects to make this idea a reality utilising the \$1 billion line of credit.

Amb. Khobragade discussed improving infrastructure, human resources development and social affairs in Cambodia by using a \$100 million fund provided by India through the ASEAN-India Fund framework. At the meeting, Mr. Sun Chanthol extolled the benefits of the Techo Sen Institute of Public Health and Transportation which is geared towards training Cambodian engineers as the country works to develop the economy and society. The technical institute,

which trains high school graduates in sectors such as transport and logistics, opened on January 22.

Both the leaders reflected on India and Cambodia's relationship over the years, with the ambassador applauding Cambodia's efforts to mitigate the effects of Covid-19. Mr. Sun Chanthol said future projects under the scheme would include refurbishing 11 healthcare centres in Kandal province. The minister added he directed his officials to research the potential of creating engineering training courses and leadership training courses under India's Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme. ■

(Excerpted from www.khmertimeskh.com on 11 June 2021, authored by Brian Badzmirowski)

© Khmer Times

Rajnath Singh Calls for Free and Open Indo Pacific at Key ASEAN Meet

India calls for a free, open and inclusive order in the Indo Pacific, said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on 16 June 2021, adding that India supports freedom of navigation, overflight, and unimpeded commerce in the international waterways including the South China Sea. During the virtual address at the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), Singh asserted that maritime security challenges are another

area of concern to India and it hopes that the Code of Conduct negotiations regarding the South China Sea will lead to outcomes that are in keeping with international law.

Speaking at the virtual meeting, Singh said India shares a deep connect with ASEAN and has continued its active engagement in many areas contributing to regional peace and stability, particularly through ASEAN led mechanisms, such

as East Asia Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum and ADMM-Plus. Terming terrorism and radicalisation as the "gravest threats" to peace and security, the Minister said that India remains committed to combating financing terrorism as a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). ■

(Excerpted from www.hindustantimes.com on 16 June 2021)

© Hindustan Times

Patience Please: India's ASEAN Journey Has Much Further to Go

Since 2010, when the ASEAN-India FTA for goods was activated, trade between the two partners has almost doubled to reach over \$87 billion in 2019-20. Bilateral trade between ASEAN and India presently accounts for almost 11% of India's global trade, up marginally by 1% from 2010-11 to 2019-20. If we add numbers for China, Japan and Korea, then countries under the coverage of New Delhi's Act East Policy (AEP) contribute about one-third of India's global trade. Driven mostly by imports, India's trade with ASEAN has grown faster than that with the world at large.

The opportunities presented by the ASEAN-India free trade area for goods, services and investments, and its associated arrangements, are growing and so are the means and ways for their utilization. The gains have been clear and there is scope to scale up the partnership further.

One of the key challenges

to Indian exports in these uncertain times is to maintain competitiveness in global and regional markets by improving trade facilitation, not only at home, but also with trade partners. Along with it, upgrading the ASEAN-India FTA and its effective utilization may perhaps add the required momentum to trade flows. Besides, to strengthen trade relations, ASEAN and India should address matters related to sensitive lists, non-tariff measures, and customs cooperation, among others.

Another great opportunity to scale up the ASEAN-India engagement is the development of value chains. The current value-chain linkages between ASEAN and India are not substantial; total trade in parts and components between them amounted to about \$5.8 billion in 2018. India's vibrant private sector must actively work out new deals to enhance ASEAN-India relations.

In the post-covid scenario, restoring the connectivity and resilience of supply chains will hold the key to economic integration, particularly the development of India's northeast. The supply chain resilience initiative (SCRI) between India, Japan and Australia (with ASEAN likely to join) will aid the development of the ASEAN-India economic corridor. It may also facilitate investment and act as a spur for growth in the region.

Finally, regional cooperation, be it economic or non-economic, helps promote economic stability, competitiveness, growth and integration within the region. Today, it is possible for countries to pick their route to a destination from a multiplicity of available options. Sustaining these initiatives is a matter of scale, quality and trade costs. ■

(Excerpted from www.livemint.com on 24 February 2021, authored by Prabir De)

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India's ASEAN Engagement Needs a Digital Push

India's desire to enhance its commercial and trade relations with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is well-known. At the last two India-ASEAN summits, in 2019 and 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated ASEAN's centrality to India's 'Act-East' policy and called for

enhanced connectivity between India and ASEAN to boost ties stating that a strong and prosperous ASEAN was in New Delhi's interest.

At the government level, existing engagements can be scaled up. At the recently concluded 1st ASEAN Digital Minister's meeting, ASEAN

ministers sought to enhance digital cooperation, develop human resources, and explore emerging technologies for adoption in the implementation of the ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025.

On the digital payments front, India could share its experience in creating an integrated

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interoperable system with the Unified Payment Interface. The UPI enables payment systems to be fully interoperable across all payment system players and allows for exchanges between a range of products, or transfers across different banks. India's engagement on this front with ASEAN could be hugely beneficial as it may allow for seamless fund transfers across borders, incentivise innovations in payment systems and allow fintech companies to expand and scale their operations.

On the trade front, India can leverage off the digital cooperation mechanisms to engage individual ASEAN member-states through Digital Economy Partnership

Agreements (DEPAs) similar to the one Singapore entered with New Zealand and Chile in 2020. A DEPA represents a new form of engagement and trade in the digital era. It aims to facilitate seamless end-to-end digital trade, enable trusted data flows and build trust in digital systems. Businesses can look forward to benefits such as improved efficiency, reduced cost and increased trust when conducting business and trading digitally with their overseas partners.

From a business perspective, India and ASEAN must facilitate and encourage start-ups and growth companies to tap each other's markets. A report by Datalabs in March 2020 stated

that over 35 big ticket Indian start-ups have expanded or plan to expand to South-East Asia. Singapore is the most favoured location followed by Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

The Indian government should invite promising start-ups and growth companies from ASEAN to India to expand their business, scout for partners and talent as well as tap into the well-established venture capital networks in India. In doing so, India could seek similar market access commitments from its ASEAN counterparts. ■

(Excerpted from www.thehindubusinessline.com on 6 May 2021, authored by Sriram Chakravarthi and Vikram Nair)

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AIC Publications (January-June 2021)



ASEAN-India Development and Cooperation (AIDCR) 2021: Avenues for Cooperation in Indo-Pacific

ISBN: 81-7122-157-2, November 2020

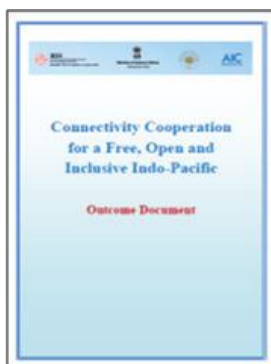
The ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) come out with the 2nd edition of ASEAN-India Development and Cooperation (AIDCR) 2021: Avenues for Cooperation in Indo-Pacific. AIDCR 2021 presents the scope, challenges, and opportunities in deepening the ASEAN-India partnership. The objective of the Report is to promote ASEAN-India integration with a particular focus on current challenges unleashed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the regional cooperative mechanisms that could provide solutions to them. This Report is an independent assessment of various economic and social relations between ASEAN and India.



Mekong-Ganga Policy Brief

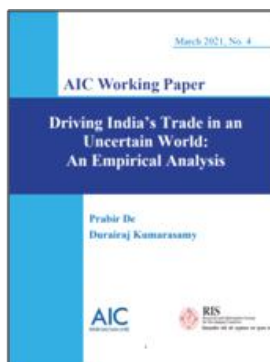
No. 10, March 2021

The Mekong-Ganga Policy Brief (MGPB) includes various activities carried in this sub-region. This Issue also covers set of initiatives taken at RIS and AIC at RIS. It includes events, speeches and statements issued on Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) over last year.



Connectivity Cooperation for a Free, Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific: Outcome Document

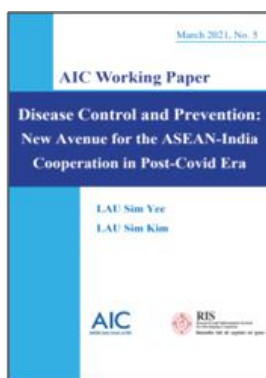
The Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at RIS jointly with the Embassy of Japan (EoJ) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India organised a Seminar on Connectivity Cooperation for a Free, Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific in virtual mode on 18 March 2021. This Outcome Document presents the summary and key recommendations of the seminar.



Driving India's Trade in an Uncertain World: An Empirical Analysis

AIC Working Paper No. 4, March 2021 by Prabir De and Durairaj Kumarasamy

This article examines the impact of trade costs on India's exports, particularly deriving the role of trade facilitation on affecting India's exports. India has made significant improvement in digital trade facilitation measures and this study indicates that significant improvement in trade facilitation measures would facilitate country's export.



Disease Control and Prevention: New Avenue for the ASEAN-India Cooperation in Post-Covid Era

AIC Working Paper No. 5, March 2021 by LAU Sim Yee and LAU Sim Kim

This article examines why it is crucially relevant for enhancing the ASEAN-India cooperative relations not only in tackling Covid-19, but also in strengthening disease control and prevention in post-Covid era. Also, it suggests specific modalities in undertaking the task, which is of extreme importance for member countries of the Framework Agreement of Economic Cooperation between India and the ASEAN.

Journal of Asian Economic Integration

Vol. 3, No. 1, April 2021



- Comparative Analysis of Structural Transformation Process of Selected Asian Developing Economies *by Roopali Aggarwal*
- What Explains FDI Inflows to ASEAN Countries? Evidence from Quantile Regressions *by Jagadish Prasad Sahu and Santosh Kumar Dash*
- Critical Success Factors for Data Governance of Cross-border e-Trade Data Among ASEAN Member States *by Craig Allen McGee Jones*
- Impact of Exchange Rate Fluctuations on India's Manufacturing Exports: An Empirical Investigation on Long-Run Relation *by Jyoti*
- Nudging in Singapore: Current Implementation in Three Key Areas *by Benjamin H. Detenber*

AIC Commentary Series (January-June 2021)



No. 13, January 2021

ASEAN Customs Transit System (ACTS): Implications for ASEAN-India Trade *by Prabir De*

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has launched the ASEAN Customs Transit System (ACTS) on 30 November 2020. The prime objective of ACTS, among others, is to reduce intra-ASEAN transaction costs and time and promote trade and investment. The launch of ACTS is set to boost the overland trade between ASEAN and India. This commentary presents an overview of ACTS and discusses the opportunities for ASEAN-India trade.



No. 14, February 2021

India-ASEAN Vaccine Resilience: The Way Forward *by Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy and Kingshuk Saha*

India's humane attitude has brought it to the forefront in the fight against Covid-19. While 1.3 billion are looking to be vaccinated, India has also launched its vaccine outreach through an initiative called 'Vaccine Maitri' (Vaccine Friendship). Days after it began vaccinating its population, India has begun dispatching millions of doses of Covid-19 vaccines to its neighbours and key partner countries. While India attaches great importance to its partnership with ASEAN countries, its actions are relatively less visible in the region. Perhaps, India's Act East Policy needs a sincere recast on ways to improve India's partnership.



No. 15, March 2021

Assessing Supply Chain Resilience between ASEAN and India by Durairaj Kumarasamy

The global supply chain has been affected by COVID-19 pandemic. Countries have been looking for resilient and long-term value chains as well as improving supply chain linkages. In this regard, this commentary examines the possible value chain linkages between ASEAN and India, and discusses how resilient their supply chains are to cope with the future shocks, and the way forward toward achieving the goal of sustainable value chain linkages.



No. 16, April 2021

Digital Connectivity to Boost Post COVID-19 Recovery in ASEAN and the Role India Can Play by Prasanna Kumar

The catastrophic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ASEAN's economy has made it inevitable for the member states to act quickly in the direction of improving digital connectivity in the region. The digitization of MSMEs and responsible investment in agriculture are indispensable in ASEAN's journey towards sustainable economic recovery. There is an urgent need to reduce the digital infrastructure gap between member states and bringing consensus on the issues of cross-border data flows in order to build a digitized economy. Cooperation with India in the areas of tech startups, e-commerce, e-services, and FinTech can contribute in many ways to strengthen ASEAN's economy.



No. 17, May 2021

India-France-Australia Trilateral: Opportunities Galore for ASEAN by Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury

India-France-Australia, three different powers from three different geographies, have one common vision – a stable Indo-Pacific region where rules-based international order is adhered for the common good and economic prosperity. India, France and Australia are committed to advancing their shared values and working together to achieve a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific. Maritime cooperation will be a key area of focus for India-France-Australia trilateral like similar trilateral grouping in the Indo-Pacific region. This commentary presents the recent developments of the trilateral cooperation between India, France and Australia and the opportunities it offers to ASEAN.

AIC Commentary Series



No. 18, June 2021

ASEAN-India Cooperation in Higher Education in the Post-Covid-19 Period by Nida Rahman

This commentary captures the cooperation between ASEAN and India in higher education. Educational cooperation has emerged as a major area of cooperation bolstering ASEAN-India relations. This commentary reflects on the international movement of students seeking higher education in ASEAN-India region. It also envisions the need for greater cooperation and collaboration between ASEAN member countries and India to confront the post-Covid-19 challenges in higher education mobility.

Important Reading

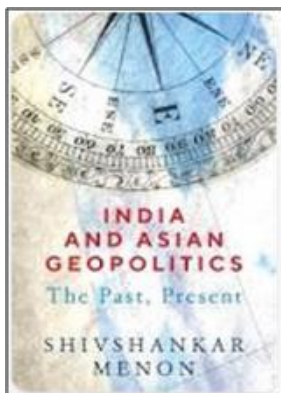


The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and Its Possible Eastward Extension to Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam: Challenges and Opportunities

Edited by Fukunari Kimura, So Umezaki, Anita Prakash

June 2020, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)

The Trilateral Highway (TLH) exemplifies the letter and spirit of connectivity between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It connects India, Myanmar, and Thailand, and is linked with ASEAN's connectivity plans. Still a project under construction, its potential contribution to the economic growth and development of the region is indubitable. This study examines the maximising of these objectives through a proposed extension of TLH to Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Viet Nam. The study on the TLH and its eastward extension fulfils this current need, and also lays down pathways for medium- and longer-term integrated connectivity solutions between India and ASEAN.



India and Asian Geopolitics: The Past, Present

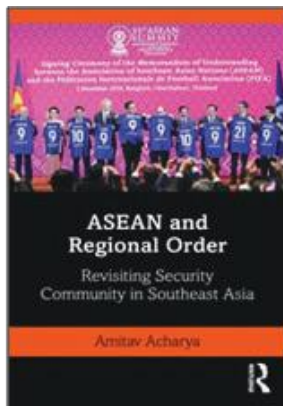
By Shivshankar Menon

ISBN: 9780815737247, April 2021, Brookings Institution Press.

The book examines India's own policy choices throughout its history, author focuses in particular on India's responses to the rise of China, as well as other regional powers. Author also looks to the future and analyzes how India's policies are likely to evolve in response to current and new challenges. As India grows economically and gains new stature across the globe, both its domestic preoccupations

Important Reading

and international choices become more significant. India itself will become more affected by what happens in the world around it. The book makes a powerful geopolitical case for an India increasingly and positively engaged in Asia and the broader world in pursuit of a pluralistic, open, and inclusive world order.



ASEAN and Regional Order: Revisiting Security Community in Southeast Asia

By Amitav Acharya

ISBN: 9780367641528, May 2021, Routledge

This book discusses the future of ASEAN against a backdrop of a growing US–China rivalry and the security implications of COVID-19. Chapters in this book move through a history of ASEAN and its multilateral institutions, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS), featuring rare photographic material to contextualize both recent developments in regional security and projections for ASEAN’s prospects. Key concepts and terms are unpacked throughout, with the chapters focusing on rapidly changing international and regional environments, economic insecurities such as trade conflicts, human rights, and ASEAN identity, and providing extensive analysis of the factors challenging the principle ASEAN Centrality and the Indo-Pacific security architecture. The concept of security community frames this book, despite being subject to change if intraregional discord and institutional stagnation take hold.



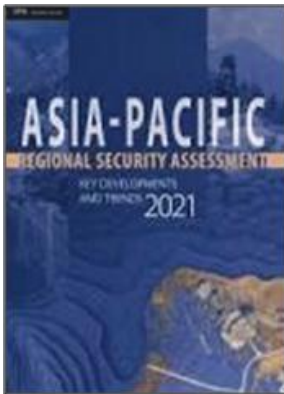
ASEAN Regional Action Plan for Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Member States (2021 - 2025)

May 2021, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta

Marine plastics has become a global development challenge as the growing amount of mismanaged plastic waste pollutes oceans, coastlines, rivers, and other inland waterways while affecting the livelihoods of coastal communities. The sudden increase in single-use plastics during the COVID-19 pandemic has created an additional stress on countries working to tackle the challenge.

Drawing from inputs from regional stakeholders and the 10 ASEAN member states, the Regional Action Plan proposes an integrated approach to address marine plastic pollution in ASEAN over the next five years (2021-2025) through 14 regional actions at three key stages of the value chain: 1) Reduce Inputs into the System, 2) Enhance Collection and Minimize Leakage, and, 3) Create Value for Waste Reuse

Important Reading



Asia-Pacific Regional Security Assessment 2021: Key Developments and Trends

The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)

ISBN: 9781000474497, June 2021, Taylor & Francis.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Security Assessment 2021 provides insight into key regional strategic, geopolitical, economic, military and security topics. Among the topics explored are: US-China decoupling and its regional security implications; Japan's security policy and China; India's emerging grand strategy; Southeast Asia amid rising great-power rivalry; Australia's new regional security posture; NATO's evolving approach to China; The United Kingdom's 'tilt' to the Indo-Pacific; and Emerging technologies and future conflict in the Asia-Pacific.

Potential for India's Entry into Factory Asia: Some Casual Findings from International Trade Data

By Mitsuyo Ando, Kenta Yamanouchi, Fukunari Kimura

June 2021, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)

Despite its impressive economic growth in the past few decades, India is slow in adopting a task-by-task international division of labour or international production networks (IPNs). Using international trade data for international comparison from multiple angles, this paper visualises the position of India – particularly in machinery IPNs and information and communication technology (ICT) services. Although machinery industries are at the centre of IPNs in East Asia, the paper clearly visualises that India has not yet participated in Factory Asia. Rather, trade data indicate that India is still engaged in import-substituting industrialisation. The paper also argues that ICT services are a strength for the Indian economy, and its competitiveness could be utilised effectively by combining new technologies with traditional industries such as manufacturing. India still has huge potential for utilising the mechanics of a new international division of labour to accelerate economic growth, innovation, and poverty alleviation.



ASEAN Economic Integration Brief - No.9

June 2021, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta

The Ninth Issue of the ASEAN Economic Integration Brief (AEIB), or the first for this year, comes as the region is still grappling with the pandemic. Countries in the region have started respective vaccination programmes and economies are slowly and cautiously reopening, but resurgences in cases, vaccination delays, and the threat of new

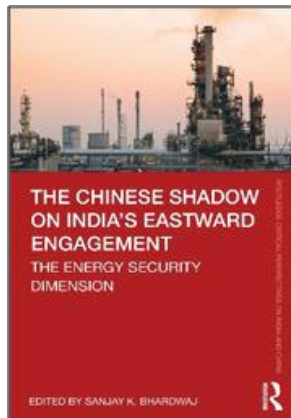
Important Reading

variants of the virus continue to pose uncertainties. The Year 2021 also marks the start of the second phase of implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025. The Mid-Term Review of the Blueprint has been completed and provides valuable lessons and recommendations to guide the next phase of the AEC.

The Chinese Shadow on India's Eastward Engagement: The Energy Security Dimension

Edited by Sanjay K. Bhardwaj

ISBN: 9780367760007, July 2021, Routledge India



This book analyses India's potential for building energy ties in the Asia-Pacific considering the global and regional power politics. Facing China's growing influence in Asia, India's eastward engagement with its extended neighbours has been entrenched in its Act East Policy and institutional commitments towards Southeast Asia. This volume focuses on diverse facets of energy security beyond the traditional understanding of demand and supply and price and stability. It examines India's energy sector, its dependence on hydrocarbons, and the push towards renewable and alternate energy resources. It further looks at the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean and South China Sea regions in geopolitical negotiations from an energy perspective and how China's influence in the region will affect India's moves towards greater energy cooperation with the countries of East Asia.

Research Publications (January-June 2021)

- De, Prabir (2021) "The BIMSTEC Moment" in ORF (2021) *BIMSTEC in 2021*, Observer Research Foundation (ORF), Kolkata
- De, Prabir (2021) "Regional Integration in Bay of Bengal Region in Post-Covid-19 Period", ARTNeT Working Paper # 204, UNESCAP, Bangkok
- De, Prabir (2021) "Patience please: India's ASEAN journey has much further to go", *The Mint*, 25 February 2021, New Delhi
- De, Prabir (2021) "Building Partnership with ASEAN and Korea's New Southern Policy: Views from India", *World Economy Brief*, Vol. 11, No. 13, KIEP, Seoul, March 19, 2021
- De, Prabir (2021) "Dealing with Coronavirus Pandemic in the Bay of Bengal Region", *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, No. 560, East-West Center, Washington, DC
- De, Prabir and Durairaj Kumarasamy (2021) "ASEAN-India Energy Cooperation: Current Status and Future Scope of Cooperation", in Sanjay K. Bhardwaj (ed.) *The Chinese Shadow on India's Eastward Engagement: The Energy Security Dimension*, Routledge India, New Delhi

Research Projects: Ongoing

Trade, Connectivity and Maritime in Indo-Pacific	<p>In the 14th East Asia Summit (EAS) held in Bangkok on November 2019, Indian Prime Minister announced the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiatives (IPOI) for promoting maritime cooperation in the wider Indo-Pacific region. The seven pillars of IPOI are (i) Maritime Ecology, (ii) Maritime Security, (iii) Maritime Resources, (iv) Capacity Building and Resource Sharing, (v) Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, (vi) Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation, and (viii) Trade, Connectivity and Maritime Transport. This study aims to identify an appropriate strategy to promote trade, connectivity and maritime cooperation in Indo-Pacific.</p>
IMT-GT Cooperation and India's Development Partnership	<p>Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are strategically located in the heart of the Indo-Pacific and have created a triangular sub-regional cooperation. The Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) initiative is aimed towards invigorating economic development in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand sub-region. IMT-GT owns substantial controlling assets in ASEAN. India's development partnership with Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand under the framework of IMT-GT could see rejuvenation from the partnership relished within the ASEAN framework. This study examines the scope and opportunities to be arising from India's participation in the IMT-GT.</p>
Assessing the Production Networks between ASEAN and India: Sectoral Analysis	<p>Over the years India and ASEAN had engaged in creating production network within those industries on which India has manufacturing capacities and complementarities that match with the demand or supply capacity of ASEAN and vice versa. In establishing these production networks, it has encountered various challenges that include gaps in connectivity and trade restrictions. The study will explore the present scenario of ASEAN-India production network at the sectoral level. The study will also present the challenges and way forward.</p>
Implications of ASEAN Economic Community 2025	<p>The establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 is a major milestone in the regional economic integration agenda in ASEAN. The AEC Blueprint 2025, adopted by the ASEAN Leaders, is aimed towards achieving the vision of having an AEC by 2025 that is highly integrated and cohesive; competitive, innovative and dynamic; with enhanced connectivity and sectoral cooperation; and a more resilient, inclusive, and people-oriented, people-centred community, integrated with the global economy. ASEAN member states aim to complete the AEC by 2025. The implementation of AEC carries economic and strategic implications for India. This study is aimed to analyse the economic implications of AEC for India with particular reference to regional connectivity.</p>
Review of ASEAN-India FTA	<p>ASEAN and India signed trade in goods in 2009 and it came into force in 2010 and the services trade and investment agreement concluded in 2014. During these years ASEAN-India trade has increased many folds and the bilateral trade reached US\$ 87 in 2019-20. However, it was expected to increase much high than where it has reached. In view of above, this study will evaluate the performance of ASEAN-India FTA.</p>
Connectivity and Supply Chain Resilience	<p>The recent Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) by India, Japan and Australia has been initiated to build resilient supply chain to mitigate the risk across the participating nations. Building last mile connectivity and proper infrastructural facilities are necessary in order to creating this resilience. The study will identify the connectivity and infrastructure challenges to resilient supply chain and provide the way forward.</p>
Public Health Cooperation between ASEAN and India	<p>The world has witnessed an unprecedented health crisis due to the Coronavirus pandemic. This ongoing pandemic makes the world realise to invest more on health facilities in order to save precious human life. With the emerging demand of public health system, India and ASEAN have come together to build cooperation and strengthen the public health system in this region. The study will identify the opportunities and challenges of public health cooperation between ASEAN and India.</p>

Forthcoming Events

- First ASEAN-India Development Partnership Programme, 16-20 August 2021
- Fifth ASEAN-India Blue Economy Workshop, September 2021
- Third ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilizational Links Conference, 7-8 October 2021
- Seventh ASEAN-India Network of Think-Tanks (AINTT), October 2021
- Fifth EAS Conference on Maritime Security, October 2021
- Twelfth Delhi Dialogue, December 2021

About RIS

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a New Delhi based autonomous think-tank under the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, is an organisation that specialises in policy research on international economic issues and development cooperation. RIS is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on international economic issues. The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and assist developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. RIS is engaged in the Track II process of several regional initiatives. RIS is providing analytical support to the Government of India in the negotiations for concluding comprehensive economic cooperation agreements with partner countries. Through its intensive network of policy think tanks, RIS seeks to strengthen policy coherence on international economic issues. For more information please visit www.ris.org.in

About AIC

Considering the work of the ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Group (AIEPG), and its Report with recommendations for forging a closer partnership for peace, progress and shared prosperity, the Heads of the State/Government of ASEAN and India at the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit 2012, held at New Delhi on 19-20 December 2012, recommended the establishment of ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) using existing resources at New Delhi. AIC was formally inaugurated on 21 June 2013 at RIS. AIC serves as a resource centre for ASEAN Member States and India to fill the knowledge gaps that currently limit the opportunities for cooperation. The AIC is closely working with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), India to undertake and disseminate policy research and provide analytical policy recommendations. For more information please visit <http://www.aic.ris.org.in>



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