

Special Article

ASEAN-India Maritime Cooperation: Broad Contour

ASEAN and India have a rich history of maritime trade and ancient cultural linkages. India is closest maritime neighbour of Mekong countries as well as ASEAN. Today, over 2/3rd of their merchandise trade has been carried through oceans. Maritime cooperation thus occupies an important place in ASEAN-India cooperation as well as India-Mekong relations.

Economic ties between India and ASEAN are always in the forefront and have been deepening day by day. In 2018, ASEAN was India's 4th largest trading partner, accounting for 10 percent of India's total trade. In the same year, India was ASEAN's 7th largest trading partner. In 2018-19, total trade between ASEAN and India has increased to US\$ 96 billion from less than US\$ 65 billion in 2015-16. In the same period, India's export to ASEAN has increased to US\$ 37 billion in 2018-19 from US\$ 25 billion in 2015-16. The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in goods, implemented in 2010, and the services trade and investment agreement between ASEAN and India thereafter represent an important effort to enhance ASEAN-India economic integration. India has also signed bilateral CEPAs/CECAs with Japan, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, along with the regional FTA with ASEAN. India is a partner of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which is a comprehensive free trade agreement being negotiated between the 10 ASEAN members and ASEAN's FTA partners.

Maritime security and cooperation is necessary element in both foreign and security policy frameworks. ASEAN countries and India have been working closely in securing the trade routes,

freedom of navigation in international waters, over flights, threat or use of force to intimidate, reducing piracy along the Malacca Straits, cooperating in addressing traditional and non-traditional security challenges, including in areas of de-radicalization, prevention of violent extremism, cyber crime and natural disaster management.

East Asia Summit (EAS) has been giving focus on maritime security and cooperation. It has been discussed also in other ASEAN-centric regional fora such as ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF). At the 10th East Asia Summit (EAS), held on 22 November 2015 at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia had recognized enhancing maritime security as an important element of maintaining peace and stability in the region and adopted the 'EAS Statement on Enhancing Regional Maritime Cooperation'. The 11th EAS, held on 6-8 September 2015 at Vientiane, adopted declarations on promoting maritime connectivity, and certain specific issues relating to maritime security and safety. At the 13th East Asia Summit (EAS), the leaders welcomed the inclusion of maritime cooperation as a new area of cooperation under the Manila POA, which includes practical and comprehensive action lines to promote this area of cooperation. The leaders expressed support for further strengthening maritime cooperation among EAS participating countries in a collective and holistic manner through ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-

Plus (ADMM-Plus), in line with the 2015 EAS Statement on Enhancing Regional Maritime Cooperation.

India is a member of the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF). Moreover, India is also active participant in non-ASEAN centric regional fora such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA); Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS); BIMSTEC; and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP). Maritime security and safety are vigorously debated in these fora.

Notwithstanding the past activities, the ASEAN and India have to undertake collective efforts to address three aspects of maritime commons: connectivity, security and cooperation. The key priority of maritime cooperation should be to build a safe, sustainable and efficient maritime transport system in the region as well as maintain the security in the ocean. According to the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), "the enhancing regional Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) could be undertaken through focused measures such as setting up Coastal Radar Surveillance System (CSRS) including radars, electro-optic and Automatic Identification System (AIS) sensors; regional agreement on White Shipping information (unclassified merchant ship information) culminating in a cooperative information Fusion Center (IFC) with linkages with other similar global centers; and use of a collective data center for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) of ships on lines of the EU (European Union) LRIT Data Center."

At the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit, held on 25 January 2018 at New Delhi, India, leaders of ASEAN and India

have outlined the vision on the future of ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership, wherein they have designated ASEAN-India Cooperation in the Maritime Domain as one of the key areas of this partnership. India has endorsed 'Blue Economy' as a new and central pillar of the country's economic activity. It encompasses both, the coastal areas and the linked hinterland. India has emphasized the 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) concept, at the *Shangri La Dialogue* in Singapore in 2018, which reaffirmed India's key role in strengthening Blue Economy in the India-ASEAN region. Given the economic potential of the oceans, a number of countries are investing enormous financial, technological and human capital to develop maritime economies and are striving to leverage their unique strengths.

At the bilateral level, India and Myanmar have signed the standard operating procedure (SOP) for India-Myanmar Coordinated Patrol (IMCOR). The signing of the pact formalizes a key part of ongoing maritime cooperation between India and Myanmar in the Bay of Bengal. India has already signed bilateral agreement with Indonesia and Thailand for maritime coordinated patrols. Myanmar is another country with which India has signed an agreement on maritime coordinated patrols. Thus, two of the Mekong countries, namely, Myanmar and Thailand, have signed agreement with India for maritime coordinated patrols. Cambodia and Vietnam may consider signing similar agreement with India. Recently, coast guards of Vietnam and India took part in search and rescue drill operation to strengthen the maritime security ties.

Enhancing regional connectivity and trade through direct short-sea shipping and shipping facilitation agreements would strengthen maritime connectivity between ASEAN and India. At present, ASEAN and India have been negotiating the ASEAN-India Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement (AIMTCA). This Agreement may provide greater access to maritime services; facilitate the flow of trade through sea; and encourage private investments in the areas of maritime transportation, port development, etc. ASEAN and India shall take up issues such as coastal shipping network (short sea shipping), development of maritime cargo routes, etc., which hold immense potential.

Box 1: Sagarmala

India has taken several important initiatives in developing the country's maritime sector. One such project is Sagarmala project to modernize India's ports and shipping sector. The programme aims to promote port-led development in the country by harnessing India's 7,500 km long coastline, 14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways and strategic location on key international maritime trade routes. Components of Sagarmala Programme are: (i) Port Modernization & New Port Development: De-bottlenecking and capacity expansion of existing ports and development of new greenfield ports; (ii) Port Connectivity Enhancement: Enhancing the connectivity of the ports to the hinterland, optimizing cost and time of cargo movement through multi-modal logistics solutions including domestic waterways (inland water transport and coastal shipping); (iii) Port-linked Industrialization: Developing port-proximate industrial clusters and Coastal Economic Zones to reduce logistics cost and time of EXIM and domestic cargo; and (iv) Coastal Community Development: Promoting sustainable development of coastal communities through skill development & livelihood generation activities, fisheries development, coastal tourism etc.

Source: Ministry of Shipping, India

Strengthening maritime connectivity would lead to strengthen economic integration through higher trade and investment, promotion of tourism, and building seaports and shipping networks, cooperation for improving efficiency of ports joining ASEAN Ro-Ro and Cruise Network, etc., ASEAN and India may also decide the possibility of developing RoRo terminals, ports and building connectivity between islands under the Sagarmala project (see Box 1).

India has taken steps to augment capacity at major ports across the country. New cargo terminals are under construction at ports in Kamarajar, Ennore, Visakhapatnam, V.O. Chidambaranar, Tuticorin, Paradip and Kolkata. Partnership with ports located in Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia can make Indian ports important gateways to ASEAN countries and vice versa. The ongoing Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport project is likely to improve connectivity between Indian ports on the eastern sea board and Sittwe Port in Myanmar, which would not only promote trade links with Myanmar but also facilitate transit of goods to and from the North East India.

ASEAN-India maritime connectivity agenda shall consider strengthening connectivity between the islands. Islands can be turned into centers of excellence if we implement a stronger inter-island connectivity programme. ASEAN-India islands connectivity has gained momentum in recent years with ASEAN's investments in infrastructure in its islands, and India's investments in infrastructure, tourism, agriculture (organic and fisheries) and renewable energy development in area Andaman and Nicobar Islands region. There are

scope to unlock the vast potentials of cooperation with ASEAN and MGC in particular, with respect to tourism, maritime security, disaster management, etc. Several ASEAN ports and shipping companies are running terminals and carry international trade.

ASEAN and India shall conduct more cooperation and capacity building in aquaculture and deep-sea fishing. Besides, greater hydrographic cooperation through training, capacity building and joint surveys would help both to refine the knowledge and understanding on the maritime cooperation. These are the areas where India can extend effective support to Mekong countries.

ASEAN countries and India shall examine national approaches to the responsible development of marine resources including the utilization of marine-based renewable energy. Emerging technologies are opening up new frontiers of marine resource development leading to mining of seabed mineral resources. Low carbon shipping, regional fisheries agreements, ocean surveillance, information sharing, marine biotechnology, cyber security and IT services are some of the areas for cooperation.

To conclude, ASEAN countries and India have to identify all such challenges and plan collaborative responses, in terms of cooperation among naval forces, coast guards and other law-enforcement agencies, capacity-building, de-confliction of naval encounters, and confidence-building at sea. ■

Prabir De, Professor, RIS

(Views are author's own. Usual disclaimers apply)

Activities

Remarks by External Affairs Minister at the 10th Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Ministerial Meeting

Since its inception in the year 2000, Mekong Ganga Cooperation has come a long way. This oldest sub-regional cooperation organization turns 20 next year. The MGC is as much a celebration of our long and rich history of trade, cultural and people-to-people exchanges as it is a vehicle to advance modern day cooperation to bring progress and prosperity to our peoples. We warmly welcome Viet Nam's suggestion that the 20th anniversary of MGC should be commemorated in a befitting manner with a series of meaningful celebratory events.

The MGC Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) are moving at a steady pace. A total of 24 projects have been completed so far, including 15 in Cambodia and 9 in Viet Nam. In addition, currently one project in Cambodia and 3 projects in Lao PDR are under implementation. I am pleased to inform that we have signed MOUs for 18 additional projects in Cambodia and a further 5 projects with Vietnam are under consideration. In Myanmar, though we do not have any QIPs at the moment, we are implementing several community development projects bilaterally under the Rakhine State Development Programme (RSDP) and our Border Area Development Programme.

All the scholarship schemes offered by India for MGC member countries have seen active utilization. We are increasing the number of scholarships for Master's Programme at Nalanda University from 6 to 20.

The setting up of CESDTs in CLMV countries by Centre for Development of Advance Computing (C-DAC) is also making good progress. We have already established these Centres in Cambodia and Lao PDR and will be deputing IT trainers to these centres soon. We have also requested Myanmar and Vietnam to expedite necessary approvals to facilitate early operationalization of the CESDTs in Myanmar and Vietnam.

We are working on early operationalization of the Common Archival Resource Centre (CARC) at Nalanda University. To this end,

Excellencies, we seek your help in sourcing copies of historical documents and replicas of art works and artefacts for the CARC. These artworks and artefacts will be made digitally available by the CARC to scholars from around the world interested in academic research on India-Southeast Asia historical and civilisational linkages.

RIS, New Delhi is working with Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS), Hanoi to host the third international conference on ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilisational Linkages in Hanoi in October 2019. My colleague, H.E. V. Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs will represent India at the conference.

Nalanda University is actively working with the ASEAN University Network (AUN), Bangkok and universities both in India and ASEAN Member States towards creating an ASEAN-India University Network (AIUN). I am happy to note that a collaborative project involving Mandalay Technological University (MTU), Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee will be moved forward as a pilot project. It is particularly relevant that this project is beginning from among our MGC Partners.

The MGC Textiles Museum in Siem Reap, Cambodia is doing significant work to preserve and showcase the rich and vibrant textile heritage of the Mekong-Ganga region. We are working with Cambodia to make the Museum financially self-sustaining, including by promoting the Museum as a tourist attraction. We seek artefacts and exhibits from all MGC countries to enhance the displays, and your help in making the Museum a hotspot by hosting academic and cultural events at this venue.

Excellency Co-Chair, following a suggestion at the last MGC SOM in New Delhi, we have commenced work on developing an MGC website to disseminate information about joint cooperation activities, as also important trade and travel fairs and cultural events. We should look at launching it before

January 2020.

We plan to organize a regional conference on traditional and complementary medicine in November this year, where we will be inviting health regulators and traditional medicine practitioners. There would also be an exhibition on the sidelines.

The first MGC Business Forum, held in New Delhi in January 2018, was very well-attended. We should plan to hold this event perhaps biennially, and organise the second edition in Vietnam to coincide with a large trade event.

Connectivity is a major focus area of our cooperation. We look forward to the early completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and its extension to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. The Jakarta-based Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) had been tasked to study the feasibility of developing the planned highway as a vibrant economic growth corridor. We look forward to the full report, expected to be completed early next year. We need to quickly finalise the India-Myanmar-Thailand Motor Vehicle Agreement to facilitate seamless movement of goods and passengers across borders, thus leading to greater trade and tourism at the next meeting in October this year.

Excellencies, India had announced a US\$ 1 billion Line of Credit (LOC) for connectivity projects in ASEAN. To identify bankable projects, we have offered to facilitate discussions on the terms, conditions and modalities for drawing on this credit line, including by sending specialists from our Exim Bank to interested countries for discussions.

We must work to enhance direct air connectivity as it would make travel easier for our peoples for business and tourism. I am happy to inform that IndiGo is going to start direct flights on the New Delhi-Ho Chi Minh City sector from October this year and daily services from Kolkata to Yangon from late September.

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MGC Plan of Action (2019-2022)

This Plan of Action implements the goals and objectives of the MGC Partnership for the next three years (2019-2022) by laying out activities to be undertaken by all parties to further deepen and enhance cooperation in the MGC priority sectors.

Cultural Cooperation

- Organize a textile exhibition along with cultural activities to showcase the varied hand-woven fabrics of the MGC countries
- Promote capacity building and exchange best practices in preservation of historical and cultural monuments
- Establish a Common Archival Resource Center (CARC) at Nalanda University as a repository of information
- Invite craftsmen and cultural troupes from MGC countries
- Cooperate in the field of radio and television broadcasting
- Develop a joint calendar of important Travel Fairs and Cultural Festivals in MGC countries for information dissemination and promotion.
- Organise an MGC Conference on Heritage Conservation Techniques in 2020 at the MGC Asian Traditional Textile Museum at Siem Reap, Cambodia
- Organize events and activities to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of MGC in 2020

Tourism Cooperation

- Organise trips of travel agencies and media familiarization visits to prominent Buddhist sites in MGC countries
- Showcase and popularise the rich culinary traditions of the MGC countries by organising food festivals.
- Encourage exchange of students through offer of scholarships for diploma and certificate courses in tourism and travel management, hospitality management etc.
- Develop institutional contact between National Hospitality/ Tourism Management Institutes

Cooperation in Education

- Promote the 50 MGC scholarships offered by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) to enhance utilisation by students from the Mekong countries.

- Promote training in traditional systems of medicine through exchange of faculty and students among national institutions.

- Organize workshops and training programmes in digital connectivity and ICT infrastructure development for government officials from MGC countries.

- Launch a website dedicated to MGC which would contribute to branding of the regional grouping and provide useful information on the various joint programs and activities.

Cooperation in Public Health and Traditional Medicine

- Organize the 2nd workshop-cum-training for MGC countries' officials in India on eradication of communicable and non-communicable diseases with high incidences at the National Institute of Malaria Research, New Delhi.
- Send Indian Ayurveda specialists under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India to Mekong countries upon request.
- Organize a regional workshop on traditional and complimentary medicine focusing on issues related to regulatory systems and standardization procedures involving traditional medicinal systems of the region.

Cooperation in Agriculture and Allied Sectors

- Organise a workshop on preservation of rice germplasm and productivity enhancement through mechanization by Crop Science Division, Indian Council for Agricultural Research.
- Organise a workshop on sustainable fisheries and dairy by Fisheries Science Division/Animal Science Division, Indian Council for Agricultural Research.
- Organise training courses/workshops on 'Integral Rural Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)' at National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad for MGC countries' professionals

Cooperation in Water Resources Management

- India will conduct training programmes and workshops to exchange experiences and best practices in community farming and water resource management.
- Undertake collaborative projects in the areas of sustainable water management, water harvesting, water data collection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, integrated water resources management, groundwater management, transboundary basin management, water quality monitoring, flood and drought management and disaster reduction etc.

Cooperation in Science and Technology

- Host an Innovation Forum in one of the MGC countries to promote social innovations in agriculture, transport, communication, industrial know-how transfer, e-commerce, information and communication technology (ICT), health, energy and environment, food etc.

Cooperation in Transport and Communications

- Examine the feasibility of extending the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam, and its development as an economic growth corridor.

Explore ways and means for the conclusion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Motor Vehicle Agreement to facilitate seamless movement of goods and passengers across borders, thus leading to greater trade and tourism.

- Organise training programmes for MGC countries on preparation of feasibility studies and detailed project reports for highway projects and construction and maintenance of highways at the Indian Academy of Highway Engineers, NOIDA.
- Promote exchange of experiences and information on policies and management regulations of ICT industry, popularization of public services, development of ICT infrastructure, e-governance, e-commerce, e-education and other related e-services.

MGC Plan of Action (2019-2022)

Enhance connectivity and cross-border ICT services to promote e-commerce as well as social and cultural exchanges.

Cooperation in MSMEs

- Organize an MGC Trade Fair either in India or any other MGC country in conjunction with a prominent trade exhibition focusing on MSMEs.
- Task the Jakarta-based Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) to conduct research studies on 'Integration of MGC MSMEs into a Regional Production Chain: Potential and Challenges'.
- Enhance cooperation in MSMEs sector with special focus on Youth and Women empowerment among the MGC countries.

- Conduct exchange programmes on innovation and market access for MSMEs as well as on software training and online payment system development.

- Organize an MGC Business Forum focusing on MSMEs on the sidelines of ASEAN-India Business Expo and Summit to be organized by Viet Nam in 2020.

Skill Development and Capacity Building

- Organise training and scholarship programmes for MGC countries in the areas of national accounts statistics and large scale socio-economic sample surveys.
- Facilitate knowledge sharing through exchange visits by experts from

vocational training institutions and skill development authorities.

- Organise annual training programmes on the topics related to MGC areas of cooperation as well as other relevant issues which are in line with the SDGs under Thailand's Annual International Training Courses – AITC.

Quick Impact Projects Scheme

- Encourage joint identification of projects, their monitoring and timely implementation of the Quick Impact Projects scheme of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India under the MGC framework.

(Excerpted from Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Plan of Action (2019-2022) at the 10th Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Ministerial Meeting in Singapore, 2 August 2019) ■

News

IndiGo to start Kolkata-Ho Chi Minh City flight from 18 October 2019

Low-cost airline IndiGo on Thursday said that it will start operating non-stop flights on the Kolkata-Ho Chi Minh City route from 18 October this year. Ho Chi Minh City will be IndiGo's second destination in Vietnam. "Effective October 18, 2019, IndiGo will operate non-stop flights between Kolkata and Ho Chi Minh City. With the launch of these flights, Ho Chi Minh City will become the 7th southeast Asian region in IndiGo's network," the budget carrier said in a statement.

The InterGlobe Aviation Ltd-run airline last month had announced the start of Kolkata-Hanoi flights from 3 October. "We have received a very encouraging response on the Kolkata-Hanoi route and we are confident of a good traction on this new connection between Ho Chi Minh City and Kolkata," William Boulter, chief commercial officer at IndiGo, said in a statement. Boulter also said that Ho Chi Minh City hosts a large Buddhist

community that will be seamlessly connected to the Buddhist circuit in India through Kolkata. The Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA) in its report released on 31 August said that IndiGo "now has the largest share of international seats to/from India".

(Excerpted from www.livemint.com on September 6, 2019)

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India Likely to Launch More Quick Impact Projects in East Asia and Other Countries

The government plans to launch more quick impact projects (QIPs) in East Asia and other countries under its developmental assistance programme as part of an effort to reach out to build its influence in these countries, many of which are of strategic importance, and to fight the impression that New Delhi lags behind in terms of completing projects, officials familiar with the programme said.

The QIPs mostly cover upgradation of physical infrastructure such as roads, local community centres, social infrastructure such as in the education,

health, sanitation or community development sectors. The short gestation projects are aimed to directly benefit locals, with immediate and visible results.

Three QIPs in Lao PDR, two in Myanmar, and five projects in Cambodia and Vietnam are in the works. "Quick Impact Projects similar to the Small Development Project (SDP) have shorter gestation period and the results are for everyone to see", said one of the officials who asked not to be identified. This person added that India's focus on such projects has increased.

Under the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) an initiative by six countries – India and five ASEAN countries, namely, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam -- it has been decided to offer Indian grant assistance for implementation of small projects with capital cost of US\$ 50000 (about Rs 34 lakhs) under the QIP.

(Excerpted from www.hindustantimes.com on 12 August 2018)

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VietJet is Launching Direct Flight between India and Vietnam

Starting December 2019, VietJet, the country's budget airline, will operate two direct flights from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to New Delhi, which makes it convenient to plan a round trip, from the north of the country to the south. Rush to grab the promotional tickets VietJet is offering until August 22, 2019 for their inaugural flight. The offer can be availed between December 6, 2019 and March 28, 2020!

Starting with Hanoi, you can explore some of the key attractions of the country, such as Ha Long Bay, Da Nang and Hoi An, and reach Ho Chi Minh City via Hue for the flight back home. We bring you a short itinerary you can follow on your holiday to Vietnam.

Hanoi (Ha Noi), the capital of Vietnam, more than one thousand years old, has a rich history and culture. It is not difficult to notice the French influence on the city. The Old Quarters still retain its traditional lifestyle, and you will find some very old temples here. The city has a large number of museums to explore, such as the Fine Arts Museum, the Vietnam

Art Gallery, Women's Museum, etc. Rub shoulders with the local residents out for their walks and other physical exercises at the Hoam Kiem Lake in the morning. And, in between taking in the city's many sights and shopping, take a break at the city's many coffee shops. Do not miss the Water Puppet Show at night.

Ha Long Bay, a Unesco World Heritage Site, can be covered on a day trip from Hanoi. But it would be more interesting to spend a night here, enjoying a cruise in the emerald waters of the bay, exploring the limestone caves, visiting the picturesque islands, etc.

From Hanoi, travel to Hoi An via Danang airport. Hoi An has many beautiful buildings reflecting a mix of Vietnamese, Japanese and Chinese architecture. Some of the common sights include the 16th century Japanese Bridge, old Chinese homes, old wooden houses repurposed as restaurants, cafes or craft galleries. From Hoi An, you may visit My Son, known for its temples and ruins reflecting the Hindu influence in the region.

On way to Hue from Hoi An, you can stop at the Cham Museum, a repository of stone sculptures from the Hindu Cham community. In Hue, the Imperial Citadel (a Unesco World Cultural heritage Site) and the Thien Mu Pagoda are must sees. To save time, you can take a flight out of Hue for Ho Chi Minh City.

The old city of Saigon was renamed after the country's famous revolutionary leader and president Ho Chi Minh. There is plenty to see here, including the Reunification Palace, the Notre Dame Cathedral, the Saigon Post Office, Cu Chi Tunnels, etc. A day-long trip along the Mekong Delta can be the grand finale before you leave Vietnam. Even though India does not feature among the visa exempted countries yet, Indians can avail electronic visa(e-Visa) which takes three working days for processing, costs 25 USD, and is a single-entry visa, valid for 30 days.

(Excerpted from www.outlookindia.com on August 21, 2019)

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India Signs MoU with Cambodia for MGC Projects

The Indian government has provided Cambodia a grant for 18 projects worth nearly \$900,000 to implement the Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) under the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) framework. The two governments signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the grant at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The Ministry's Secretary of State, Luy David said that MGC is advancing smoothly with strong cooperation. "The real value of these small projects is very important for Cambodia to create tangible results and promote the livelihoods and contribute to the welfare of Cambodians," he said. David said the 18 projects – worth a total of \$895,145 – will be implemented for 2019-2020.

India is the first country to collaborate with the Greater Mekong Subregion nations and establish the first Mekong

cooperation framework – which we now refer to as MGC. The MoU covers six projects under the Ministry of Health; four under the Ministry of Rural Development; two under the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology; and two under the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. It also covers two projects under the Ministry of Women's Affairs; one under the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts; and one under the Ministry of Environment. David said since the launch of the QIPs under MGC in 2015, Cambodia has received a total of 34 projects in the fields of health, agriculture, education, environment, skills development, women's empowerment, rural development, water resources and ICT. Several projects have been completed and the remaining have made substantial progress, he said. A practical achievement that stems from the cooperation, he said, is the "Asian

Traditional Textile Museum", which was inaugurated in 2014 in Siem Reap town. "Cambodia is committed to strengthening sub-regional cooperation based on practical activities which will be beneficial for Cambodia and the Mekong region as a whole."

Manika Jain, the Ambassador of India to Cambodia, said the Indian government has various engagement programmes with Cambodia including assistance programmes for the Kingdom's socio-economic development. It has been providing assistance since 2015. "The Indian government will continue to support and cooperate with the Cambodian government under the framework of the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation," she stressed.

(Excerpted from www.phnompenhpost.com on 20 June 2019)

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India, Laos Agree to Strengthen Bilateral Ties

India and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) agreed to strengthen their bilateral relations through political dialogue and increased trade and investment respectively.

Accompanied by a delegation of senior officers from her ministry, Hon'ble External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, visited Lao PDR on November 22-23, a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs read. During the visit, the Minister co-chaired the 9th India-Lao PDR Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) along with her Laotian counterpart Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith. The meeting reviewed the India-Lao PDR relations comprehensively and took note of all that has been achieved and the current state of the various cooperation programmes. The meeting also laid out the roadmap for future cooperation and enhancement in bilateral relations. The agreed minutes of the JCM were signed by the two ministers at the end of the meeting.

The External Affairs Minister also met Laotian Prime Minister Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith and discussed bilateral relations

and various areas of mutual interest and cooperation. Both the leaders agreed that India-Lao PDR enjoy excellent bilateral relations which need to be strengthened further through constant political dialogue and through increased trade and investment, the statement said. The External Affairs Minister assured Laotian Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith that India will stand by Lao PDR in its quest for development and growth and will be happy to assist through soft loans projects aimed at building Lao PDR's infrastructure including roads, agriculture and irrigation, IT, human resource development and any other sectors.

"During the visit, the Minister addressed the Indian community in Vientiane. The community was very happy to interact with the minister and warmly reciprocated the feeling. She asked the Indian community to forget all differences and work together as a community to promote the welfare of the Indian community in Lao PDR and also work towards contributing to the increase of bilateral contacts between India and

Lao PDR especially in the commercial and cultural fields," the statement added.

India and Lao PDR enjoy warm and friendly ties characterised by the exchange of regular visits at all levels. The two countries share age-old civilizational ties best symbolised by the relic of the Buddha encased in the That Luang Stupa, the national emblem of Lao PDR, and the Vat Phou Temple Complex, an ancient Shiva temple, whose earliest structures date back to the 5th and 6th Century AD, and which is currently being renovated and restored by the Archaeological Survey of India. "In recent decades, bilateral cooperation has grown in many areas including India's role in assisting Lao PDR in infrastructure building, human resources capacity building, agriculture and irrigation, Information Technology (IT) and education among others. Trade and economic cooperation have also been growing steadily," the statement further said.

(Excerpted from www.business-standard.com on 23 November 2018)

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Direct Flight Launched between India and Vietnam

Giving a special boost to tourism between the two nations, a direct flight from Kolkata to Hanoi is set to start from 3 October 2019, according to Vietnam's Ambassador to India, Pham Sanh Chau. We have launched direct Indigo flights between Kolkata and Hanoi, that will be starting from October 2019. We have also launched an online platform for Indian travellers to apply for a visa on arrival".

"It was three years back when PM Modi came to Vietnam. He decided to uplift the India-Vietnam relationship from a strategic

partnership to a comprehensive strategic partnership. I believe that the relationship will continue to grow," he added. He further highlighted how Hon'ble President Ram Nath Kovind became one of the first leaders to address the Vietnamese Parliament during his visit to the nation around six months ago. "The India-Vietnam relation is at all weather good and expands the relationship through practical steps.

(Excerpted from www.indiatoday.com on 20 June 2019)

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Remarks by...

We have also notified IndiGo and Vistara as designated Indian carriers under the India-Cambodia bilateral Air Services Agreement. We encourage them to start direct flights based on the airlines' commercial considerations.

We are pleased to accept Thailand's invitation for India to join the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) Initiative as a Development Partner. I am told our Senior Officials have had preliminary discussions on the ACMECS Master Plan 2019-2023.

(Excerpted from the Remarks by External Affairs Minister at the 10th Mekong Ganga Cooperation Ministerial Meeting, H.E. (Dr) Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister, Government of India at the 10th Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Ministerial Meeting in Singapore, 2 August 2019)

India, Vietnam to Strengthen Cooperation in Atomic Energy, Defence and Security

India and Vietnam agreed to further strengthen cooperation in defence and security, peaceful uses of atomic energy and outer space, oil and gas and renewable energy as Hon'ble Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu concluded his four-day visit to the Southeast Asian country.

During his visit, Mr. Naidu held talks with his Vietnamese counterpart Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Chairperson of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan. "Vice-President's talks with his Vietnamese interlocutors were extensive and productive and covered whole range of bilateral and multilateral cooperation," said a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs. Both sides agreed to further strengthen cooperation in

defence and security, peaceful uses of atomic energy and outer space, oil and gas, renewable energy, agriculture and innovation-based sectors, it said.

Vietnam is an important trade partner of India and their bilateral trade stood at nearly USD 14 billion last year having nearly doubled from USD 7.8 billion three years ago. Vice-President Naidu and Vietnam Prime Minister Phuc expressed commitment to enhancing trade and investments and agreed to facilitate direct air connectivity to promote tourism, trade and people-to-people relations. Both sides reiterated the importance of building a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region on the basis of respect for national sovereignty and international law, and expressed full commitment to an open, transparent, inclusive and

rules-based regional architecture based on freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded economic activities and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law, the statement said.

Vietnam's leaders appreciated India's long-standing development partnership engagement, especially scholarships and training programmes. They also thanked India for extending concessional Lines of Credit for defence industry cooperation and implementing other socio-cultural infrastructure projects in Vietnam under Indian grants-in-aid.

(Excerpted from www.thehindu.com on 12 May 2019)

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India Committed to Building Cooperative Relationship with Vietnam

India is committed to building its cooperative relationship with Vietnam in diverse fields, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu, pointing that agricultural growth has been a key driver in the remarkable progress achieved by the South East Asian country. In his first engagement after arriving on a four-day visit, the Vice-President addressed the Indian community in the country, highlighting their role and importance in promoting cultural understanding and harmony between India and Vietnam. Describing the ties between India and Vietnam as civilizational and historic, the Vice-President said, Our partnership has stood the test of time. More than 2000 years ago, Indian monks and traders brought with them the message of peace and compassion of Lord Buddha to Vietnam."

The Vice-President said that successive generations of leaders from Ho Chi Minh and Mahatma Gandhi to the current leaders have built upon this trust and goodwill. Referring to the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries, the Vice-President stated that India is committed to building its cooperative relationship

with Vietnam in diverse fields. "Over the years, Vietnam has been successful in making huge socio-economic advances. Sustained high levels of economic growth, combined with vision and foresight of its leadership, has ensured rapid progress, development and prosperity," he said.

Pointing out that agricultural growth has been a key driver in the remarkable progress achieved by Vietnam, he said India was privileged as a development partner to have contributed to Vietnam's agricultural revolution and food security. He said that an Archaeological Survey of India team has been working in Vietnam for the past three years for the conservation and restoration of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of MySon in Vietnam.

Expressing his satisfaction over the doubling of the trade between the two nations from USD 7.8 billion in 2016 to nearly USD 14 billion last year, he said both the nations must come together with pride and purpose and help each other grow and prosper.

Referring to India's growth story, the Vice President said that an ambitious and transformative vision was making

India one of the most favorite investment destinations in the world. India has become the fastest growing large economy in the world. We will be a USD 5 trillion economy by 2030, he added and gave a detailed overview of the progress achieved in various sectors.

The Vice-President said the Indian community in Vietnam, though small in number, has numerous achievements to its credit and was well respected. He said Indians and Indian business and industry in Vietnam have been instrumental in promoting bilateral understanding and creating opportunities for the local economy and society. He urged the Indian diaspora to contribute and join in the development agenda back home. Describing Indians living abroad as our cultural ambassadors, he told them continue to cherish their Indian roots and rich cultural traditions and at the same time nourish the socio-economic and cultural life of Vietnam.

(Excerpted from www.business-standard.com on 9 May 2019)

© *Business Standard*

India, Thailand to Firm up Maritime Security Cooperation

Expanding maritime security cooperation, joint defence production, counter-terrorism strategy and boosting trade and investment will be major focus of Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Cha's three-day visit to India. Chan-o-Cha will have extensive talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday on a slew of issues including enhancing overall defence and security cooperation and the South China Sea situation amid China's aggressive posture there. Counter-terror cooperation is emerging as a key area of partnership between Delhi and Bangkok with Thai government extraditing key fugitives.

The Thai Prime Minister is accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising the Deputy Prime Minister, five senior ministers and a big business delegation. The two sides will also deliberate on expanding cooperation in trade and tourism sector. India is keen on enhancing connectivity between the two countries and promoting the Buddhist tourist circuits.

Issues relating to the proposed free trade pact between the two countries may also figure in talks at the PM level. The volume of current annual bilateral trade between the two countries is nearly \$ 8 billion. Thailand is India's second largest trading partner in ASEAN after Singapore. "Indian companies invested \$63.45 million in 2014 and \$37.53 million last year in Thailand. Thai companies invested \$23.72

million in 2014 and \$23.12 million last year in India in real estate, infrastructure, food processing, chemicals, hotels and hospitality. Thailand's "Look West" policy complements the "Act East" mission of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, building on the "Look East" policy of his predecessor. Next year, the two countries will be celebrating 70 years of bilateral relations," according to a recent article on this visit in Thailand's leading English Daily Bangkok Post.

The Thai Prime Minister will visit Bodhi Gaya, a major place of pilgrimage for Buddhists, in Gaya district of Bihar before returning to Thailand on June 18. It will be Chan-o-Cha's (a former military general) first India visit as the PM. While US a traditional Thai ally has been lukewarm towards this regime in Bangkok, both Russia and China are extending support to the government. India on the other hand stays neutral and says it is internal matter for Thailand. Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra visited India in January 2012 and she was the Chief Guest for the Republic Day celebrations.

Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs Preeti Saran told media on the eve of the visit that India regards Thailand as "central pillar" of India's ties with ASEAN countries and a host of issues ranging from maritime security, trade and investment, education, tourism and space research are likely to figure prominently in talks. On maritime security,

she said cooperation between the two countries in the Indian Ocean is already "very strong" and ways to further enhance it may be explored. Saran said Thailand has shown interest in joint ventures in defence production and procurement of defence platforms from India. The issue may figure in the talks besides ways to combat terrorism. There could be pacts during the PM trip for establishing sister relations between Surat in Gujarat and Surat Thani province in Thailand, according to the Bangkok Post. The areas of expansion of trade will be sectors like steel, banking and food processing. India was keen on attracting Thai investment in the infrastructure sector. Another issue that will momentum with this visit is India-Myanmar-Thailand highway.

Saran said there was huge potential for expanding bilateral cooperation in the tourism sector. Currently, around one million Indians visit Thailand annually while the number of Thai people visiting India is around one lakh. The Thai Prime Minister will also address an event organised by industry chambers FICCI and CII where a joint business forum of the two countries will be formed which will give its recommendations on ways to boost trade.

(Excerpted from www.economictimes.indiatimes.com on 9 May 2019)

© *Economic Times*

Cambodia, the Home of Angkor Vat, has Potential to be the Fifth Hindu 'Dhaam'

The home of the holy Angkor Vat temple, Cambodia is fast on its way to being developed as the Fifth Dhaam (pilgrim spot) of Hindus. A major initiative in this direction has been taken by Shailesh Hiranandani of SRAM MRAM Ltd., in step with the campaign of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

The effort of holding a grand event to promote the cause was lauded by member of the RSS national committee Mr. Indresh Kumar, as he witnessed the huge congregation in Cambodia. Appreciating the efforts made, Kumar said that with

a shrine as revered as Angkor Vat and mountain Kulen, Cambodia deserved to be the fifth pilgrim spot for Hindus. He also stressed awareness about the glorious heritage and spread of Hindu values.

On the occasion, Mr. Hiranandani said, "Tourists from all over the world visit Cambodia to experience the mystic charm of Angkor Vat temple. There is a lot in Cambodia that defines Hinduism. It is commendable the way support is being extended from various quarters to the initiative of turning Cambodia into

the fifth pilgrim place of Hindus." It is noteworthy that to organise the event that was attended by Hindu followers from a number of countries across the world, 500 acres land had been acquired and 1,008 Shivalingas with different names were installed. Chief guest Indresh Kumar said after the Bhumi Pujan that with such extensive preparation, the day was not far when Cambodia could be recognised as the fifth Hindu dhaam.

(Excerpted from www.outlookindia.com on 6 June, 2018)

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Educational Cooperation, Trade, Reduced Visa Fees Needed to Boost India, Myanmar Ties

Recognising each other's educational degrees, reducing visa fees to boost tourism and a motor vehicle act to facilitate seamless trade are among the stepping stones on the way to deeper India-Myanmar ties, say officials and experts. Participants at a recent conference in Imphal also agreed on the need for better air connectivity, enhanced personnel deployment at the Integrated Check Point (ICP) in the border town of Moreh and overhauling the existing import mechanism to help farmers in Myanmar grow pulses and betel nuts.

The conference, which took the decision to work towards enhanced ties between the neighbours and speed up development in Myanmar and India's eastern region, was attended by a high-powered delegation, including the Chief Minister of Magway region, Dr Aung Moe Nyo, and the ambassadors of both nations.

Dr Moe Nyo emphasised that India and Myanmar need to explore the possibility of cooperation in education and health sectors. "Medical services are much cheaper in India as compared to other countries like Thailand and Singapore. Both the countries need to take concrete steps and collaborate in health and education sector," he told.

The June 11 event was organised by India Foundation, a New Delhi based think-tank that has signed an MoU with the Manipur government on developing a strategic vision for the state in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs. Dr Shristi Pukhrem, a senior research fellow at India Foundation, said the discussants agreed to further deepen their ties and work in a way so Yangon gains from India's Act East Policy. "The

two nations have mutually decided to work on signing an MoU on educational cooperation which should include recognition of educational degrees and facilitation of students in each-other's educational institutions," Pukhrem, who was part of the Indian delegation, told. As of now, the two countries do not recognise each other's educational degrees. She added that a motor vehicle agreement, which will ease vehicular movement between the two neighbours, was also in the pipeline.

"The Myanmar side asked India to ensure concerns of Myanmar farmers growing pulses and betel nuts must be taken into account to facilitate better import mechanism," she said. "Similarly, there was consensus on improving air connectivity between Imphal and Delhi so that Myanmar tourists who are coming to Imphal via road can visit Bodhgaya as part of their Buddhist pilgrimage," she added. The two sides also agreed to expedite work on starting a bus service between Mandalay to Imphal, a decision taken in 2012.

An agreement was reached on setting up an Indian Consulate or Visa office in Kaley in Sagaing division of Myanmar. "There was a detailed discussion on allowing tourists with e-Visas to cross into India from Myanmar across land border via Moreh as well as reduction of Visa fee for Indian tourists visiting Myanmar," she said. "Also, there was a call from the Myanmar side to have a full-fledged foreign exchange facility at Moreh is required," she added. Myanmar, the only Southeast Asian country which shares a 1,600-mile border with India, serves as its gateway to the other 10-member states of the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations. Four North Eastern states -- Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Manipur (398 km), Nagaland (215 km) and Mizoram (510 km) -- have unfenced borders with Myanmar. A senior diplomat at the MEA said the conference effectively positioned businesses and academia between the two nations.

Current bilateral trade between India and Myanmar stands at USD 1.75 billion, mainly comprising pulses, meat, products, timber and pharmaceuticals. Though the two nations agreed on boosting trade ties on several occasions, no concrete steps were taken till late last year. According to Khriezo Yhome, a senior research fellow at New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation (ORF), it is important that they ensure early completion of existing projects. "The idea that cooperation between India and Myanmar should begin at the borders is not new. The renewed focus towards translating the ideas into reality in recent years need to be sustained with periodic assessments of cross-border projects," Yhome, a prominent Indian expert on Indo-Myanmar affairs, told.

"Even as some infrastructure projects have seen progress in the recent past, the fact remains that many significant projects such as Imphal-Mandalay bus services or the trilateral highways are yet to see the light of the day," he said. "As new projects are initiated, it is important to ensure that ongoing projects are expedited as completion of these decade-old projects will boost confidence among local people and the business community," he added.

(Excerpted from www.economicstimes.indiatimes.com on 21 June 2019)

© Economic Times

India-CLMV Business Forum Meets to Promote Economic Ties in the Region

Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Hor Namhong urged companies in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) to look to India for potential business opportunities and partners, arguing that the South Asian giant is a key ally in the economic development of these countries.

Speaking during the fifth edition of the India-CLMV Business Forum, which is being hosted in Phnom Penh from May 21-22, 2018 Mr Namhong encouraged local companies to seek new partnerships with Indian companies to benefit from their business experience and gain access to

a vast market. "The India-CLMV Business Forum serves as an important vehicle to promote economic ties between India and CLMV countries," said Mr Namhong, who is presiding over the event together with

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Mapping Mekong Cooperation Complementarities and Policy Implications

Cambodia's ultimate goal is peace and prosperity. The best way to achieve this goal is to craft a foreign policy that places sustainable economic development at its core. In such spirit, Cambodia aligns our development strategies to take advantage of various flagship initiatives. At the sub-regional level, various Mekong cooperation mechanisms are complementary to Cambodia's economic diplomacy as well as efforts to bridge development gap, and pursue an inclusive and fully integrated ASEAN Economic Community.

There are 8 Mekong cooperation frameworks. Cambodia always seeks to capitalize from all the Mekong sub-regional cooperation mechanisms, namely 1) Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (India), 2) Mekong-Japan Cooperation, 3) Mekong-Republic of Korea Cooperation, 4) Lower Mekong Initiatives-LMI (the United States), 5) Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (People's Republic of China), 6) Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), 7) Mekong River Commission (MRC) and 8) the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS).

Cambodia regards all Mekong partners as the key strategic and economic partners in our diversification strategy. More than being a participant, Cambodia is also playing a leading role in contributing to agenda-setting of various Mekong platforms as host and chair of the high-level meetings.

For instance, in January 2018, Cambodia chaired the 2nd MLC Leaders' Meeting in Phnom Penh and in April of the same year, Cambodia hosted the 3rd Mekong River Commission (MRC) Summit in Siem Reap. Cambodia and Thailand successfully co-chaired with the United States at the First LMI Policy Dialogue in April this year in Bangkok, and Cambodia led the discussion with the US on the strengthening of STEM education in the region. Coming in the pipeline, Cambodia

will chair the 9th ACMECS Summit and 7th GMS Summit in 2020.

Countries still deem opportunities to interact and cooperate as fundamental to promote dialogue for peace and cooperation for sustainable development. Sustainable peace and development remains the core collective interest for all of us, especially for post-war zone like the Mekong region.

Mekong sub-region is an integral part of the ASEAN Community and even a center of the global growth engine, it is worthy to note that we did not come thus far by succumbing to the "zero-sum game mindset", but instead we have consistently adhered to win-win cooperation and multilateralism approach anchored by a strong spirit of mutual trust, respect and equality.

Most of the Mekong cooperation mechanisms are sort of common diplomatic platform for engagement between the Mekong nations and regional powers on a wide range of priority areas. It is possible to say that the Mekong mechanism is a "clustering factor" of development efforts of all the Mekong countries across many fields.

Mekong frameworks continue to evolve, uniqueness of each mechanism starts to emerge and they have complimented one another from their own individual specialty and values added. For instance, no mechanism is going to replace the technical expertise on water data that has been excelled by the MRC and no other mechanism is going to best capitalize on the strength of the economic corridors that have been developed under the GMS either. This is also true for specific development partners as they seek to carve their own niche in their interaction with the Mekong countries.

With an annual growth rate of up to 7%, the Mekong countries shines brightly and the region has been considered as one of the main driving forces behind regional and global economic growth. Economies

now constitute a consumer and labor market of over 300 million people, with rising incomes and a combined GDP that could exceed \$1 trillion by 2020.

Several Mekong frameworks also means that tangible and concrete funding for cooperation is not something that is always readily available. Therefore, countries in the region need to find alternatives for diversified sources

Moreover, when it comes to the issues of ownership and stake-holdership, it is fair to say that Mekong countries don't want to be inactive and passive by listening to reports of completed projects without any involvement in any process of project formulation and delivery.

As the development challenges are too huge, it is the role of the Mekong countries to encourage healthy competition among development partners mindful that cooperation and complementarity should be the core spirit instead of the "zero-sum mindset" or strategic division and confrontation. The Mekong countries are mindful that Mekong platforms should not be politicized or become an arena to push for anti-China, anti-US, anti-Japan, anti-Korea, anti-India polarization or fall prey to geopolitical consequences that are the remembrances of the recent past.

Finally, as various Mekong frameworks continue to evolve robustly, Cambodia is proud that we could play a role in setting the agenda for the development of the Mekong region by actively engaging as a host and co-chair of various platforms. For future to come, Cambodia is highly and consistently committed to push further the above endeavors for the best interest of sustainable peace, sustainable development and shared prosperity for peoples in the region.

(Excerpted from www.khmertimeskh.com on June 17, 2019)

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Greater Focus on MGC for Closer CLMV Linkages

During the 10th Foreign Ministers Meeting of the MGC held on August 1, Jaishankar emphasised on greater sub-regional cooperation and intra-regional connectivity. MGC is an additional sub-regional platform for better integration and connectivity with the ASEAN countries that helps India to deal with a variety of transnational issues such as Climate Change, Sustainable Development Goals 2030, Blue Economy, etc. Another important development was India joining the Ayeyawady-Chaophraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS). MGC economies have complementary advantage and India's participation in the ACMECS will help it become a stakeholder in the sub-regions' development.

The newly adopted MGC Plan of Action (2019-2022) aims not only to strengthen cooperation in the existing seven areas but has been expanded to include three new areas of cooperation- skills development and capacity building,

science & technology, and water resource management.

Capacity building is a key area where India stands out in the region and MGC has become a vehicle for India's engagement with the CLMV countries. India's outreach to the smaller Southeast Asian economies such as Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar has been shaped by capacity building under the framework of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and MGC Scholarship, and Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). There are 50 scholarships assigned annually to MGC countries by the ICCR. Since the introduction of QIPs in MGC in 2014, US\$ 1.2 million worth financial assistance for 24 QIPs (15 in Cambodia and nine in Vietnam) has been disbursed. During the current year, 18 QIPs worth US\$ 900,000 will be executed.

The QIPs have gained popularity and appreciation among recipient countries

and the offers have been actively utilised. Unlike China's Belt and Road Initiative, India's outreach to the Southeast Asian region pivots on capacity building with grass-root development at its core. Although MGC is not as dynamic as New Delhi would like it to be, yet it is an effective instrument for pursuing India's developmental programmes in the region.

There is an increasing realisation that India-ASEAN connectivity aspirations can also be steered through the MGC. Noteworthy is the India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway, which aims to link India's Northeast with the Southeast Asian countries via the Asian highway. Although the IMT has been languishing and missed several deadlines like the other connectivity initiatives- Kaladan Multimodal Transport project, it is hoped that these would gain higher precedence during the Modi 2.0 regime and provide the much needed critical boost to the AEP.

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Fillip to 'Act East' as India Joins Key Sub-Regional Group

In a big fillip to its Act East Policy, India was formally accepted as a partner of a sub-regional grouping comprising Myanmar, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam, that would provide greater impetus to connectivity, trade and people-to-people ties with its Southeast Asian neighbours. As External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar co-chaired the 10th Mekong Ganga Cooperation Ministerial Meeting in the Thailand capital, along with his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Binh Minh, India was accepted as a development partner of the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) Initiative as a Development Partner.

The five countries represent half the membership of the 10-member ASEAN organisation, comprising over 240 million people, and are among the fastest growing. The ACMECS regions is connected to India by land through the northeast region, and water, through the riverine route and sea. ACMECS is also strategically located, between China and India, two of the largest and fastest growing economies in the world.

Jaishankar, in his speech, stressed on connectivity with the region, on the early completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and its extension to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. He also stressed on quickly finalising the India-Myanmar-Thailand Motor Vehicle Agreement to facilitate seamless movement of goods and passengers across borders, thus leading to greater trade and tourism, at the next meeting in October this year. On connectivity with the MGC countries, Jaishankar said India had announced a \$1 billion Line of Credit (LOC) for connectivity projects in ASEAN, and urged the countries interested in specific projects to hold discussions to take them forward.

On measures taken for direct air connectivity, which would help in business and tourism, he said that IndiGo is to start direct flights on the New Delhi-Ho Chi Minh City sector from October this year and daily services from Kolkata to Yangon from late September. "We have also notified IndiGo and Vistara as designated Indian carriers under the India-Cambodia bilateral Air Services

Agreement. We encourage them to start direct flights based on the airlines' commercial considerations," he added.

In another move stressing on the common cultural and historical linkages between India and Southeast Asia, India is working towards operationalization of the Common Archival Resource Centre (CARC) at Nalanda University, in Bihar.

Jaishankar sought the help of the countries in sourcing copies of historical documents and replicas of art works and artefacts for the CARC. "These artworks and artefacts will be made digitally available by the CARC to scholars from around the world interested in academic research on India-Southeast Asia historical and civilisational linkages," he said.

In another move to highlight the common cultural linkages, he said India is working with Cambodia to make the MGC Textiles Museum in Siem Reap, financially self-sustaining, including by promoting the Museum as a tourist attraction. He urged the members to

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India Needs to Gear Up For Stronger Economic Partnership with Old Ally Vietnam

India and Vietnam have historically shared friendly relations and India enjoys substantial goodwill in the country. In 2016, the Strategic Partnership between the two countries was upgraded to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Defence ties form the bedrock of India's relations with Vietnam because of convergence in strategic interests and mutual concerns about China but economic relations remain much below potential. India's total trade with Vietnam currently stands at about US\$ 12.2 billion. Meat and fish products are India's largest export items to Vietnam and electrical machinery and equipment are India's main import items from Vietnam. India currently ranks 27th among all foreign investors in Vietnam with a total investment capital of US\$ 756 million. Indian investments are much smaller in magnitude as compared to other Asian countries like China, Japan, and South Korea and only a handful of large Indian firms such as ONGC Videsh, Marico Industries, TATA Group etc dominate India's portfolio.

India has undertaken several initiatives in recent years to boost its economic ties with Vietnam under the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation and its engagement with the CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) sub-region. Several delegations from India have also visited Vietnam to explore investment opportunities and held consultations with Vietnamese officials to develop closer ties in the textiles and garments industry. Such efforts have not met with much success. This is largely because the Indian textile and garments industry is in bad shape. Many Vietnamese

officials and researchers interviewed by this author during her field work, revealed that textiles and garments industry is not an appropriate sector for collaboration between India and Vietnam because the Indian textile sector is not globally competitive. India's product quality is not at par with other countries and Indian firms typically fail to meet the tight schedule of the value chain. Given the importance of the textile sector in India's organised sector employment, this is bad news.

To facilitate Indian investments in the CLMV countries in the manufacturing sector and help Indian companies get integrated with the regional value chains, the Indian government set up the Project Development Fund worth Rs 500 crore in 2016. This was undoubtedly the most important initiative by the Indian government but many analysts have expressed their anguish over the operationalisation of this fund. Also, data from the EXIM Bank reveals that so far only one project, the possibility of setting up a pharmaceutical manufacturing unit, has been identified in Vietnam. Textiles and manufacturing sector, one of the main sectors in which India sought to engage with Vietnam has been ignored.

India's development cooperation strategy in Vietnam has also not been very helpful in promoting India's economic engagements in the country. The Exim Bank of India has extended concessional credit lines worth US\$ 691 million to Vietnam for various infrastructure projects. The largest project is the US\$ 500 million credit line to procure defence equipment from India. Although defence cooperation is an essential component of

India's relations with Vietnam, this project has suffered from many delays. One of the main reasons behind the delay is Vietnam's concern about its rising public debt. The country's current public debt-to-GDP ratio is about 63.9% which is close to the ceiling of 65%. Moreover, Vietnam finds India's lines of credit programme unattractive because of the relatively higher rate of interest of 1.75% and the mandatory procurement of 75% of the materials from India. The country can access funds from China, Japan, and South Korea at much cheaper rates.

With an underperforming manufacturing sector, sluggish export growth, and job losses in the manufacturing in the last couple of months, business as usual can not be an option for India. To achieve the target of increasing manufacturing share in GDP to 25%, India needs to learn from the experience of other countries in Asia like Vietnam which have industrialised very rapidly in a short span of time and get integrated into regional value chains because over three-quarters of global trade takes place through value chains. India should also try to make its development cooperation more effective and make sure that instruments lines of credit deepen India's economic engagements with partner countries like Vietnam. In a nutshell, stronger strategic partnership with Vietnam is good news but we also need stronger economic partnership with Vietnam.

(Excerpted from <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com> on August 20, 2019, authored by Dr Malan Cha Chakrabarty)

© Economics Times

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Greater Focus on MGC for Closer...

India's politico-diplomatic engagement with the ASEAN as also its bilateral engagement in the region is heavily focused on bigger economies. Similarly, BIMSTEC has received greater consideration from India. It is important for India to give equal attention to its MGC initiatives. The MGC countries have

figured prominently in India's civilizational linkages and cultural and social contacts bind them together.

The new agenda under the MGC i.e. water resource management, skills enhancement and capacity building, specifically focus on human dimensions of security and prosperity. A sustained follow-up on these two items alongside

science & technology cooperation has the potential to link these two civilization neighbours in bolstering ties that would bring enormous benefits to all stakeholders.

(Excerpted from www.khmertimeskh.com on August 26, 2019, authored by Ms Sana Hashmi)

© Khnertimes

The Opening of an India-Myanmar Land Border Crossing: A Boon for Northeast India

The recent opening of two land-border crossings between India and Myanmar at Tamu/Moreh in the state of Manipur and Rihkhawdar-Zowkhawtar in Mizoram will go a long way toward bringing India and Myanmar closer. According to a statement issued by the Indian Embassy in Myanmar, “the landmark Land Border Crossing Agreement between India and Myanmar, signed on May 11, 2018, has been brought into effect with the simultaneous opening of international entry-exit checkpoints at the Tamu-Moreh and the Rihkhawdar-Zowkhawtar border between Myanmar and India.”

First, Myanmar shares an almost 1,600km border with four Northeast Indian states: Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram. Many of the people who live in these provinces of India have brethren living across the border in Myanmar (like in the case of the Nagas of Nagaland).

Second, Myanmar is crucial for New Delhi's connectivity initiatives in the region, particularly in light of its non-participation in the Beijing-led Belt and Road Initiative. India, Myanmar, and Thailand are working on the trilateral India-Myanmar-Thailand highway, which is expected to be see completion by the end of next year. There are also plans to

connect it with pre-existing highways all the way to Da Nang in Vietnam.

Third, this will give a leg-up to the Indian involvement in Myanmar, especially in the field of infrastructure, where Beijing seems to have stolen a march over New Delhi. The India-funded Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, which will allow for sea-access for the landlocked Northeastern states of India via the Kaladan river in Myanmar, has been plagued by delays. The opening of the land routes will strengthen New Delhi's case when it comes to the actual delivery of projects and initiatives.

Meanwhile, the Narendra Modi government after taking office in India in 2014 had renamed the “Look-East Policy” as the “Act-East Policy.” The central government, in concert with the state governments, has also been given a big push to infrastructure development in the Northeastern region. In May last year, Modi inaugurated the Bhupen Hazarika Setu bridge in Assam, which connects upper Assam and the eastern reaches of the border state of Arunachal Pradesh. At 9.15 km across, this bridge is India's longest bridge.

Fourth, the opening of these land border crossings will help in the growth of tourism in Northeast India and Myanmar.

The Northeastern states are strikingly beautiful and many people in Myanmar and other ASEAN nations in the future could visit the Northeast Indian states.

Fifth, this will help in the growth of medical tourism in the Northeastern states of the country, which offer high quality medical services at reasonable rates, something which may interest people living in the border regions of Myanmar.

Finally, the opening of these land routes also reflects the rapid growth in India-ASEAN ties, which was exemplified by the presence of the heads of state of all the ASEAN states at India's Republic Day celebrations earlier in January this year for the ASEAN-India commemorative summit.

Relations have indeed moved a long way since 1992 when New Delhi became a sectoral dialogue partner of ASEAN. Steps like these will aid India's outreach to the ASEAN countries. Myanmar is India's land bridge to ASEAN and hence closer connectivity with Myanmar is sine qua non for the success of India's “Act-East Policy.”

(Excerpted from www.thediplomat.com on 13 August 2018 authored by Rupakjyoti Borah)

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What's Next for Vietnam-India Defense Relations?

Vietnam and India have been looking to advance their existing defense relationship as part of their wider ties, which were elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2016. Defense ties have grown in recent years to include not just the traditional components of ties like exchanges and port calls but also the training of personnel, capacity-building funding and equipment, coast guard collaboration, and pacts on areas such as white shipping and outer space. That trend in defense ties has continued on into 2018. The defense component of the relationship has featured in high-level exchanges between the two sides, including visits to India by both Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and President Tran Dai Quang in January and

March 2018 respectively. In June, India's Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also visited Vietnam which saw the defense aspect of ties highlighted again.

The relationship was in the spotlight again when Vietnam's Deputy Defense Minister, Nguyen Chi Vinh, was on a visit to India. Though the visit, which lasted from July 31 to August 2, saw Vinh participate in a series of engagements, the highlight was when both sides chaired the 11th iteration of the Vietnam-India Defense Policy Dialogue at the Indian defense ministry. According to official accounts of the meeting, both sides used the opportunity to review the state of defense ties to date, including progress on the implementation of already agreed areas of collaboration. They also discussed ways

to improve ties further in various aspects, including with respect to bilateral ties in terms of areas such as maritime security, defense industry collaboration, science and technology, and training.

Apart from the areas of collaboration, some of the headlines, particularly in India, were unsurprisingly focused on the state of potential deals on defense items between the two sides, as well as the wider geopolitical implications of closer India-Vietnam ties for New Delhi's broader relationships, including its ties with China.

As I have observed previously with respect to such interactions, inroads both sides are continuing to make should not obscure the broader realities and structural constraints that exist, including

...Continued on page 18

Events

Interaction with Tamu Border Authority

Mr. Nandan Singh Bhasora, Consul General meeting at Border Trade Chamber of Commerce, Tamu by visiting 4 member Study Team, led by Dr Prabir De, Coordinator, ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at RIS along with Prof. Priyaranjan Dash, Manipur University regarding a study on Trilateral Highway and Its Implication on India's Northeast region and further its extension of Trilateral Highway from India- Myanmar-Thailand to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam for seamless movement of goods and people across the borders- an economic corridor. The meeting was attended by District Collector, Tamu; Department of Trade, Customs; Trade Chambers from Moreh and Tamu, and other stake holders and business community from India



Group photo with Mr. Nandan Singh Bhasora, Consul General, Mandalay; India Study Team head by Dr. Prabir De, Coordinator, AIC and Prof. Priyaranjan Dash, Manipur University with Tamu Border Authority and other stake holders.

and Myanmar. Deliberations were held on border trade, procedures, impediments, setting up a Joint Border Trade Committee, Rupee Trade, early

completion of connectivity projects, e-visa, border pass, air and bus connectivity, Motor Vehicle Agreement & various other issues.

10th Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Ministerial Meeting



The 10th Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Ministerial Meeting was held at Bangkok, Thailand on 1st August 2019. The Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and H.E. Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India, and attended by H.E. Dr. Sok Siphana, Advisor to the Royal Government

of Cambodia; H.E. Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR; H.E. Mr. Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; and H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand. During this meeting, new MGC Plan of Action 2019-2022 was adopted that envisages project-based coop-

eration in the seven areas of MGC cooperation, namely tourism and culture, education, public health and traditional medicine, agriculture and allied sectors, transport and communication, MSMEs as well as three new areas of cooperation, i.e. water resources management, science and technology, skill development and capacity building.

Resources

Mekong-Ganga Cooperation: Breaking Barriers and Scaling New Heights

ASEAN India Centre (AIC) and Research and Information System for the Developing Countries (RIS), 2017,

ISBN: 8171221289



In view of India's Act East Policy, India has been strengthening its economic integration with Southeast and East Asian countries. Over the years partnership with ASEAN in general and countries in Mekong region in particular has made considerable movement. This Report discusses various aspects of India-Mekong relations such as India-Mekong trade, strengthening regional value chains, facilitating foreign direct investment, connectivity, harnessing border economic zones, Mekong- Ganga cultural fusion, among others. The comprehensive Report makes significant policy recommendations for further strengthening of Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC).

Myanmar's Integration with the World: Challenges and Policy Options

Edited by Prabir De and Ajitava Raychaudhuri, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017



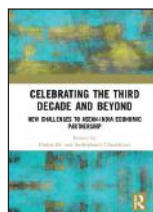
ISBN: 9789811051333

This book comprehensively investigates the challenges to Myanmar's access to the global market. Myanmar is a late entrant in the global trade and investment scenario after years of isolation. However, it has large untapped potentials for trade and investment in minerals, agro and forest based industries, other labour intensive industries, services like tourism, IT, etc. Chapters of the book explore the implication of democratic transition of Myanmar, the progress of Myanmar's industry and infrastructure, its international linkages and feasible options for integrating more in regional economic groups and also analyses how far Myanmar could exploit the global value chain.

Celebrating the Third Decade and Beyond: New Challenges to ASEAN-India Economic Partnership

Edited by Prabir De and Suthiphand Chirathivat, Routledge, 2018

ISBN: 9781138484788

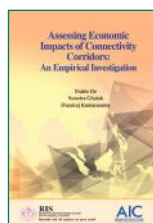


This book is a timely initiative to review the past and suggest the ways to further strengthen the economic partnership. It primarily deals with the economic integration issues between ASEAN and India, and assesses policy priorities, effectiveness, implementation imperatives and challenges. Each chapter in this book tries to capture essential features of the crosscutting issues and attempts to draw some policy implications. It will be a valuable reference for policymakers, academics and practitioners.

Assessing Economic Impacts of Connectivity Corridors: An Empirical Investigation

ASEAN India Centre (AIC) and Research and Information System for the Developing Countries (RIS), 2018

ISBN: 817122136X



This study has examined the developmental impact of existing East West Corridor (EWC) and the proposed cross-border corridors such as Trilateral Highway (TH), Kaladan multi-modal transit transport corridor, and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) on the Indian states with particular focus on the NER states based on economic geography model. The study finds that corridor-based development projects may generate economic activities and regional development, which, in turn, would influence economic growth through higher production and consumption. The study has important policy implications in promoting economic activities and regional development.

Outcome Document of Mekong-Ganga Cooperation: "Stronger Connectivity, Enhancing Ties"

ASEAN India Centre (AIC) and Research and Information System for the Developing Countries (RIS), 2017

ISBN: 8171221289

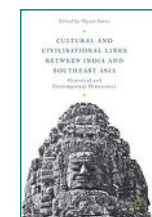


This is an outcome document of the policy dialogue entitled "Stronger Connectivity, Enhancing Ties", held on 8 April, 2017 at New Delhi. This recommended hosting of an MGC seminar focusing on building stronger connectivity and enhancing our multi-dimensional ties. The ASEAN-India Centre at RIS was entrusted with the task of convening such an interaction and providing a platform for sharing of views, ideas and proposals aimed at strengthening MGC. This volume has several policy suggestions for the way forward.

Cultural and Civilisational Links between India and Southeast Asia: Historical and Contemporary Dimensions

Edited by Shyam Saran, Palgrave Macmillan 2018

ISBN: 9789811073168



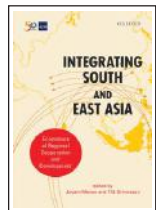
The book presents the study undertaken by the ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) on India's cultural links with Southeast Asia, with particular reference to historical and contemporary dimensions. The book traces ancient trade and maritime links, Chola Empire and Southeast Asia, religious exchanges (the Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic heritage), language, scripts and folklore, performing arts, painting and sculpture, architecture, role of the Indian Diaspora, contemporary cultural interaction, etc.

Resources

Integrating South and East Asia

Edited by Jayant Menon and Srinivasan T.N., Oxford University Press, 2018

ISBN: 9780199474127



This book evaluates the economic implications of increasing cooperation between the two regions, providing empirical analyses for informed policy decisions and improved outcomes.

Exploring the role of market forces as well as domestic and regional policies, it examines how integration helps in spurring inclusive economic development in small economies. It also focuses on the prospects for India's integration with East Asia, elaborating on its role as the biggest driver of integration in the sub-region.

Act East: ASEAN-India Shared Cultural Heritage

ASEAN India Centre (AIC) and Research and Information System for the Developing Countries (RIS), 2019

ISBN: 81-7122-140-8

This book presents essays on India's cultural links with Southeast Asia, with

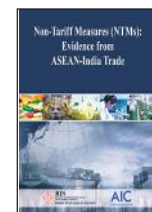


particular reference to cultural heritage. This book presents a set of papers which were presented at the 2nd International Conference on "ASEAN-India Cultural Links: Historical and Contemporary Dimensions", held at Jakarta on 19 January 2017.

Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs): Evidence from ASEAN-India Trade

ASEAN India Centre (AIC) and Research and Information System for the Developing Countries (RIS), 2019

ISBN: 81-7122-145-9



This Report presents perspectives of exporting and importing firms on ASEAN-India trade and their experiences on NTMs that are hindering the trade between them.

The Report has used both primary and secondary data. The Report has also reviewed awareness and perception on NTMs, FTAs and trade facilitation related issues. The Report has used various methods to assess the incidence of NTMs and its impacts on

ASEAN-India trade, both at the country and sectoral levels. The Report has also analysed the regulatory environment, identified the regulatory gaps and has presented a series of recommendations in order to ease the burden of NTMs on the ASEAN-India trade.

Sailing to Suvarnabhumi: Cultural Routes and Maritime Landscapes

Himanshu Prabha Ray and Susan Mishra, ASEAN India Centre (AIC) and Research and Information System for the Developing Countries (RIS), 2019



The book presents the study undertaken by the ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) on 'Sailing to Suvarnabhumi: Cultural Routes and Maritime Landscapes', which covers various themes of India and Southeast Asia interactions and the array of collection of bibliography. The Working Paper series and Bibliographies of the ASEAN countries prepared to date have been uploaded on the AIC-RIS website at <http://aic.ris.org.in/culture-and-civilization>.

Continued from page 12

Fillip to 'Act East' as India Joins...

contribute artefacts and exhibits from all their countries to enhance the displays, and help in making the Museum a hotspot by hosting academic and cultural events at the venue.

He said that India has begun work on developing an MGC website to disseminate information about joint cooperation activities, as well as on important trade and travel fairs and cultural events. "We should look at launching it before January 2020," he said. India is also planning to hold a regional conference on traditional and complementary medicine in November this year, where health regulators and traditional medicine practitioners of the region would be invited.

In the joint statement, the Ministers

adopted the new MGC Plan of Action 2019-2022 that envisages project-based cooperation in seven areas -- tourism and culture, education, public health and traditional medicine, agriculture and allied sectors, transport and communication, MSMEs as well as three new areas of cooperation, i.e. water resources management, science and technology, skill development and capacity building.

They welcomed India joining the ACMECS, and directed senior officials to identify specific projects from the list of ACMECS priority projects for joint implementation, "focusing particularly on projects that can also complement joint projects already being undertaken by India with the ACMECS countries both under bilateral and other multilateral frameworks such as the MGC, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

(BIMSTEC) and ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations".

The Ministers welcomed India's assistance to Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam under the MGC Quick Impact Projects (QIP) Scheme and noted that since its inception in 2014, 24 projects have been completed so far. In 2019, 18 QIPs will be implemented in Cambodia, Vietnam and Lao PDR at a cost of \$900,000. Myanmar was urged to identify projects of mutual interest under the QIP Scheme. The Ministers also appreciated India's pledge of Rs 5 billion (equivalent to \$72.5 million) under a Project Development Fund to facilitate Indian investments in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.

(Excerpted from www.outlookindia.com on August 2, 2019)

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Statistical Indicators

Socio and Macro Economic Indicators of MGC Countries, 2017

Indicator	India	Cambodia	Lao PDR	Myanmar	Thailand	Vietnam
Population, total (million)	1338.66	16.01	6.95	53.38	69.21	94.60
GDP (current billion US\$)	2652.55	22.18	16.85	66.72	455.28	223.78
GDP per capita (current US\$)	1981.50	1385.26	2423.85	1249.83	6578.19	2365.62
GDP (PPP current billion \$)	9596.84	64.35	48.25	329.50	1240.05	648.74
Agriculture and allied, value added (% of GDP)	15.62	23.36	16.20	23.33	8.33	15.34
Industry, value added (% of GDP)	26.50	30.85	30.91	36.29	35.28	33.40
Services, etc., value added (% of GDP)	48.45	39.72	41.53	40.37	56.40	41.26
Trade (% of GDP)	40.77	124.79	75.83	47.95	122.52	200.38
GDP Growth Rate (%), (2000-2017)	4.66	5.03	8.73	6.49	2.60	6.18
Gross capital formation (% of GDP)	30.94	22.89	29.04	32.76	22.84	26.58
Gross domestic savings (% of GDP)	29.99	21.49	21.90	28.74	34.90	25.46
Inflation, consumer prices (annual %)	2.49	2.89	0.83	4.57	0.67	3.52

Source: World Development Indicator, World Bank.

Intra-regional Trade

Year	ASEAN-India		BIMSTEC		MGC		SAARC	
	Value (US\$ Billion)	Share (%)	Value (US\$ Billion)	Share (%)	Value (US\$ Billion)	Share (%)	Value (US\$ Billion)	Share (%)
2000	8.99	2.17	3.92	3.42	3.95	3.19	2.20	4.62
2005	22.90	4.09	9.65	4.29	9.63	3.94	8.34	6.37
2010	58.40	5.83	23.67	5.38	31.30	6.28	16.07	6.03
2018	86.04	11.47	47.58	7.48	73.42	8.67	32.08	8.13

Source: WITS Database, World Bank.

India-CLMV Business....

Continued from page 10

Mr. Pan Sorasak, the Cambodian Minister of Commerce. Other high-profile guests to the event include Mr. Suresh Prabhu, Hon'ble Minister of Commerce, Mr. Than Myint, Myanmar's Minister of Commerce, and Mr. CaoQuoc Hung, Vietnam's Vice-Minister of Industry and Trade.

Apart from promoting new business partnerships, the forum aims to provide a platform for decision makers in CLMV countries to interact with Indian companies involved in trading,

manufacturing, processing, engineering, consultancy and construction. As a result of discussions and negotiations conducted at the India CLMV Business Forum in 2009, the flow of investment from India to ASEAN increased by 9.4 percent from 2015 to 2016, according to the Cambodian Minister of Commerce Mr. Pan Sorasak.

(Excerpted from www.khmertimeskh.com on 22 May, 2018)

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Vietnam-India Defense Relations.....
Continued from page 14

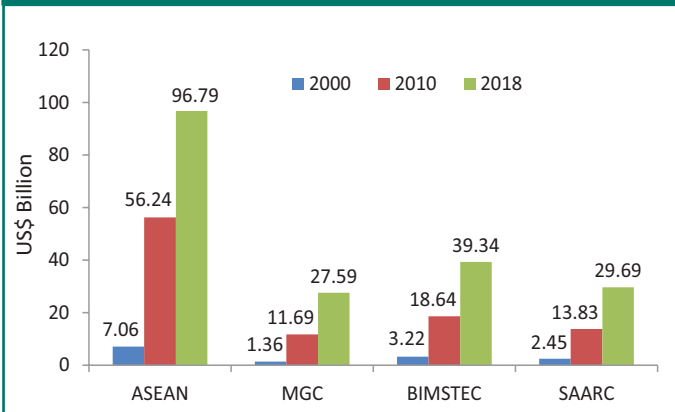
India being just one partner for Vietnam within its wider omni-directional foreign policy, the limits of strategic alignment between New Delhi and Hanoi across specific issues, and the remaining obstacles to development in particular areas of defense cooperation on both sides despite the sunny rhetoric. Nonetheless, engagements at various levels, including this dialogue at the deputy ministerial level, continue to provide opportunities for both sides to manage this aspect of ties.

(Excerpted from www.thediplomat.com on 20 June 2019 authored by Prashanth Parameswaran)

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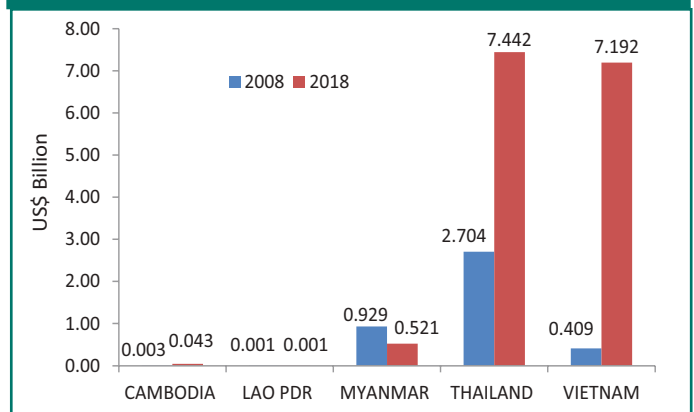
Statistical Indicators

India's Total Trade with Regional Blocks



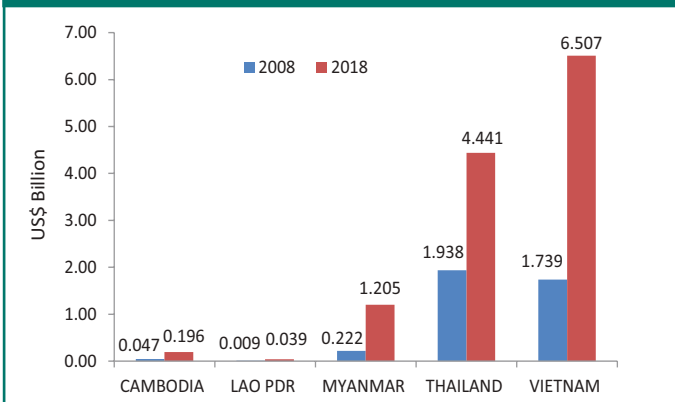
Source: Export Import Data Bank, Government of India.

India's Import from MGC Countries by Partners



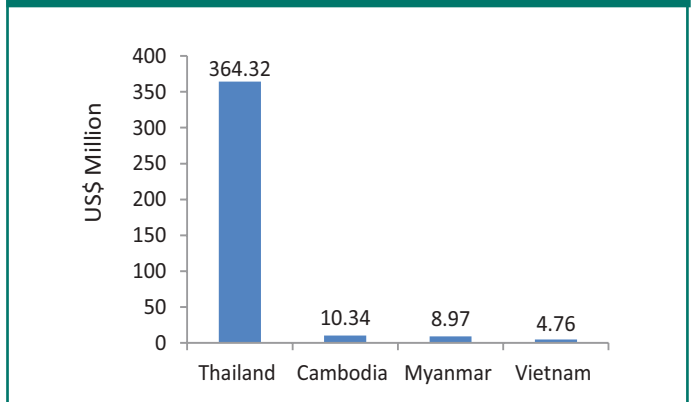
Source: Export Import Data Bank, Government of India.

India's Export to MGC countries by Partners



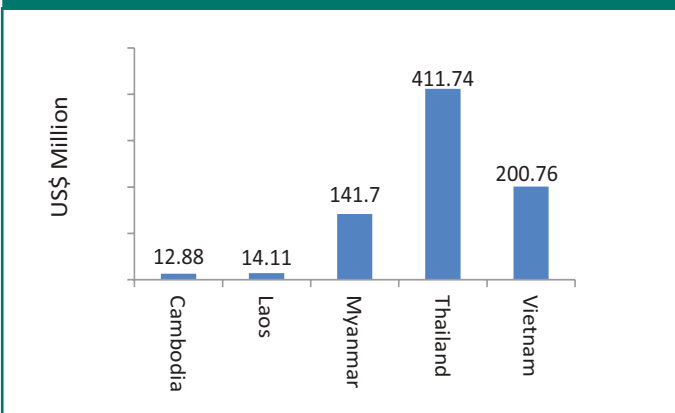
Source: Export Import Data Bank, Government of India.

FDI Inflows to India: 2000-2017



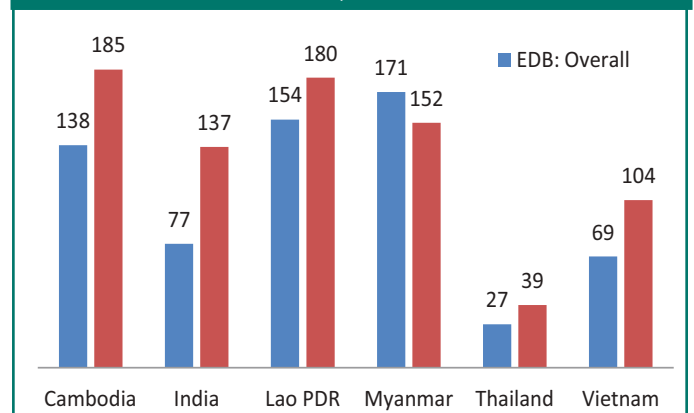
Source: Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Government of India.

FDI Outflows from India: 2008-2016



Source: Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Government of India.

Ease of Doing Business Index, 2018



Source: World Bank.

Mekong-Ganga Policy Brief

An RIS Publication on Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC)

The *Mekong-Ganga Policy Brief* seeks to disseminate the policy-related research, news, viewpoints, and information about resources among the policy circles and think-tanks to promote the cause of deeper cooperation between India and Mekong countries. Views expressed by the authors in this policy brief are their personal, and do not represent the views of AIC or RIS. The information contained has been compiled from various sources, as cited, purely for education and dissemination, and not for commercial purposes. The copyrights of the material included remain with the original sources. *Mekong-Ganga Policy Brief* is available from AIC or RIS or can be downloaded from www.ris.org.in.

About RIS

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) is a New Delhi-based autonomous policy research institute that specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. RIS is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues. The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. RIS is engaged across inter-governmental processes of several regional economic cooperation initiatives. Through its intensive network of think tanks, RIS seeks to strengthen policy coherence on international economic issues and the development partnership canvas. For more information about RIS and its work programme, please visit its website: 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 set-up 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. AIC undertakes policy research, advocacy and networking activities with organizations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN, with an aim to promote the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership. For more information please visit <http://aic.ris.org.in>

Contact us at:



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विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

AIC

ASEAN-India Centre at RIS

Core IV-B, Fourth Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110 003, India

Ph.: +91-11-24682177-80, Fax: +91-11-24682173-74

E-mail: dgoffice@ris.org.in; aic@ris.org.in , Website: www.ris.org.in

Editorial Team

Editor: Prof. Prabir De, Coordinator, AIC

Managing Editors: Dr. Beena Pandey, RIS and Dr. Durairaj Kumarasamy, RIS

Research Support: Ms. Sreya Pan, RIS