

The ASEAN



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ASEAN-India Friendship Year: Moving Forward Together

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Community of Values
30th Anniversary Celebrations of
ASEAN-India diplomatic relations



Community of Values
30th Anniversary Celebrations of
ASEAN-India diplomatic relations

2022 is the ASEAN-India Friendship Year, celebrating 30 years of the ASEAN-India diplomatic relations.

To start the commemorative year, the ASEAN-India Logo Design and Tagline Contest was launched from 14 February to 14 March 2022 and opened to all citizens of ASEAN and India.

Bew Thanakorn Khumkhrua's entry was chosen from over 1200 submissions, with the tagline, "Community of Values." His logo features the number 30 and the infinity symbol, representing the 30 years of unity and relationship between ASEAN and India. Arpit Shankar and Vatsal Shah were awarded as the 1st and 2nd finalists, respectively.

The winning logo and tagline were used for commemorative events and activities to mark the ASEAN-India Friendship Year 2022.

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ASEAN-India Friendship Year

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Dato Lim Jock Hoi
Secretary-General of ASEAN

As ASEAN commemorates 30 years of diplomatic relations with India this year, I am happy to note that our relations continue to deepen at every level. The ASEAN-India partnership has not only led to greater ASEAN regional and global engagement, but also the fostering of regional peace, stability and prosperity. This was reaffirmed at the 19th ASEAN-India Summit in November this year, which declared the establishment of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership that will strengthen more multifaceted collaboration for both sides.

Today, India stands as one of ASEAN's largest trade partners and the region's top 10 foreign direct investment (FDI) sources. Thanks to significant achievements in ASEAN-India economic cooperation, primarily through the implementation of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area, our economic relations remain resilient and dynamic despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Two-way trade between ASEAN and India reached 91.5 billion US dollars, increasing by 39.2 per

Message from the Secretary-General of ASEAN

cent year-on-year while total FDI inflows from India increased from 0.2 million US dollars in 2020 to 2 billion US dollars in 2021.

Meanwhile, trade connectivity between ASEAN and India is instrumental in sustaining the global supply chains as well as fostering innovation and collaboration among our business communities. Taking on this momentum, ASEAN and India have recently agreed to undertake a comprehensive review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) in 2023 to ensure it remains user-friendly, trade facilitative for businesses, and more importantly, is responsive towards emerging challenges. In the tourism sector, arrival flow from and to India has been on a steady increase despite a brief disruption related to the pandemic. Strengthening our cooperation in the tourism sector, therefore, will be an important booster for the economic growth of ASEAN and India.

Amidst new opportunities and challenges presented by the digital economy and other emerging trends, ASEAN and India are collaboratively navigating the domain of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Together we are undertaking steps to create a dynamic environment for research and development and digital innovation. Recent initiatives, including the ASEAN-India Startup Festival, the ASEAN-India Grassroots Innovation Forum, as well as training series on information and communications technology, are commendable and should be encouraged further.

Under political and security cooperation, both ASEAN and India have a shared interest in ensuring regional peace, security, and stability, since these are essential pre-requisites for progress and prosperity. To this end, India has played a positive role, including through its active participation in and contribution to supporting ASEAN Centrality in the evolving regional architecture, particularly through ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Plus.

Furthermore, the adoption of the ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Cooperation on the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific for Peace, Stability, and Prosperity in the Region in 2021 has provided a solid foundation for both sides to promote practical cooperation in areas such as maritime, connectivity, UN Sustainable Development Goals and economic growth as identified in the ASEAN Outlook.

The establishment of the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership this year signifies the commitment of both sides to give full play to new opportunities for growth, while tackling common challenges. As we look back at our three decades of friendship and cooperation with a sense of accomplishment, I am confident that going forward, ASEAN will continue to work closely with India on areas of common interests towards peace, stability and prosperity, and sense of community between our two regions.



Message from the Indian Ambassador to ASEAN

It gives me great pleasure to write this message, representing India as ASEAN's Comprehensive Strategic Partner. Since 1992, 30 years down the lane, the ASEAN has become the heart of the Indo-Pacific. No other region probably is as much discussed, constructively, as Indo-Pacific these days, not only from the geo-political perspectives but also from the perspective of the prime mover of the economic growth for the world.

While the world might have started focusing on this region of late, India has the added advantage of its historical linkages, in the ancient, medieval and modern history. This is reflected in our shared values, traditions, languages, texts, architecture, culture, and cuisine.

The relationship matured in stages—it went from sectoral dialogue partnership to full dialogue; then Summit level partnership becoming Strategic, and now Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. When we talk about India making a qualitative shift from the *Look East* to *Act East Policy* under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and subsequently announcing and synergising its Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative with that of ASEAN's Outlook, it was also done in harmony with other regional initiatives such as Security and Growth for All in the Region, popularly known as SAGAR. While doing so, India has always recognised and

upheld ASEAN centrality in the evolving regional architecture. India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, has described ASEAN, "the one which always stood tall as a beacon of regionalism, multilateralism and globalisation".

While India has been expressing itself through policy pronouncements, on the ground, these are getting reflected in our increased interaction with the region. A few facts and figures can illustrate how ASEAN remains the centre of focus for India both at the level of government and people. Our trade for the last financial year (April '21 to March '22) has crossed 110 billion US dollars. Cumulative FDI into India from ASEAN since 2000 has been 132 billion US dollars, which is 22 per cent of India's total inbound investment. Similarly India's investment into ASEAN since 2000 has been 21 per cent of India's total outbound investment. Around 18 per cent of India's outbound tourists visited beautiful ASEAN countries in 2019. India has a 15 per cent strong Indian Diaspora in this region, who acts as a natural bridge between us. We get 8 per cent of inbound tourists from ASEAN and we hope that this shall only increase.

As we have become comprehensive strategic partner of ASEAN, we look forward to deepen our ties in five broad areas. Firstly, maritime security including projects under the Joint Statement on AOIP, disaster management, emergency response; secondly, cyber security, fintech, digital economy; thirdly,



sustainable development, renewable energy, smart cities etc.; fourthly, tourism and people-to-people connectivity; and finally regional and global issues of common concern.

I must also say here that we enjoy excellent bilateral relations individually with all ASEAN Member States.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the ASEAN Secretariat under the leadership of Secretary-General of ASEAN Dato Lim Jock Hoi and the Committee of Permanent Representatives for making the ASEAN-India Friendship Year successful. Under the ASEAN-India framework, a lot has happened this year which has been captured precisely by highly professional and dedicated team of *The ASEAN* magazine. I thank them for bringing a substantial, beautiful and special issue of *The ASEAN* magazine.

Note from the Editorial Team

2022 marks three decades of diplomatic relations between ASEAN and India. This special edition of *The ASEAN* celebrates a 30-year-long friendship, and looks at the historical and cultural links between Southeast Asia and India that go back for centuries. These ties have helped deepen a broad-based and lasting partnership.

We feature the milestones, projects, and initiatives in ASEAN-India's cooperation, particularly in cultural and media exchanges, education and research, science and

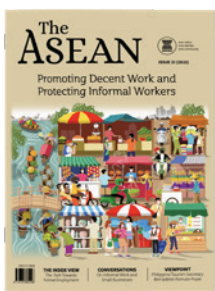
technology, energy transition, digital transformation, trade, and agriculture. This edition also highlights some of the commemorative events held this year, including the ASEAN-India Start-up Festival, the ASEAN-India Artists' Camp, and the ASEAN-India Music Festival.

The editorial board and team would like to convey our profound gratitude to the government of India for their continuous support to the magazine. Since its inception in May 2020, the magazine has produced twenty-four editions covering ASEAN's work,

particularly in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) or "People's Pillar".

This publication has become a platform for people and decision-makers to share their views on our region's most pressing issues. We are committed to fostering even stronger ties between ASEAN and its partners, bridging the gap, and allowing for meaningful conversations that can help ensure an ASEAN that is sustainable, inclusive, and resilient for all.

Recent Issues:



Issue 21
May 2022

https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_Informa_Economy



Issue 22
August 2022

https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_Children_First



Issue 23
November 2022

https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_Digital_Transformation



COVER About the Artist

Neelam Naden Malaisé is an artist and graphic designer based in Jakarta. After graduating from university in 2013, she worked for several design studios. In 2017, she founded Studio Neelam, where she is the Creative Director, and later established Neem Jakarta, her fashion brand. Neelam has a growing local and international clientele, including a French company.

The *ASEAN* team was impressed by Neelam's design style, and colour palette, which she says is influenced by her mixed Indonesian and Indian

heritage. We commissioned Neelam to create an illustration that depicts ASEAN-India's long and continued partnership.

Neelam says, "I feel really grateful and content with having so many opportunities to collaborate and design for other brands worldwide. Since childhood, my only dream has been to become an international designer. Now, I have my own studio. People contact me because they love my style, and I can see that I am getting closer to my dream, and it feels amazing."

"My art is influenced a lot by Indian culture. During my childhood, my

parents took me to the Indian Hindu temple weekly. All the Indian temples are so colourful and detailed, with women and girls coming in different Saree colours. I really love to see that, and it represents happiness and festivities."

All magazine covers were designed by talented artists from the region. The *ASEAN* team would like to invite other ASEAN artists to illustrate for our future editions. Interested artists may email a sample of their work to ASCCAD@asean.org.

30 Years of ASEAN-India Relations



Leaders from ASEAN Member States and India during the 19th ASEAN-India Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

The ASEAN Editorial Team

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department

The year 2022 marks the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-India relations, and its progression into a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**. India initially came on board as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 1992, then gained Dialogue Partner status three years later. It began participating in ASEAN Summits in 2002, became a Strategic Partner in 2012, and in 2015, it formally set up a Mission to ASEAN to deepen its engagement with ASEAN.

ASEAN and India celebrated this historic milestone with a series of cultural, artistic, and formal events throughout the year.

During the three decades of formal relations, cooperation between ASEAN and India steadily grew in the areas of culture and social development, economy, and political-security. The details of this cooperation are outlined in the latest **Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity (2021-2025)**.

In the socio-cultural sphere, the plan focuses on educational and media exchanges, capacity building of ASEAN citizens through Indian scholarships, teaching, and research partnerships, promotion of women and youth participation in human development programmes, documentation and dissemination of knowledge about civilisational links between ASEAN and

India, and disaster management and humanitarian assistance.

Following this plan of action, ASEAN and India pursued the following programmes and activities: various scholarships for ASEAN students at Nalanda University, Doctoral Fellowship in India for ASEAN, ASEAN-India Media Exchange Visits, ASEAN-India Youth Summit, ASEAN-India Music Festival, ASEAN-India Artists' Camp, International Conference on ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilisational Links, and *The ASEAN* magazine. India also contributed to ASEAN's humanitarian assistance in Myanmar.

ASEAN and India likewise launched two new projects this year. One is the setting up of an expert panel and ad-hoc working group to study the feasibility of an ASEAN Cultural Heritage List. The other is the ASEAN-India Network of Universities, which gives participating universities from ASEAN and India an

opportunity to form linkages in three areas: faculty exchange, doctoral student exchange, and joint research or PhD research supervision.

In the sphere of economics, the plan of action includes the facilitation of trade and investment, promotion of energy security through the development of renewable and alternative energy sources and an integrated regional power grid, research and development (R&D) and capacity building in the field of science and technology, and support to digital connectivity and skills development.

In line with this, ASEAN and India recently approved the scope of the review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement to make it simple and user-friendly and to truncate trade transactions. They held a High-Level Conference on Renewable Energy to facilitate knowledge sharing on factors that impact the integrated

renewables market. In science and technology, ASEAN and India launched the inaugural ASEAN-India Start-up Festival, which aims to showcase the most promising innovations in the region. In December, ASEAN and India are also holding the ASEAN-India Grassroots Innovation Forum, which provides a venue for innovators from local communities to exhibit their products and share experiences in grassroots innovation.

In the digital sector, several activities have been completed or are underway, such as the Cyber Threat Hunting Webinar and the multitude training courses on advanced satellite communication, 5G and Internet of Things, ICT in disaster management, telecommunication security, mobile communication and future trends, and cyber forensics.

In the political-security sphere, the plan of action includes continuing dialogue in various platforms, maritime cooperation, and collaboration to combat transnational crime and terrorism. Towards this, ASEAN and India continue to hold the Delhi Dialogue, and India recently hosted the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) delegation.

These cooperation projects and activities are identified and finalised through multilevel dialogue mechanisms: the ASEAN-India Summit, ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting, and the ASEAN-India Ministerial and Senior Officials meetings. Some of them arise from interactions with and recommendations of ASEAN sectoral bodies.

India has created three funding sources to support these cooperation

activities. These are the ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund, which was established in 2009 and has an initial funding of 50 million US dollars; ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund, which funds joint R&D projects and has received infusions of 1 million US dollars in 2007 and 5 million US dollars in 2016-2017; and ASEAN-India Green Fund, with an initial contribution of 5 million US dollars and is meant to support environment- and climate change-related activities.

ASEAN and India recently issued a Joint Statement on ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, in which they committed to strengthening their partnership, reaffirmed their cooperation priorities, and pledged to work together on regional and global issues of common concern.

Events to Commemorate 30 Years of ASEAN-India Relations

Event Name	Venue	Date
ASEAN-India High-Level Conference on Renewable Energy	Virtual	07-08 February 2022
ASEAN-India Logo and Tag-Line Competition	Virtual	14 February-14 March 2022
ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme from ASEAN to India	New Delhi	14-20 June 2022
Special ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers' Meeting	New Delhi	15-17 June 2022
Delhi Dialogue XII	New Delhi	16-17 June 2022
Visit of Parliamentary Delegation from ASEAN to India	New Delhi	10-14 August 2022
ASEAN-India Bazaar	Jakarta	09 October 2022
ASEAN-India Artists' Camp	Udaipur, Rajasthan	10-19 October 2022
7th ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry	Virtual	26 October 2022
ASEAN-India Start-up Festival	Cibinong, West Java	27-30 October 2022
ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme from India to ASEAN	Singapore and Cambodia	08-13 November 2022
Signing of an MoU between the ASEAN Centre for Energy and The Energy and Resources Institute	Jakarta	09 November 2022
Cyber Threat Hunting Webinar	Virtual	15-16 November 2022
ASEAN-India Music Festival	New Delhi and Shillong	16-22 November 2022
ASEAN-India Defence Ministers' Informal Meeting	Siem Reap	22 November 2022
4th ASEAN-India Workshop on Blue Economy	New Delhi	14-15 December 2022
3rd ASEAN-India Grassroots Innovation Forum	Phnom Penh	19-21 December 2022

ASEAN-INDIA RELATIONS THROUGH THE YEARS

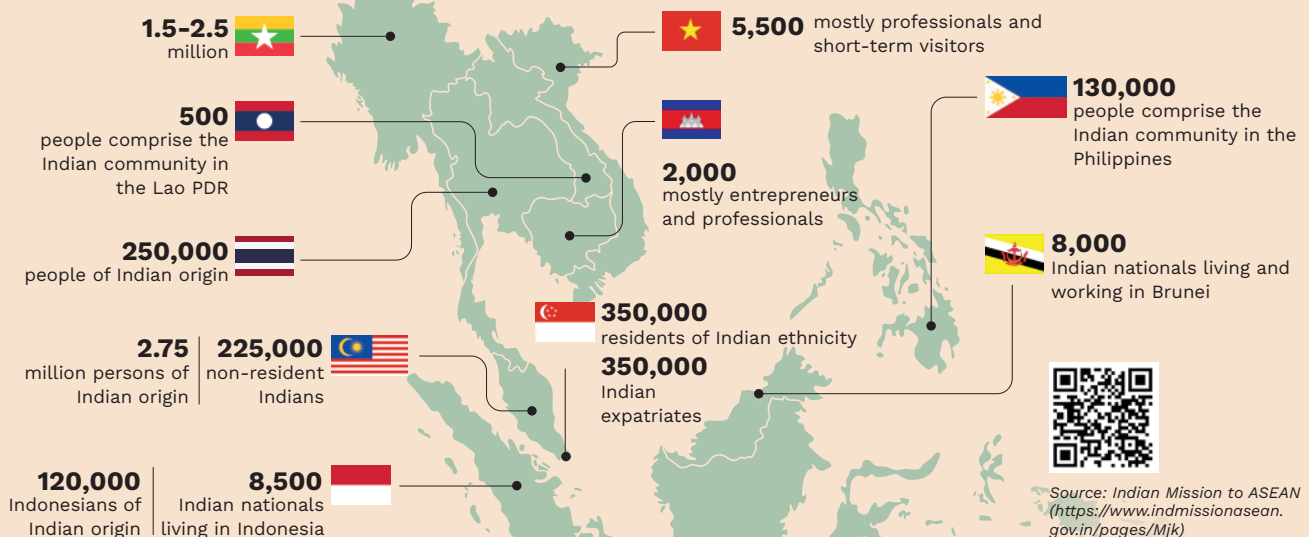
Timeline of ASEAN-India Relations



ASEAN Member States and India

- **Brunei Darussalam:** Diplomatic relations between Brunei Darussalam and India were established on 10 May 1984. India's Mission in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia handled consular services before the Resident Mission in Brunei opened on 18 May 1993.
- **Cambodia:** Cambodia and India first established diplomatic relations in 1952. India re-established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of Kampuchea and opened its embassy in Phnom Penh in 1981.
- **Indonesia:** The two countries established their diplomatic relations in 1951.
- **The Lao PDR:** The Lao PDR and India established diplomatic relations on 2 February 1956.
- **Malaysia:** India established diplomatic relations with the Federation of Malaya (predecessor state of Malaysia) in 1957 immediately after Malaysia's independence.
- **Myanmar:** India established diplomatic relations with Myanmar after the latter's independence from Britain in 1948.
- **The Philippines:** The Philippines and India formally established diplomatic relations on 26 November 1949, shortly after both countries gained independence.
- **Singapore:** India was among the first countries to set up diplomatic relations with Singapore on 24 August 1965 after it gained its independence.
- **Thailand:** Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1947.
- **Viet Nam:** India initially maintained Consulate-level relations with North Viet Nam and South Viet Nam, but later established full diplomatic relations with a unified Viet Nam on 7 January 1972.

Indian Diaspora in ASEAN



Commemorative Events

ASEAN and India marked the anniversary of their partnership by holding several commemorative events throughout 2022. Some of these are high-level meetings, such as the Special Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the Delhi Dialogue on 15-17 June 2022, the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus and ASEAN-India Defence Ministers' Informal Meeting on 22-23 November 2022, and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) Delegation's visit to India on 10-14 August 2022.



Photo Credit: ©Organizer Committee / Minister of External Affairs Government of India

In celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations, the Special Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held on 16 June 2022 in New Delhi, India. The Meeting was co-chaired by Singapore and India. From left to right: Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN; Dato' Sri Saifuddin Abdullah, Former Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs; Pornpimol Kanchanalak, Special Representative of Thailand's Foreign Minister on Myanmar; Bui Thanh Son, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; Prak Sokhonn, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cambodia; Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India; Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Singapore; Antonio Morales, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Administration, The Philippines; Dato Haji Erywan, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam; Retno Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia; Thongphan Savanphet, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Lao PDR



Photo Credit: ©Indian Mission to ASEAN

The AIPA delegation visited India from 10-14 August 2022 at the invitation of Speaker Lok Sabha and Chairman Rajya Sabha. The AIPA delegation included 11 parliamentarians led by Kittisethabindit Cheam Yap, First Vice President of the National Assembly of Cambodia, on behalf of the 43rd AIPA President, Samdech Akka Moha Ponhea Chakrei Heng Samrin, President of the National Assembly of Cambodia

BRIDGES

AN ENDURING FRIENDSHIP

India and Southeast Asia Relations

**Munmun Majumdar, PhD**

Professor, Department of Political
Science, North-Eastern Hill University,
Shillong, India

India and the Member States comprising the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam, are connected integrally in their economic, social, and political life. These relations go back over two millennia. The more important relations between Southeast Asia and India can be found in the *shastras* (religion, scripts, literature, politics, and law) and architecture. Early contacts between South and Southeast Asia were precursors to the spread of Indic ideas to Asia (Nilakanta Sastri, 1949).

The Southeast Asian region has been influenced by Indian political ideas, religion, art, culture, etc. However, the transmission and assimilation of culture were not due to any political domination. Instead, it was a result of peaceful means carried out by Indian princesses, priests, merchants, artists, and poets. The Ananda Temple in Myanmar's ancient city of Bagan, the Borobudur Temple dating back to the 8th and 9th century in the island of Java, Indonesia, Prambanan Temple, the Angkor Wat temple complex in northern Cambodia built in the first half of the 12th century are evidence of the rich linkages between the two that are well recognised. Similarly, the spread of Indian mythology and folklore have been well documented. The Malaysian and Cambodian adaptation of the *Ramayana*, the *Seri Rama* and *RamKer* (Ramayana Khmer)

are some of the literary works in Southeast Asia held in great esteem to date.

The cultural linkages between India's northeastern region and Southeast Asia have, however, remained relatively unknown. For example, the people living on the border between Manipur (India) and Myanmar share centuries of ethnic and cultural linkages. These people of the Myanmar-India borderland share more commonalities and have closer affinities with the Southeast Asians than with their fellow men and women in the rest of India. Barter trade, which is an age-old practice among them, is a natural outcome of their symbiotic relations to meet their daily needs. This has sealed the bond between them even further. The common dietary habits, traditional weaves, similar celebration of festivals, etc., are a testimony of historical interrelationships across the region.

Similarly, India can refer to the Southeast Asian roots of the Tai Ahom as a witness to the cross-cultural linkages and interaction between northeastern India and Southeast Asia. The development of agriculture, especially rice cultivation, indicates the common regional legacies and that the historical interactions provide commonalities in attitudes to nature. In the last century, the exchange of ideas and artistic techniques and forms travelled from Southeast Asia when Rabindranath brought the batik form of art from Indonesia to India and taught it to the students in Santiniketan. Similarly, musical influences and exchanges are compelling themes to establish their linkages for future researches on the history of music in India and Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia's strategic position in the maritime route connecting

Narrative of a Resurgence: Cooperation between Nalanda University and the ASEAN Region

International Relations Office, Nalanda University

Launch of the ASEAN-India Network
of Universities, ASEAN Secretariat,
Jakarta, August 2022



The ASEAN-India cultural and civilisational linkages form a solid bedrock for the connection between the ASEAN Member States and Nalanda University to flourish. The shift from the *Look East Policy* to the *Act East Policy* by the government of India, underlining the policy of connectivity, culture, and commerce, accelerates the momentum of this engagement.

Communities and cultures of Southeast Asia witnessed an intricate exchange pattern of knowledge and traditions, where the ancient Nalanda University and monastic centre functioned as an anchor promoting cross-cultural dialogue. The essence of the reincarnated Nalanda University, likewise, is a new knowledge ecosystem. It is forward-looking but embraces the ancient ideals of universal relevance as feasible solutions to a shared and sustainable future for all. Thus, leaders of 16 member states of the East Asia Summit held in the Philippines in January 2007 endorsed the university's re-establishment.

Nalanda University, in its present avatar under the aegis of India's Ministry of External Affairs, is engaged in recreating this renascent vision based on Asian and Indian wisdom.

The university's objective is to revitalise knowledge networks and peace in the ASEAN region. In this regard, under the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Professor Sunaina Singh, with the support of the ministry, the university has taken several measures as follows:

1. Various fellowships programmes for the students of the ASEAN region
 - i. Nalanda University supports aspiring students from ASEAN Member States through various scholarships and fellowships. Initially, six scholarships per year catered to the students from Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam. With the initiative of the Vice Chancellor and the Ministry, the ASEAN scholarship scheme was introduced in 2020 and expanded in 2022 to support students from all ASEAN Member States.

- ii. The university also offers Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) scholarships (announced by the Honourable Prime Minister of India in 2018) to students from Thailand and Myanmar, the two ASEAN Member States that are also part of the BIMSTEC.
- iii. Under the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Ministry of External Affairs, several scholarships are available for the students from ASEAN Member States to pursue studies at Nalanda University.
- iv. The government of Thailand offers scholarships to students from Thailand to study at Nalanda University.

2. Academic frameworks with ASEAN orientation



Campus life at Nalanda University

The courses and curriculum at Nalanda University are holistic in nature. In addition to developing subject-specific knowledge and expertise, experiential learning and imparting of culture and civilisation values are emphasised.

Various courses offered at the Master's level across the schools show an ASEAN orientation. Courses like Making Culture Portable: Maritime Interconnections in Indian Ocean and Mnemocultures, Performance Studies, Ramayana Traditions in Southeast Asia, Writings from Southeast Asia Culture, Philosophy, Aesthetics and Management, Energy in Asia, Sustainable Asian Cities, Environment in Asia, etc., including several courses on Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhist Archaeology have witnessed active enrolment of students from the ASEAN region.

The university, with students from about 30 countries, has a vibrant academic atmosphere and a multicultural campus that is conducive for the students to hone skills and ideas to become future thought leaders.

3. Collaboration initiatives

The vice chancellor of Nalanda University has undertaken a number of initiatives to strengthen its engagement with the ASEAN region:

- i. *ASEAN-India Network of Universities*
Envisioned by the Prime Minister of India, the ASEAN-India Network of Universities (AINU) shall create a knowledge ecosystem built through the linkages among the

top academic institutions/ universities/research centres in ASEAN and India to address region-specific concerns. The focus areas of the project are Engineering, Science and Technology, Policy and Lawmaking, Trade and Investments, Peace and Security, Sustainable Development, Humanities, Religion, Cultural Intersections, and Blue Economy.

The three phases of the AINU project include: AINU-Faculty Exchange Programme, AINU-Student Exchange Programme, and AINU-Joint Doctorate Programme. Various participating institutions in these programmes constitute a consortium that would provide a basis for future collaborative endeavours. Nalanda University is the nodal Institution of the AINU consortium.

- ii. *Common Archival Resource*
The Common Archival Resource Centre (CARC) is a digital archive initiative that curates digital collections, particularly from South and Southeast Asia. The Centre is intended to preserve and globally share Asia-related information and resources—highlighting the history, material culture, trade networks, heritage, religious ideas and practices, oral and performative traditions, civilisation, and Asian networks of interaction—besides designing and offering academic opportunities for continued exploration of these fields. The idea of the CARC

was envisaged in the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation summit in 2015.

The Centre offers a portal to form clusters, which cater to the digital conditions of production, circulation, consumption, appropriation, storage, and re-usage of various forms of knowledge in Asia.

- iii. *Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies*
In the announcement made by the Prime Minister of India in August 2018, the Vice Chancellor established the research centre to lead research in the Bay of Bengal region through various disciplinary angles, notably “civilisation, history, arts, culture, languages, heritage, global maritime trade routes, and maritime laws.” The centre also focuses on security, trade, development, oceanography, environment, and marine ecology.
- iv. *Centre for Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies*
Fulfilling the mandates of the university, “to contribute to the promotion of regional peace and vision by bringing together the future leaders of East Asia,” the Centre intends to be proactively involved in various capacity-building initiatives and research endeavours.

Nalanda University is actively fulfilling its mandates and, through the knowledge routes, building bridges and expanding the dimensions of ASEAN wisdom.



CONVERSATIONS

Preserving heritage, restoring lost connections

**Ixora Tri Devi***Staff Writer, The ASEAN**ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department*

The Phoenix is an apt metaphor to depict the revived Nalanda University. Like this mythical bird, the historic campus was resurrected after being burned down to ashes. According to the university's website, historical findings revealed that ancient Nalanda had a remarkable life lasting 800 years from the fifth to the twelfth century CE.

After a gap of hundreds of years, the new avatar of Nalanda University opened its doors for the first batch of students in 2014, around 12 kilometres from the original site. The restored Nalanda University is again aiming to become an icon for a new Asian convergence, a creative space and a centre of inter-civilisational dialogue for future generations.

The university is built upon a foundational philosophy that seeks to re-establish lost connections in the Asian region. The ideal is shared among students and teachers. Surrounded by the picturesque Rajgir Hills of Bihar State, India, wisdom seekers from all over the world have come to deepen their knowledge at this monumental location.

Stretching around 450 acres, Nalanda University students come from 31 countries, including ASEAN Member States. They are recipients of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarship and the Nalanda University ASEAN Scholarship scheme. *The ASEAN* interviewed two of them to learn about their stories.

Tin Tran

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam***Nalanda University, School of Languages and Literature/ Humanities***

India is the first foreign country Tin Tran has ever visited. The 26-year-old was born and raised in An Giang province, Southern Viet Nam. He chose to continue studying in India to improve his English. He says, as a devoted Buddhist, learning in India also opens opportunities for him to dive deeper into his spirituality.

Tran also feels special affection toward Indian pop culture. "I like Indian culture. When I was little, I watched Bollywood movies. They are fascinating. We have them in the cinema and on TV back in Viet Nam," he revealed.

Currently, Tran is doing his Master's degree in World Literature at Nalanda University. Before pursuing his Master's, Tran received a scholarship from ICCR to do his Bachelor's degree at Savitribai Phule Pune University, majoring in Economics. "I used to dream about being a businessman, hence the economics major. However, after I graduated with my Bachelor's degree, I realised that being a teacher might be a better fit for me," he said.

After finishing his Bachelor's degree, Tran travelled around India and landed several jobs. He worked at a hotel, a travel company, and a Vietnamese language centre to teach Vietnamese for business. These pursuits exposed him to diverse cultures, making him want to further immerse in the topic.

"I have interacted with many people from many countries. I can see their culture, their expression, and their emotion. It is like when you read literature, not only do you read the text, but you also learn about the people's emotions," Tran argued.

Tran was granted a scholarship from the Nalanda University ASEAN Scholarship scheme to pursue a Master's degree after receiving a nomination from one of his professors. It was the peak of COVID-19, and he was in Viet Nam studying an online finance course at Nalanda University when he got nominated in 2021. Tran embraced the nomination and got one step closer to his dream of becoming a lecturer.

"I chose Nalanda because it is an international intensive research university, and I have opportunities to interact with people from different parts of the world. After studying, I want to return to Viet Nam to become a lecturer. I will share my knowledge and experience about India and other parts of the world. I want to make a humble contribution to the friendship between Vietnamese and people around the world."



Photo Credit: ©Tin Tran

In addition to the academic experience, Tran affirmed the university's excellent facilities in supporting its students. From encouraging professors and staff to housing and cafeteria, Nalanda University is building a sublime academic environment for students.

According to Tran, this environment is getting even more vibrant with diverse students from ASEAN countries such as Indonesia, Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Thailand. "I would like to encourage students from ASEAN to go to India because it is a perfect place to gain knowledge and to be in harmony with the international environment," Tran conveyed.

Beyond all the facilities, however, Tran is grateful to be friends with locals while enjoying the country's various delicacies, festivals, and celebrations. "What I like the most is the Indian people. They are very friendly and helpful. It helps me to overcome all the challenges," he concluded.

Yuni Saputri

Banda Aceh, Indonesia

Nalanda University, School of Historical Studies

Living and studying at Nalanda University made Yuni Saputri reminisce about her high school life. She was a student at an Islamic boarding school or *pesantren* in her hometown in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Like in Nalanda University, students and teachers in a *pesantren* live around the school area. However, the 26-year-old said that the temperature significantly differs between Banda Aceh and Rajgir, India, where she lives now.

"Last winter, it got to minus 8° Celcius. It was so cold, unlike Indonesia. Lucky for us students, the school provides all our necessities, like food, housing, and transportation. So, all we need to think about is studying," she expressed.

Saputri's journey to India started with a dream. She and a group of friends actively sought information about studying abroad because they all

dreamt about continuing their higher education in foreign countries through scholarships. "One of the countries that I was eyeing was India. I prefer to do my Master's in India because I can easily see how Indian culture relates to Indonesian."

One time on her scholarship-hunting journey, her senior gave a seminar about continuing education in India. Saputri's eyes lit up when she learned the information. She browsed through the Indian embassy's website and found all the information about the ICCR scholarship. From there, Saputri chose Nalanda University to pursue a Master's degree in Historical Studies. In 2021, her dream to pursue higher education in India came true.

For Saputri, Historical Studies was an obvious choice. She has been fascinated with history since high school. She studied Islamic Cultural History for her bachelor's degree at State Islamic University Ar Raniry in Banda Aceh. For a brief period, Saputri also worked voluntarily at local elementary schools to teach various subjects, one of which was history. A topic that, according to Saputri, is not popular among many in her homeland.

"I want to teach my students that history can also be interesting. It is not only about memorising dates, and it is about fascinating stories from a while back that we can all relate to and learn from," she said.

As a history scholar, Saputri is also glad she has a chance to be fully immersed in the same environment around Rajgir, a ground with tremendous historical value, only a few kilometres from the original

Nalanda. "Religion significantly impacts acculturation between India and Indonesia," she argued.

"My research interest is closely related to the acculturation topic. I want to examine and trace the Indian heritage in Indonesia, especially in my hometown in Aceh," she said.

Aside from the opportunity to delve deeper into acculturation between Indonesia and India, living in an international environment has also opened up Saputri's eyes to other countries' cultures, including those from the Southeast Asian region.

"I was fascinated when I saw a performance of Myanmar dance. They look so much like Javanese dance! If I had stayed in Indonesia, I probably would have never seen the dance or known about this shared identity," she concluded after watching a dance on a cultural performance regularly held inside the campus.

Saputri and her fellow students eagerly anticipate the university's cultural events as they could enjoy unique and mesmerising performances from different nations.

After her Master's degree, Saputri is looking forward to continuing her studies with a doctoral degree in history. "Someday, I will return to Indonesia, and I want to teach the younger generation to preserve our cultural heritage," she promised.



Reference: <https://nalandauniv.edu.in/about-nalanda/history-and-revival/>



ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme

Stronger Ties Through Media Exchange



Joanne B. Agbisit

Associate Editor, *The ASEAN*

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department

ASEAN media professionals visit Tata Consultancy Services

Nineteen media professionals from 10 ASEAN Member States visited India to learn more about ASEAN-India ties through the 2022 ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme.

From 14 to 20 June 2022, ASEAN media delegates went on exposure trips to New Delhi and Hyderabad, and covered major events commemorating the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-India dialogue partner relations.

Media representatives from Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam witnessed the open session of the Special ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting, and the 12th Delhi Dialogue on “Building Bridges in Indo-Pacific” which featured panel discussions on maritime cooperation, post-pandemic economic recovery, and the digital economy.

The delegates also visited various institutions that highlighted India's rising leadership in science and technology. At the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Delhi, they learned about the Doctoral Fellowships in India for ASEAN, a fellowship programme offered by the government of India to students from ASEAN Member States.

They also visited Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), a multinational company that offers a wide range of IT services and business solutions in

multiple industries such as banking, energy, education, and healthcare. The company's Senior Vice President, V. Rajanna, briefed them about Tata's mission and operations.

The media also had the opportunity to visit Bharat Biotech International, Ltd., a leading biotechnology company known for developing and producing life-saving vaccines. Executive Director, Sai Prasad, enlightened them about Bharat's pioneering efforts to develop vaccines for Zika virus and Chikungunya virus, and its success in coming out with India's first locally-produced COVID-19 vaccine.

The programme wrapped up with the group's visit to T-Hub, a business incubator that helps start-ups from India and other countries secure better technology, talent, business networks, and funding. The group was received and briefed by its Vice President, Panneerselvam Madanagopal.

As part of the programme, the ASEAN media delegates produced several news reports featuring the various events and activities they had participated in. These reports were aired or published in their respective media platforms.

A reciprocal visit of media professionals from India to ASEAN also transpired as part of the exchange programme. Eight individuals from various media agencies and an official from India's Ministry of External Affairs

visited Singapore and Cambodia from 8 to 13 November 2022. The visit was arranged to coincide with the ASEAN Summit and ASEAN-India Summit to provide good media coverage of these key events.

In Singapore, the delegates visited and interacted with the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the editor of *Tablet*, and the editor and director of the Asia News Network and *The Straits Times*. They also paid a courtesy call to the High Commissioner of India to Singapore and interacted with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Communications and Information of Singapore.

In Cambodia, the delegates visited the temples of Ta Prohm and Angkor Wat as well as the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Asian Traditional Textile Museum. They attended the ASEAN Cultural Festival which included cultural performances from ASEAN and India. They also provided media coverage of the ASEAN Summit and the ASEAN-India Summit and related events. Lastly, they paid a courtesy call on the Minister of Information, Dr. Khieu Kanharith.

The ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme is an annual event that aims to expand people-to-people interaction and linkage between ASEAN and India. The programme is supported by the ASEAN-India Fund.

ASEAN-India Cooperation on Energy Transition



Beni Suryadi

*Manager, Power, Fossil Fuel, Alternative
Energy and Storage Department,
ASEAN Centre for Energy (ACE)*

The year 2022 coincides with 30 years of ASEAN-India dialogue relations and, as a befitting tribute to the deepening relations, it has been designated as the “ASEAN-India Friendship Year.”

The natural progression in the ASEAN-India relationship from Sectoral Partnership in 1992, Dialogue Partnership in 1995, Summit-level Partnership in 2002, to

Strategic Partnership in 2012 reflects the widening horizon of ASEAN-India relations as India and ASEAN strive to achieve new heights.

Keeping this in view, the success of the ASEAN-India High-Level Conference on Renewable Energy with the theme “Experience and Innovation for Integrated Renewables Market,” which was held virtually on 7-8 February 2022, is encouraging. The ASEAN Centre for Energy (ACE) and The Energy Resources Institute (TERI) of India organised the conference. It consisted of an inaugural ministerial session, five technical sessions, and a closing session.

The conference was attended by energy ministers, senior officials, academia, the private sector from ASEAN and India, and experts from international organisations.

In his keynote address, Shri R.K. Singh, Minister for Power and New and Renewable Energy of India, emphasised that ASEAN and India can work together to develop an entire ecosystem for renewables that promotes knowledge sharing, capacity building, and technical assistance; and also explore joint initiatives for the development of renewable energy manufacturing hubs in the region.

He applauded ASEAN's efforts to achieve the development of the ASEAN Power Grid and highlighted that India foresees opportunities to expand this grid integration beyond ASEAN to the Indian sub-continent in line with the "One Sun, One World, One Grid" initiative.

Other speakers also highlighted the current situation and possible areas of cooperation. The conference concluded with a stronger commitment to foster relations and address the issue of energy transition and climate change while improving the quality of people's lives.

The dynamic duo

ASEAN and India are two huge entities with a total population of around two billion and collective GDP of 5.7 trillion US dollars (approx.). Hence, cooperation between both parties is essential to achieve national and global targets.

India has set an ambitious climate goal for 2030, and it even increased its commitment during COP-26. It aims to achieve a non-fossil energy capacity of 500 gigawatts (GW), meet 50 per cent of its energy requirements from renewable energy, reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes, reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by less than 45 per cent, and achieve the target of net-zero by 2070.

The ASEAN Member States also have very ambitious targets. Therefore, increased collaboration would be mutually advantageous.

To establish a cooperation framework for initiatives in the areas of smart grids, electric mobility, and renewable energy development, India Smart Grid Forum (ISGF) and ASEAN Centre for Energy (ACE) have executed a memorandum of understanding in 2021.

India has been supporting various initiatives under ASEAN-India Green Fund since November 2012, when the first cooperation between ASEAN and India in renewable energy was inaugurated.

There is vast potential for further collaboration. For example, Cambodia, the ASEAN Chair in 2022, said during the conference that it had updated its energy efficiency policy and identified investment plans for market transformation. Not only that, but each ASEAN Member State is also committed to advancing renewable energy to improve energy security which is the foundation for accelerating energy transition.

ASEAN-India's way forward

India is one of the top countries investing in renewable energy and is a low-cost destination for grid-connected solar power. To explore

more of its solar resources, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson jointly launched a "green grid" initiative dubbed "One Sun, One World, One Grid" initiative at the last COP-26 in Glasgow. With the support of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), this initiative strives for the ASEAN's close involvement in its first implementation phase. This can bring significant impact to the fight against global warming, as it will develop a worldwide grid that can transmit clean energy from anywhere, at any time, and most importantly, reduce carbon emissions and energy costs.

Out of 10 ASEAN Member States, Cambodia and Myanmar have signed and ratified the ISA Framework Agreement. More Member States hopefully can follow suit since the ISA would like to bring in ASEAN, India, and the rest of the world. Other than that, ASEAN and India may also collaborate more in joint research studies, especially in grid stability and green management. We should not forget the opportunities from public-private partnerships in helping ASEAN and India to further accelerate their energy transition efforts.

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4th ASEAN-India Workshop on Blue Economy

Partnership to Safeguard Our Oceans and Seas

Secretary (East) Saurabh Kumar addresses the workshop as India and ASEAN take steps to enhance blue economy cooperation



Joanne B. Agbisit

Associate Editor, The ASEAN

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department

The 4th ASEAN-India Workshop on Blue Economy was successfully held on 15-16 December 2022 in New Delhi, India. With the theme “Advancing Partnership for Sustainability,” the workshop highlighted the importance of collective action to ensure the sustainable and rules-based use and management of oceans, seas, and their resources.

In the workshop, participants shared experiences and ideas on the sustainable exploitation and harnessing of marine resources, combating marine debris, promoting coastal and marine tourism, and sustainable maritime connectivity. They noted some positive developments at the regional level, such as ongoing efforts to establish an

ASEAN Network for Combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris and the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris.

The workshop is consistent with the ASEAN Leaders’ Declaration on the Blue Economy (2021) in which they committed to pursue a “greater understanding of the blue economy through workshops and seminars, research and education, capacity building and training, and sharing of information and best practices.” In the declaration, the ASEAN Leaders also committed to explore cooperation on the blue economy with relevant stakeholders and to ensure that any cooperation is in accordance with international law, such as the UN Charter and the 1982 UNCLOS.

Blue economy and maritime cooperation continue to be key areas of partnership between India and ASEAN. These were stated in the Joint Statement on ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership adopted in November 2022.

Three previous workshops on the blue economy had been convened: in 2017 in Vietnam, in 2018 in New Delhi, and in 2019 in Bangkok. The fourth workshop was jointly organised by the Ministry of External Affairs of India and Indonesia’s Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Investment and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the ASEAN-India Centre, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, and the National Maritime Foundation. The workshop was keyed by Secretary Saurabh Kumar of India’s Ministry of External Affairs.





3rd ASEAN-India Grassroots Innovation Forum Cutting-Edge Technology from the Grassroots



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The 3rd ASEAN-India Grassroots Innovation Forum 2022 was held on 19-21 December 2022 at the Institute of Technology of Cambodia in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The three-day forum served as a platform for participants from ASEAN and Indian communities to share experiences and best practices in grassroots innovation.

During the launch event, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for the ASEAN Economic Community Satvinder Singh highlighted the significant contribution of grassroots innovators. "Public and private institutions need to understand grassroots innovation sociocultural dynamics and encourage innovation, particularly towards advancing the circular economy. Policymakers, especially the local government, must acknowledge grassroots innovators as valuable contributors to creativity, employment, and productivity," he said.

Meanwhile, Department of Science and Technology Secretary Dr Srivari Chandrasekhar pointed out,

"India attached high importance to grassroots and student innovations in our science, technology, and innovation policy as these are not just integral to it but also its significant driving forces. I urge our friends in ASEAN Member States to continue their commitment towards social innovations and collectively ensure that tomorrow is better than today for each one of us."

Bringing together the key stakeholders, this forum aimed to promote and strengthen the development of the grassroots innovation ecosystem. The event consisted of seminar sessions, innovation competitions, and an exhibition displaying 100 technological innovations from nine countries.

Of the 45 participating innovators, Shalini Kumari from India clinched the top prize in the Grassroot Innovation Competition for creating a modified walker with adjustable legs. Shalini's innovation was inspired by her grandfather's struggle to climb stairs with his walker. The walker she created has spring-loaded self-locking front legs so that it can be used to climb stairs. The walker is

also equipped with a foldable seat for resting and a horn and light.

The second prize was awarded to Meriam Bouquia from the Philippines for her innovative multi-purpose fibre stripper. Myo Thaw from Myanmar won third prize with his GreenToddy's Palmyra palm coconut. Each winner received a cash prize of 1,500, 1,000, and 500 US dollars, respectively.

To nurture youth innovators from ASEAN and India, 37 participants engaged in the Student Innovation Forum. Napaschol Inthapan from Thailand won first prize for creating an Osteoarthritis Rehabilitation Assistant (ORA) while Tanapat Charunworaphan from Thailand and Phonsena Chanthavong from the Lao PDR won second and third prizes.

The ASEAN-India Grassroots Innovation Forum is organised annually by the ASEAN Committee on Science, Technology, and Innovation (COSTI) in partnership with India's DST and the National Innovation Foundation (NIF)-India. The first forum was held in Indonesia in 2018 and the second was held in the Philippines in 2019.

ASEAN-India Digital Start-up Festival

A Vibrant Ecosystem for Innovations



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ASEAN and India are fast-rising hotspots for digital start-ups. This was evident in the first ASEAN-India Start-up Festival 2022, held on 27-30 October 2022 at the Innovation Convention Center in Cibinong, Indonesia.

The four-day event featured 239 start-up companies, including 60 from ASEAN Member States and India. These innovators exhibited their cutting-edge technologies in healthcare, education, food production, waste management, and space technology.

Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for the ASEAN Economic Community Satvinder Singh highlighted how the pandemic drove technological innovation that resulted in substantial social impact. Among these are cashless payment systems and other online financial services. Given the region's vibrant and promising digital ecosystem, he said ASEAN start-ups raised a record of almost 25.7 billion US dollars in funding in 2021.

"Despite the pandemic, last year we welcomed another 25 new unicorns. We have also been able to see one of the biggest start-ups exit in ASEAN with a valuation of close to about 55.4 billion US dollars in combination. What all this shows is a testament to enduring confidence from investors from all over the world in our local start-up scene in ASEAN," Deputy Secretary-General Singh explained.

Deputy Secretary-General Singh also cited the designation of 2022 as the ASEAN-India Friendship Year and expressed appreciation for India's support for science and technology initiatives jointly implemented with the ASEAN Member States.

"Through strong commitment on both sides, the ASEAN-India Science and Technology Working Group will continue to fuel more collaborations in science and technology, underpinned by the robust implementation of our ASEAN Plan of Action on Science Technology and Innovation 2016-2025 and our ASEAN-India roadmap," he said.

Ambassador of India to ASEAN Jayant Khobragade highlighted that India has emerged as the 3rd largest ecosystem for start-ups globally with over 77,000 recognised start-ups across the country. The start-ups aim to provide

collective solutions in 56 diverse industrial sectors: 13 per cent are in IT services, 9 per cent in healthcare, 7 per cent in education, and so on. Unicorns (start-ups with a value of over a billion dollars) in India have also grown. As of September 2022, India is home to 107 unicorns with a total value of 340 billion US dollars. Out of the total number of unicorns, 44 were born in 2021 with a value of 93 billion US dollars and 21 unicorns so far in 2022 with a value of 26.99 billion US dollars.

Dr. Srivari Chandrasekhar, Secretary of India's Department of Science and Technology, conveyed the department's commitment to supporting the ASEAN Member States. He announced that the ASEAN-India Start-up Festival will be held annually to create a more extensive network of technology and business incubators across ASEAN and India countries.

"I am quite hopeful and confident that ASEAN-India Start-up Festival will be a big event for all of us in the future. I wish all the start-ups a good beginning. In three to five years, you are going to become a big-size company, and I am sure some of you would grow to billion-dollar companies and create employment for this part of the world," Dr. Chandrasekhar said.

Solutions to real-world problems: Some examples

Participating start-up companies developed technological products that aim to solve pressing community and industry problems. They joined the event hoping to expand their networks and attract partners and investors. Some promising start-ups are:



binbag

Binbag

India

Binbag is a company that collects and recycles discarded electronic products or “e-waste” and sells recycled fractions, such as plastic and metal, through its mobile app.

Achitra Borgohain, Binbag founder and CEO, conceived of this solution after having a hard time finding a recycling facility for his electronic waste. He later found out that this is a global problem—of the 50 million tons of e-waste generated yearly, only 20 per cent is collected and recycled. He realised that e-waste management is his calling and quit his full-time job to build Binbag.

Borgohain started his business by literally going door to door to collect e-waste. “Initially, it was more on the consumer side. But it was tough to scale the

consumer waste properly, which is why we moved to Business to Business (B2B),” he revealed.

These days, customers need only to submit a pick-up request through the platform, and Binbag will collect the e-waste and provide all documentation and secure compliance. The collected items are then processed in either of Binbag’s two recycling plants, one in Bangalore and another in Guwahati. After which, the recycled materials are advertised in the mobile app. The mobile app is a marketplace where buyers can bid and buy their preferred e-waste.

“We are in between the waste generators and the buyers. We control the inventory and the supply chain. We process and own the waste. So, when you buy from us, you know exactly what you want to buy. It is not your typical eBay,” he explained.

Achitra Borgohain
Founder and CEO, Binbag



Faezal Murni
Founder and CEO, Super
Squad Soccer

Super Squad Soccer

Brunei Darussalam

The love of football motivated Faezal Murni to develop Super Squad Soccer, an online platform where football enthusiasts can sign up to play recreational football.

“As you grow older, friends you used to play with do not have time (to play) or say, ‘I have kids, I can’t run anymore,’” Murni said. “A year without football, I got so frustrated.”

Under the platform, anyone can register to join a football match. The company takes care of the venue, schedule of matches, referees, and sponsors for prizes. Over 5,000 players are registered, and over 4,000 games have been organised through the platform.

Murni said that Super Squad Soccer had been franchised in Malaysia under a two-year contract, but this was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that he is looking to franchise his business across ASEAN.



Manastik

Manastik

India

Dementia is a difficult enough disease to handle, but without proper information and resources, it becomes doubly so for patients and their families. Soubhik Das founded Manastik to develop a solution to lighten the burden of families.

“We are trying to develop a one-stop solution that covers the entire dementia ecosystem—starting from a battery of cognitive, neuropsychological assessments, to digitised neurorehabilitation exercises,” said Das. “We want to provide a pathway for patients throughout their journey, from the onset of the disease to the last stages.”

In addition to digitising standard cognitive tests to facilitate proper and early diagnosis, the digital application also aims to match patients with the right kind of doctors. “For example, in the early stages of dementia, a neurologist (may be recommended), but in the late stages, the physiotherapist plays a larger role,” said Das.

At the moment, the digital application is undergoing testing in India with 10 to 15 patients. “We aim to complete the whole clinical validation in the next year. We hope to make the application available in the market,” said Das. Das added that he looks forward to rolling out the application in Indonesia and Malaysia in the near future.

Soubhik Das
Founder, Manastik



Lalitphat Suppraphakorn
CPO, SPIKE Architectonics

S P K E
Architectonics

SPIKE Architectonics

Thailand

Microneedle patches are quickly becoming a popular method for delivering drugs and therapeutic agents into the human body. The National Nanotechnology Center of Thailand has developed a breakthrough technology that not only speeds up the production of microneedle patches, but can also customise the dimension, area density, coating, and material of the microneedles to effectively and painlessly deliver a wide range of treatments.

Spike Architectonics, a start-up company supported by Thailand's National Science and Technology Development Agency, is taking the technology to the next level by working on its beauty and skin care applications. It has had promising results in substantially reducing fine lines and wrinkles and improving skin texture through under-eye patches, spot patches, and facial masks laden with active substances.

The company is planning to expand the application of this non-invasive technology to pharmaceutical and biomedical fields, including the delivery of vaccines.



Xfinito Biodesigns

Exploring Infinite possibilities for...
Accessible & Affordable healthcare

Xfinito Biodesigns

India

Using deep-tech research, various experts from the Indian Institute of Sciences (IISc) Bangalore are building a state-of-the-art medical device to bring disruption and fill the gap in the healthcare industry. These experts come together in the form of a start-up called Xfinito Biodesigns.

Their latest innovation employs physical stimulations, such as electrical, photo, vibration, and thermal in developing active, intelligent footwear and insole to prevent diabetic foot ulcers and monitor the progression of Neuropathy. The innovation is called Xeet Smart Insole.

Co-founders Siddharth Nair and Suramya Asthana believe in using technology to create impact. They also convey their long-term goal, which is to establish equitable healthcare across the world.

“You see, if it is a smartwatch, some people wear it, and some forget to wear it. But we always wear footwear. So, if we make them really intelligent in multiple generations—like what we have planned—we could have a deeper understanding of your physical health,” said Nair.

Next step, they are planning to test the device on two thousand patients in six to nine months. Nair and Asthana also aim to open channels for possible collaboration through events like the ASEAN-India Start-up Festival.



— Suramya Asthana
Co-founder, Xfinito Biodesigns

Photo Credit: ©BRIN, IIT Kanpur, ASEC, India Department of Science & Technology

Winning pitches

Twelve of the 60 start-ups from the ASEAN Member States and India were selected for the Pitch Battle on the third day of the ASEAN-India Start-up Festival. The start-ups had the chance to present their business ideas to a panel of investors, venture capitalists, and government official-judges. Five start-ups walked away with prize money totalling 7,500 US dollars. They were Netra (Indonesia), Xfinito (India), SPIKE Architectonics (Thailand), NovoEarth (India), and ELSA Corp (Viet Nam).

The event was funded by the ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund and co-organised by the Indonesia National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) and Start-up Incubation and Innovation Centre, Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur on behalf of the ASEAN Committee on Science, Technology, and Innovation and the Indian Department of Science and Technology. The festival was held in conjunction with the G20 Indonesia Research & Innovation Expo 2022, Indonesia's biggest innovation expo.



Doctoral fellowships for ASEAN Opportunities for Higher Education in India



Joanne B. Agbisit

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ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department

ASEAN citizens now have an opportunity to study in India, thanks to the Doctoral Fellowship in India programme.

The fellowship allows successful applicants to pursue a PhD degree at any Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) for up to five years. IIT has produced some of the world's top CEOs and most influential entrepreneurs, including Sundar Pichai of Alphabet Inc./Google, Arvind Krishna of IBM, and Sachin Bansal of Flipkart.

The fellowship was launched during the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in 2018, which marked the 25th anniversary of the ASEAN-India dialogue relations. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi of India announced the allotment of 1,000 fellowship slots exclusively for citizens of the 10 ASEAN Member States.

Increasing the number of fellowships for ASEAN students to pursue higher education in India is part of the plan of action to implement the ASEAN-India

Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity (2021-2025).

Four selection rounds have been completed, and a total of 81 individuals in the region have been selected for the fellowship.



Details of the fellowship, including the application process and selection criteria, are available at <https://asean-iit.in/>.

Photo Credit: ©skaman306 / Getty Images

Cooperation with IndoIndians presents
ASEAN - India Bazaar
Sunday, 9 October 2022

ASEAN-India Bazaar
Keeping the Light Alive

Southeast Asia is home to many generations of the Indian diaspora. Although they live far away from their ancestors' land, many have kept their vibrant customs and traditions alive.

Ambassador Shri Jayant N. Khobragade of the Indian Mission to ASEAN and Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for the ASEAN Economic Community Satvinder Singh at the opening of the ASEAN-India Bazaar

Photo Credit: ©Indian Mission to ASEAN



One way to keep these traditions alive is through social gatherings and celebrations. The Indian Mission to ASEAN, in collaboration with the Indian diaspora in Indonesia—Indoindians—held the ASEAN-India Bazaar on 9 October 2022. The event was held to commemorate the 30th year of the ASEAN and India's friendship, and sell wares for Diwali preparation.

In his opening remarks, Indian Ambassador to ASEAN, Jayant N. Khobragade, highlighted various events to celebrate ASEAN-India relations, including Artist Camp, ASEAN-India

Start-up Festival and ASEAN-India Music Festival. The ambassador also pleasantly regards the ASEAN-India friendship. "There may be handicrafts and branded items here. But the most popular brand is ASEAN-India Friendship."

Meanwhile, Indoindians co-founder and bazaar co-organiser Poonam Sagar was delighted to see guests from various countries at the bazaar. "We are so happy to see how people are happy and enthusiastic about coming here, meeting people and shopping. Indoindians, at first, are always trying to connect people. Like

a bridge of information between India and Indonesia, and now the ASEAN countries," expressed Sagar.

At the bazaar, more than 120 stalls from ASEAN Member States and India offered various goods, from home décor to ethnic wear and jewellery. Other attractions and cultural activities, such as Bollywood and local dance numbers, kept visitors glued to the event.

The ASEAN had a chance to talk with one of the participating vendors at the ASEAN-India Bazaar, Poonam Adnani, who is part of the Indian diaspora living in Indonesia.



CONVERSATIONS

Poonam Adnani

Wedding Consultant, Party Planner, and Event Organiser

Poonam Adnani had just finished her fourth event of the day when she talked with *The ASEAN*. It was ten days after Diwali, and many in Jakarta were still celebrating.

Adnani's parents moved to Indonesia in the 1950s. She was born and raised in Bandung, and her family is part of a sizeable Indian diaspora community that settled in the country.

Sixty-five-year-old Adnani has been in the party business for more than two decades. It is not an overstatement to say that she has become one of the most wanted Indian-themed party organisers in Jakarta.

"I was born in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1957. My first visit to Mumbai, India, was when I was eight. My father had just passed away, and my mother decided to bring the whole family back to India. One month after arriving, my mother pronounced that all of us would return to Bandung. I lived there until high school while my brothers continued to work in my late father's business in textile.

"I started my business slowly but surely in 1998. At that time, I had just returned from India, where I got the inspiration to start my gift shop. I bought many souvenirs from India and made some here in Jakarta. My first

store is at my home in North Jakarta, which is still here 24 years later.

"As my gift shop grew, some customers started to look for wedding decorations. I made some to cater to my customers. Eventually, some of them asked me, 'why don't you do my wedding décor?'. That is how it started. It was small for the first two years until I got this big offer to hold a wedding in Bali. So, twenty years ago, I had already organised a destination wedding.

"Looking back at my life, back in Bandung, Surabaya, and now here in Jakarta, all I have are happy memories. Here everybody is connected. We celebrate everything together. I do not see any challenges because we always feel welcomed. I hope it will stay like this in the future."

Interviewed by Ixora Tri Devi. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.

ASEAN-India Artists' Camp 2022

Art is a powerful tool that brings people together and imbibes the socio-cultural practices of the time. The ASEAN-India Artists' Camp 2022 was one such project. It recognised the power of art in fostering intercultural people-to-people exchanges to promote mutual understanding and tolerance.



Vasundhara Prasad
Project Head, SEHER

Photo Credit: ©SEHER, India



The city of Udaipur is a perfect place for artists, with its marvellous forts and palaces, a rich history and culture, enchanting lakes, and pretty cafes. SEHER thus chose this picturesque location to hold the ASEAN-India Artists' Camp 2022 to celebrate 30 years of ASEAN-India diplomatic relations. The camp was organised from 10 to 19 October 2022 at the Taj Aravali Resort and Spa. Well-known and upcoming visual artists, specifically painters from ASEAN Member States and artists from India, participated in the activity.

ASEAN and India share common cultural and civilisational linkages that go back to ancient times. Many similarities can be found in literature, architecture, religious texts, and even in folk practices. It is important to strengthen people-to-people and cultural ties by exploring the similarities while celebrating the differences, and providing a platform for the creative community to initiate a deeper understanding of the values and traditions of both ASEAN countries and India.

The aim was to conduct a highly publicised activity that involves creatives from ASEAN and India.

The participating artists created works of art during the artists' camp, each with a different style of painting—contemporary, modern, traditional, impressionist, etc.—but carries the essence of their own culture and history.

Apart from working on their art pieces, the artists also participated in formal and informal lecture demonstrations

and workshops. These not only deepened the artists' understanding and appreciation of the rich visual art traditions in ASEAN and India, but also increased the awareness of ASEAN identity amongst creative intellectuals and the public.

Pre-event activities included an online webinar hosted by Dr. Anuradha Ghosh, a well-known author and intellectual from India, which was attended by all participating artists from ASEAN countries and India.

Several workshops and lecture demonstrations by experts in the field of traditional arts and different techniques in the field of visual arts were organised during the camp in Udaipur. These included special interdisciplinary programmes to showcase the different Indian traditions and art forms, providing a more holistic experience to the visiting artists with classical dance, music, handicrafts, and others. The camp also focused on gender equality and encouraged higher participation from younger artists.

An educational visit was organised to expose local art students to the different art forms and styles of the ASEAN nations and India. The selected artists visited a school in Udaipur and local art students visited the camp to interact and learn from the artists at work. To commemorate the event for years to come, local artists painted a wall in the city with motifs and stamps of the participating ASEAN countries.

The paintings produced were brought to Cambodia for an exhibition at the ASEAN-India Summit. Dignitaries in attendance, local officials, and

“

It is important to strengthen people-to-people and cultural ties by exploring the similarities, while celebrating the differences, and providing a platform for the creative community to initiate a deeper understanding of the values and traditions of both ASEAN countries and India.

Concluding ceremony of the Artists' Camp,
Udaipur, 19 October 2022



Photo Credit: ©SEHER, India

Camp participants create impressive works of art on the theme, "Oceans of Connectivity"

From left, clockwise: Melissa Abuga-a (the Philippines), Phattaraporn Leanpanit (Thailand), Janani Shyam (India), Sone Khounpaseuth (the Lao PDR)

members of the Indian community visited the special art exhibit.

In conjunction with celebrating the 25th year anniversary of ASEAN-India Relations in 2017, and in synchronisation with India's *Act East Policy*, the first ever ASEAN-India Artists' Camp was organised in India in 2017.

The participating artists from India included: Sonika Agarwal, Janani Shyam, Nupur Kundu, Laishram Meena Devi, Anjum Khan, Nin Taneja, Vanita

Gupta, Yogendra Tripathi, Mayur Kailash Gupta, Dileep Sharma, and Basant Bhargava.

From ASEAN, the following artists joined the camp: Nabil Fikri bin Haronli (Brunei Darussalam), Samrit Keo (Cambodia), Eddy Sulisty (Indonesia), Sone Khounpaseuth (the Lao PDR), Edroger Rosili (Malaysia), Aye Myat Soe (Myanmar), Melissa Abuga-a (the Philippines), Phattaraporn Leanpanit (Thailand), and Nguyen Phuong Linh (Viet Nam).



India's Vice President, Jagdeep Dhankhar, visits the exhibition in Cambodia

ASEAN-India Music Festival 2022

Bridging the Best of Southeast Asian and Indian Music



Photo Credit: ©SEHER, India



Fiori Djuwita

Officer Culture and Information Division
ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
Department



Vasundhara Prasad

Project Head, SEHER

It is Sunday evening in New Delhi, India. As the sun begins to set, a refreshing November wind blows, and a swarm of people flies into the magnificent historical fort of Delhi, Purana Qila. The fort looks more vibrant than usual, with colourful lanterns strung up on the trees and a dazzling stage set up in the middle for the ASEAN-India Music Festival 2022.

The five participating bands from India were Papon, Faridkot ft. Amar Jalal, Jonita Gandhi, Raghav Meattle, and Sukhbir; from ASEAN, the bands included Empty Wallet (Brunei Darussalam), RizerXSuffer (Cambodia), Riau Rhythm (Indonesia), Lao Traditional Music Troupe (The Lao PDR), Instamuzika (Malaysia), MRTV Modern Music Band (Myanmar), Bayang Barrios at Ang Naliyagan (The Philippines), Linying (Singapore), Makaohang (Thailand), and Tri Minh's Quartet (Viet Nam)



The ASEAN-India Music Festival 2022
closing ceremony



Festival goes at The
ASEAN-India Music
Festival, Purana Quila,
New Delhi

The ASEAN-India Music Festival was first held in 2017 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations. In 2022, on the occasion of the 30th commemorative year of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations, the second edition of the festival, ASEAN-India Music Festival 2022, was held from 18 to 20 November 2022 in New Delhi, India.

The festival was organised by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, in collaboration with SEHER, India. The programme brought together 10 bands from the ASEAN Member States and five acts from India.

Indonesian band, Riau Rhythm, has performed in many other countries before. But they were all praises for the festival, saying that, “the quality of the sound and staging are impressive and very professionally managed. These qualities are rarely seen at other music festivals, particularly free-entry music festivals like this.”

A prelude concert at the Ashoka University on 17 November 2022 was also conducted to promote ASEAN awareness among the university students. Two post-festival workshops were also organised for the arts and music students of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar School of Specialized Excellence and Global Music Institute on 21 November 2022.



Balloon release at the finale of the ASEAN-India Music Festival 2022

“Both ASEAN and India have experienced an explosion of pop culture products, especially contemporary and pop-rock music, that have expanded and deepened their reach domestically and across regional and national borders.

On the evening of 20 November 2022, the closing ceremony of the ASEAN-India Music Festival 2022 was graced by the Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture of India, Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi. The festival was also graced with the presence of the ambassadors and embassy representatives of the 10 ASEAN Member States.

“I saw all of you enjoying yourselves, so I know the festivals are a hit when audiences are happy, when youngsters are happy. That means we did a good job. So, you must cheer and clap for ASEAN-India friendship,” says Minister Lekhi.

“ASEAN-India friendship goes on since time immemorial. We are all ancient civilisations. Maritime roots from India always went to those areas, and together we have a common civilisational bond from Sanātana Dharma to Buddhism, to trade and everything else. We have always worked together, and that is why this friendship is being celebrated here.”

ASEAN and India have significantly influenced each other's cultural trajectories dating back to ancient times. Both ASEAN and India have experienced an explosion of pop culture products, especially contemporary and pop-rock music,

that have expanded and deepened their reach domestically and across regional and national borders.

Intercultural communication, combining traditional and contemporary music that can bring youth together, is vital to developing a better understanding of each other's practices and sensitivities.

With the widespread participation of and warm reception by the audiences, the artists have essentially become cultural ambassadors for ASEAN and India once they returned to their respective cities and countries.

Until the first edition in October 2017, such a large-scale music festival has never been held, and this is an important initiative to boost the cultural relations in this vital sector between ASEAN Member States and India.

"For historical reasons, Indians and especially the youth, are drawn towards the West. Students and the youth are normally accustomed

to hearing the music and cultural traditions of Europe and America. Whereas there is huge talent in the East, and it is imperative that through festivals and showcases such as the ASEAN-India Music Festival and the Artist camp held recently, the Indian youth get a chance to witness this talent first-hand," says SEHER Founder-Director, Sanjeev Bhargava.

For three days, the ASEAN-India Music Festival 2022 attracted approximately 15,000 people on-site and 7,000 viewers virtually via YouTube Live. The festival was also widely shared across national and international conventional media, such as TV, newspapers, radio, and magazines, as well as social media, with a total engagement of 2,300,000 accounts. People of all ages and backgrounds attended the festival. Even the senior citizens enjoyed and attended the festival on wheelchairs specially arranged by SEHER.

"We need such showcases more regularly so that ASEAN culture can also become a brand," says Bhargava.

Photo Credit: ©SEHER, India



Bayang Barrios,
the Philippines



Tri Minh's Quartet,
Viet Nam



Instamuzika,
Malaysia



Rizer x Suffer,
Cambodia



Linying,
Singapore

A Dive into Bollywood Fever in Southeast Asia



Ixora Tri Devi

Staff Writer, The ASEAN

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
Department

Putri Nabilah and Nandi's performance
at Komunitas Bollywood Indonesia's
Bollywood Festival

“Bollywood” was once a pejorative term for mainstream Hindi cinema, according to film scholar M. K. Raghavendra. It has since evolved to become a brand and one of the most visible “Indian” presences in the global arena, including in Southeast Asia.

From Amitabh Bachchan to Priyanka Chopra, *Kabhi Kushi Kabhie Gham* to *RRR*, Bollywood's charms have captivated millions across Southeast Asia. The heartfelt storytelling, enriched by cultural and family values, is easily relatable to audiences in the region.

Bollywood stories, particularly those with lavishly produced musical numbers, have captured generations of Southeast Asian fans. With content crossing over from radio, television and film to social media, audiences continue to grow.

The ASEAN talked to some enthusiasts from the Bollywood lovers' community on how Bollywood has influenced their lives.

Recreating the Bollywood magic at home

The screen started playing *Ishq Kameena*, This Malicious Love, from the movie *Shakti the Power* (2002). At once, 22-year-old Nandi got up from a prop bamboo bed, mimicking Shah Rukh Khan's every move. The loudspeakers blared:

Bedardi ishq nigoda, sab ka dil isne toda (Merciless, worthless heart, it has broken everyone's hearts)
Har aashiq ishq se haara, humko bhi ishq ne maara (Every lover has lost to love, love has also destroyed me)
Aaye chain kahin na (I don't get any peace)
Kar de mushkil jeena ishq kamina (It makes living difficult, this malicious love)

As Aishwarya Ray appeared on screen flaunting her fascinating dance moves, 19-year-old Putri Nabilah entered the stage and copied her routine. The audience cheered as Putri and Nandi, uncannily wearing similar outfits, effortlessly bounced, shimmed, and even flipped their hair precisely like Khan and Ray. The performance ended with a thunderous applause from hundreds of audiences. The show was just getting started.

The couple called themselves Punad (short for Putri-Nandi), and they were contestants in the “Dance Cover Competition” held by Komunitas Bollywood Indonesia, Indonesia Bollywood Community. Taking place in a North Jakarta mall in November, the competition was part of the Bollywood Festival commemorating the community's 7th anniversary.

According to Hendra “Babloo” Wijaya, the community's chief, Bollywood lovers responded enthusiastically to the event as it has been two years since they last held a live event.

After receiving a glowing welcome from Bollywood lovers, an Indonesian

national TV later decided to sponsor the event. “They also sponsored the guest stars and promised to collaborate with us in the upcoming projects,” the 42-year-old explains.

The one-day festival showcased Bollywood talents from across the Indonesian archipelago. Ranging from a 9-year-old dancer to a 54-year-old singer, the contestants dressed up in saree, tunics, and jewellery in lively colours.

Yet, the community is not only about the glimmering stage and the spotlight. They hold various enrichment events like entrepreneurship seminars and numerous social events. “We routinely hold gatherings for social causes. In the case of natural disasters, we come together to help and hold open donations for victims. We also regularly conduct blood donation events,” says Rey Agatha, the community's vice chief.

From radio fan clubs to dance competitions

Growing up in North Jakarta, Agatha remembers racing to the cinema to catch her favourite Indian movies. It was the '80s, and the cinema in front of her parents' storehouse always showcased Bollywood movies that she loved, starring Kumar Gaurav, Rishi Kapoor, Sridevi, and Amitabh Bachchan. As her adoration grew, she joined various Bollywood dancing competitions.

What fascinates her the most? “Well, obviously, it is the singing and dancing. The actors are also easy on the eye,” she says.

Similar to Agatha, Wijaya’s first encounter with Bollywood was also in the ’80s. His parents introduced the industry to him. “My mother’s favourite was Rishi Kapoor. She said Kapoor was one of her ‘cravings’ during pregnancy. That is why, when I came out, I also really loved Bollywood and Indian culture,” Wijaya says.

Wijaya never entered a Bollywood dancing competition; instead, he joined various radio fan clubs and gathered with other Bollywood fans. “Back in the day, AM radios usually had a programme dedicated to Indian songs. Many of these fans came together for the love of songs, movies or actors. It was my initial motivation to bring them together in a community,” Wijaya states.

Komunitas Bollywood Indonesia is building a solid community, trying to be up-to-date with current trends while preserving older traditions.

The community has been asked to participate in Indian Embassy’s events and Indian diaspora events, including the ASEAN-India Bazaar held in Jakarta on 9 October 2022.

Hendra “Babloo” Wijaya, chief,
Komunitas Bollywood Indonesia



Swimming against the Mainstream: Thailand’s Bollywood niche market

It did not take long for *Gangubai Kathiawadi* (2022) to catch the attention of Thai movie-goers. Directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, the movie was released in Thailand on Netflix’s streaming service on 26 April 2022. Soon after, Thai social media was flooded with Gangubai’s reenactment, while the movie stayed in the platform’s local top chart for seven weeks.

On her social media, Thai actor Arachaporn Pokinpakorn praised the movie’s leading role, Alia Bhatt.

A picture of an elderly lady in pigtails copying Gangubai’s pose while standing against the wall was also in the spotlight. Local media in India and Thailand hyped these stories on their platforms.

According to Bangkok-based movie critic and influencer Nitheep Khounkump, Alia Bhatt’s performance as Gangubai has touched the hearts of many in his country. “The movie has opened Thais’ eyes to make them realise how good Indian movies are,” the 54-year-old explains.

The warm welcome received by *Gangubai Kathiawadi* reminds him of Rajkumar Hirani’s romantic comedy *PK* in 2014.

“I have been watching many Bollywood films since I was a kid, but the most memorable Indian movie for me is *PK*. The story was so powerful, touching, and strongly aligned with what I believed. On top of that, the storytelling was perfect.”

With nearly two decades of experience as a columnist for a Thai entertainment magazine, Khounkump has seen Bollywood’s ups and downs in his homeland. He has observed that Bollywood remains a niche market in Thailand. Khounkump, on the other

hand, can’t get enough of Bollywood’s musical numbers and over-the-top action sequences.

“Even though (the majority of) Thai audience is still not much interested in Bollywood movies, I will keep talking about them. When at least one audience says they loved the Indian movie because of my recommendation, that already makes me happy,” he explains.

According to Ganesh Salian, the initiator of Bangkok Bollywood Facebook page, at least thirty Bollywood movies are released yearly in Thailand’s movie theatres. The Mumbai native has lived in Bangkok for 10 years while working in an Indonesian-owned Indian movie distributor company, Multivision Plus (MVP). He noted that most of the people who watch Indian movies in Thailand are the Indian diaspora; however, he realised that more Thai youth are experimenting with Bollywood movies.

“I hope more Thai community will embrace the Bollywood movies because I know they will love them. Yes, our movies are longer, it can take up to 2.5 hours, so it is easy to disconnect. But I know, once they go and watch, they will know that they love it,” Salian says.

With more than fifty thousand followers on his page, Salian is optimistic that more Thai will embrace the Indian cinematic style. In the meantime, movie lover Khounkump is hoping for more quality movies in the future. He believes that film can inspire people to do better and thus make the world a better place. “Now the world has lots of tragedies, so some good movies might be able to heal our spirits,” he concludes.

Indian Roots of Southeast Asian Cuisine

Tony Boey studies food for insights on the history of peoples, places, migration, and society, especially of maritime Southeast Asia. He shares his research and dining and travel experiences in his international award-winning blog, johorkaki.blogspot.com. In 2016, he published *Find Dining with Johor Kaki*, a guide to Johor's heritage and street food.



Tony Boey

Author, *Find Dining with Johor Kaki: 100 Must-Try Johor's Heritage and Street Food*

When we discuss Indian heritage cuisine in Singapore and Malaysia, most of us assume or presuppose that Indian cuisine was brought here by indentured labourers during the British colonial era (from the 1800s). That is only partially true.

Indian cuisine has a deeper, much older, more pervasive influence in Southeast Asian cuisine, not just Singapore and Malaysia, that dates back to over 2,000 years.

This article is about the origins of that deep Indian influence, often overlooked today or buried under many layers of our multicultural influences and time. As the dishes evolved and became localised or indigenised over 2,000 years of adaptation, their Indian origins had become less obvious.

Indianisation of Southeast Asia

Indianisation is a gradual process that took place across Southeast Asia for

over a thousand years from around the 1st to the 13th century. The kingdoms and empires of Southeast Asia adopted Indian language (Sanskrit), religion (Hinduism and Buddhism), statecraft and governance systems, legal system, the performing arts, and other aspects of life, including cuisine.

Indianisation spread throughout Southeast Asia from Myanmar, to Indochina, the Malay archipelago and Malay peninsula.

How and why did Indianisation take place across Southeast Asia?

Maritime Silk Road

The key to understanding Indianisation of Southeast Asia is the Maritime Silk Road.

The Maritime Silk Road, which began around 200 BC, connected kingdoms from Arabia to India, through Southeast Asia to China. It was an extensive sea network facilitating trade between Arabia, India, Southeast Asia, and China.

The Chinese exported silk, ceramics, silver, etc. They imported glass from Arabia while India exported sandalwood, textile, and spices. Southeast Asia was a source of gold, tin, and also spices. At that time, the task of plying the oceans serving the Maritime Silk Road fell mostly on the shoulders of Indian mariners and traders (Tamils from India's Malabar and Coromandel Coasts).

Indian Vaishya caste traders came to Southeast Asia to trade and look for gold as there was high demand for gold in India. On the same boats were Kshatriya caste warriors who provided security against sea pirates. There were also Brahmin priests/scholars who served the spiritual needs of the people onboard as the journeys were long and treacherous. So, priests, traders and warriors travelled together in the same trade mission. Each boat was a sailing microcosm of an Indian kingdom.



During the days of sail, mariners came with the prevailing monsoon wind and returned home with the next monsoon. The interval between the monsoons could last a few months, hence friendly stopovers were essential. Southeast Asia sits strategically between India and China. There were many locations in Southeast Asia which were ideal for sea ports facilitating the Maritime Silk Road.

These ports allowed the mariners to rest, replenish their supplies and stocks, and to trade. The Indian mariners and traders also mingled with the locals. Many such sea ports were established by collaboration between Indian mariners/traders and local chieftains to profit from the great wealth that trading brings.

At that time, Indian civilisation had already reached an advanced state. The chieftains of emerging Southeast Asian sea ports or kingdoms looked to India for models of advanced statecraft and organisation—ideas which the traders and learned Brahmins shared with the locals.

The locals adopted Indian language (Sanskrit), religion (Hinduism and Buddhism), statecraft and governance, law, the arts, and naturally cuisine as well. The local rulers engaged learned Brahmins as advisors. Once the chieftain or royalty adopted Hinduism or Buddhism, their subjects followed.

Hence, the ancient kingdoms in Indonesia and Indochina were Hindu and Buddhist.

The sea ports facilitating the Maritime Silk Road became highly prosperous. Kingdoms and empires such as the Srivijaya and Majapahit in Indonesia controlling the Maritime Silk Road became powerful.

Indianisation of Southeast Asia took place gradually over a period of around a thousand years from the 1st century to around the 1300s. It started to fade with the arrival of Islam in Sumatra in the 1300s and later the Europeans in Malacca in 1511. Chinese influence through migration grew after the sea expeditions of Admiral Zheng He between 1405 and 1433.

Nevertheless, Indian culture is already deeply embedded in Southeast Asia culture and is still prevalent to this day.

Influences on Southeast Asian cuisine

Grand historical monuments in Southeast Asia such as temples are visible manifestations of this old Indianisation.

So are the Sanskrit foundations of contemporary Southeast Asian languages such as Myanmar, Thai, Lao, and Cambodian.

Less obvious but equally pervasive, the ancient Indianisation of Southeast Asia can also be seen in Malay, Indonesian, Myanmar, Thai, Lao, Cambodian, and even Vietnamese cuisine. Spices and herbs from India such as black pepper, cinnamon, turmeric, and cardamon, which were part of Indian cuisine and medicine for thousands of years, were introduced to Southeast Asia during the Indianisation era. These are still essentials in many Southeast Asian dishes today.

Southeast Asian cuisine adopted and retained its Indian influences to this day. Digging deeper can uncover the Indian roots of some of our dishes.

For example, one of Indonesia's national dish, *nasi tumpeng kuning* [turmeric-yellow cone shaped rice with side dishes] has Hindu origins. The rice's cone shape symbolises Mount Meru, the mythical five peaked Hindu mountain which is the abode of the gods.

Many Hindu temples were built as representations of Mount Meru. The mounds of side dishes around the cone of yellow rice seem to symbolise the four minor peaks of the mythical Meru of Hinduism.

Nasi tumpeng kuning's yellow colour from the turmeric spice is one of the sacred colours of Hinduism and symbolises learning, knowledge, joy, and renewal. Yellow is often featured in the clothes of Hindu deities, such as Vishnu, Krishna and Ganesha. (Today, the rice comes in different colours including the trendy blue tint from butterfly pea flowers.)

Today, *nasi tumpeng* is served during Thanksgiving or *Slametan* rituals conducted for highly significant events like birth, circumcision, marriage, Prophet's birthday, etc.

The *slametan*, central to Javanese village life, is a communal feast involving prayers and religious rites. The shared meal is blessed by the rites. The *slametan* is Hindu in origin but has since been closely coupled with the practice of Islam in Java.

I have only briefly mentioned one example, what other Southeast Asian dishes can you think of that traces its deep roots back to the Indianisation era from the 1st to the 13th century?



This is a slightly edited version of the article which first appeared in the author's food blog: <https://johorkaki.blogspot.com/2022/08/indian-roots-of-southeast-asian-cuisine.html>.

The views expressed in this article are solely of the author's and not of ASEAN.



The ASEAN

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People fly lanterns during the Vesak Day celebration at Borobudur Temple in Magelang, Indonesia

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