

## OVERVIEW

### ASEAN-INDIA COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

#### Introduction

1. ASEAN-India dialogue relations have grown rapidly from a sectoral dialogue partnership in 1992 to a full dialogue partnership in December 1995. The relationship was further elevated with the convening of the ASEAN-India Summit in 2002 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Since then the ASEAN-India Summit has been held annually. All these took place in a decade, which clearly signifies the importance of the dialogue partnership to ASEAN and India and the progress made in the cooperation. At the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit held in Kuala Lumpur on 21 November 2015, the ASEAN Leaders welcomed India's initiative, namely the "Act East Policy" and noted that the initiatives could complement ASEAN Community building efforts. In that regard, the ASEAN Leaders encouraged India to work with ASEAN to realise the vision and goals outlined in the ASEAN 2025: *Forging Ahead Together*.

2. As a reflection of the interest of ASEAN and India to intensify their engagement, the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity, which sets out the roadmap for long-term ASEAN-India engagement, was signed at the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-India Summit on 30 November 2004 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. A Plan of Action (2004-2010) was also developed to implement the Partnership. The 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit held in October 2009 noted with satisfaction the steady progress of implementation of the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity. The Summit also agreed on a new and more enhanced phase of the Plan of Action to implement the said Partnership in order to seize the opportunities and overcome the challenges arising from the global financial crisis and evolving political and economic landscape. Since 2010, ASEAN and India have adopted three ASEAN-India Plans of Action (POA), namely the POAs for 2010-2015, 2016-2020, and 2021-2025. The POA for 2021-2025, adopted by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN and India at the Post-Ministerial Conference Plus One Session with India on 12 September 2020 via videoconference, spells out and sets the course of joint actions, practical cooperation and concrete projects and activities. It comprises broad areas, namely political and security, economic, socio-cultural cooperation, Initiative for ASEAN Integration and Narrowing the Development Gap, connectivity, smart cities, ASEAN institutional strengthening, and sustainable development. Projects and activities to be conducted under the POA 2021-2025 include annual meetings/visits, seminars/workshops, training courses and exchange programmes.

## Political and Security Cooperation

3. Since India became a Dialogue Partner of ASEAN, the collaboration has intensified to cover political and security dimensions. India participates in a series of consultative meetings with ASEAN under the ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations, which include Summit, ministerial and senior officials meetings, and meetings at experts level, as well as dialogue and cooperation frameworks initiated by ASEAN such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1, the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus as well as sub-regional cooperation frameworks, namely Mekong-Ganga Cooperation and Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which contribute to enhancing regional dialogue and accelerating regional integration.

4. In demonstrating its commitment and shared interest to ensuring peace, security, stability and development in Southeast Asia, India acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) on 8 October 2003 during the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-India Summit in Bali, Indonesia. On the same occasion, ASEAN and India also signed a Joint Declaration for Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, manifesting concrete initiatives to step up cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

5. Following the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter, and based on the strong foundation of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations, India has accredited its resident Ambassador to ASEAN based in Jakarta, particularly to work closely with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) and the ASEAN Secretariat. As an illustration of the intensification of the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership, India established a separate diplomatic Mission to ASEAN, which was inaugurated in April 2015 by H.E. Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister of India.

6. The Leaders at the 18<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit adopted the ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Cooperation on the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo Pacific for Peace, Stability and Prosperity in the region, which is aimed to promote practical cooperation between ASEAN and India in the ASEAN priority areas as identified in the AOIP and to strengthen the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership for achieving peace and prosperity in the region.

7. ASEAN and India marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their Dialogue Relations in 2012 with a Commemorative Summit held in India on 20 December 2012. A number of commemorative activities were carried out to signify the expanding and deepening of the dialogue partnership. In this connection, the ASEAN-India Eminent Persons group (EPG) was established to take stock of ASEAN-India relations over the past 20 years, explore ways and recommend measures to strengthen and deepen existing ASEAN-India cooperation and partnership in the future. In 2017, ASEAN and India commemorated the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their Dialogue Relations with a number of meaningful celebratory events, including high-level meetings, business conclaves and Expo, youth summit, artist camp, music festivals, youth awards, among others.

8. ASEAN and India convened ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations on 25 January 2018 in New Delhi, India. At this Commemorative Summit, the Leaders adopted Delhi Declaration which charts out the future direction of ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership. The year 2022 marks an important milestone in ASEAN-India partnership in light of the celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN-India relations, and the designation of the year as ASEAN-India Friendship Year. Both sides held and planned a number of meaningful commemorative activities to mark the important occasion, including the Special ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in New Delhi in June 2022, the visit of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly delegation to India in August 2022, the ASEAN-India High Level Conference on Renewable Energy in February 2022, ASEAN-India Start-up Festival, the launch of ASEAN-India Network of Universities in August 2022, the ASEAN-India Artists Camp in October 2022, among others. On 4 March 2022, the Indian Mission to ASEAN hold a reception to kick off the commemorative activities.

9. The 19<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit to Commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on 12 November 2022. During the Commemorative Summit, the Leaders adopted a Joint Statement on ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. With a view to advancing a substantive, meaningful, and mutually beneficial comprehensive strategic partnership in the coming years, ASEAN and India are developing the Annex to the ASEAN-India Plan of Action 2021-2025 to broaden and deepen their practical cooperation and collaboration

## **Economic Cooperation**

10. On the economic front, India has been ASEAN's leading trade partner. According to a preliminary data, in 2022, India was the sixth largest ASEAN's trade partner among the ASEAN Dialogue Partners with the total trade amounting to **US\$ 113.07 billion**, which makes **2.94%** of total ASEAN trade. Meanwhile, the Foreign Direct Investment flows from India into ASEAN experienced a decrease from US\$ **1.27** billion in 2021 to **US\$ 0.68** billion in 2022<sup>1</sup>.

11. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-India Summit in 2003, the Leaders signed the ASEAN-India Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation. The Framework Agreement laid a sound basis for the establishment of an ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (FTA). The ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) was signed on 13 August 2009 and entered into force on 1 January 2010. The signing of the AITIGA on 13 August 2009 in Bangkok paved the way for the creation of one of the world's largest free trade areas with more than 2 billion people and a combined GDP of US\$ 7.2 trillion in 2022. The AITIGA saw tariff liberalisation of over 90% of products traded between the two dynamic regions and tariffs on over 4,000 product lines eliminated by 2016. In view of expanding the rate of the implementation of the AITIGA, ASEAN and India are in the midst of finalising a scoping paper for a review of the AITIGA,

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<sup>1</sup> ASEAN Statistics Database as of June 2023.

which aims to make the AITIGA more user-friendly, simple, and trade facilitative for businesses. Meanwhile, the ASEAN-India Trade in Services and Investment Agreements entered into force since 1 July 2015.

12. ASEAN and India are also working on enhancing private sector engagement, including through the re-activation of the ASEAN-India Business Council (AIBC) and the holding of the first ASEAN-India Business Summit (AIBS) and an ASEAN-India Business Fair and Conclave (AIBFC) in New Delhi on 2-6 March 2011, which saw the participation of an estimated 500 trade exhibitors, business leaders, practitioners and entrepreneurs from ASEAN and India. The 2<sup>nd</sup> AIBF was held at the sidelines of the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit, in New Delhi on 18-20 December 2012. The events were part of the efforts to stimulate trade and business-to-business interaction. A subsequent ASEAN-India Expo and Forum was held in August 2017 in Bangkok, Thailand, under the theme “ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership: an untapped potential on trade, investment, tourism and connectivity”. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Business Summit were organised on 27 November 2018 in Kuala Lumpur, on 19 October 2019 in Manila and on 7-8 October 2021 (virtually), respectively. AIBC also regularly participates in the ASEAN Economic Ministers – India Consultation. The last participation was at the 18<sup>th</sup> AEM – India Consultation on 14 September 2021.

13. The 14<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Transport Ministers (ATM) Meeting on 6 November 2008 in Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines adopted the ASEAN-India Aviation Cooperation Framework, which would lay the foundation for closer aviation cooperation between ASEAN and India. In 2012, India participated for the first time in the 21<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Land Transport Working Group (LTWG) Meeting. During the Meeting, India presented its initiatives for enhanced cooperation on ASEAN Action Plan, covering various sectors such as land transport, maritime transport, border management, customs, immigration, logistics and safety and Public Private Partnership (PPP). The India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway Project and its extension to Lao PDR and Cambodia was one of ongoing projects to achieve greater ASEAN-India physical connectivity and is aimed to connect the ASEAN Highway Network with the highway system in eastern India.

14. On tourism, according to a preliminary data, the number of visitor arrivals from India to ASEAN in 2022 was 2,38 million, a significant increase from 81,131 in 2021.<sup>2</sup> The 2nd Meeting of ASEAN and India Tourism Ministers (ATM+India) held on 25 January 2010 in Bandar Seri Begawan supported the establishment of the ASEAN Promotional Chapter for Tourism (APCT) in Mumbai, India, as an important collaborative platform for ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) to market Southeast Asia to the Indian consumers and, at the same time create mutual awareness between ASEAN Member States and India.

15. To further enhance tourism collaboration between ASEAN and India through concrete activities, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> ATM+India held on 12 January 2012 in Manado, Indonesia, the ASEAN and India Tourism Ministers signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ASEAN and India on Strengthening Tourism

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<sup>2</sup> ASEAN Statistics Database as of June 2023.

Cooperation, which has served as the key instrument for more action-oriented cooperation, encouraging both parties to cooperate in facilitating travel and tourist visits and further strengthen the close tourism partnership. The implementation of the MoU is carried out through several activities, including participation of tourism stakeholders in travel marts, tourism exhibitions and festivals in ASEAN and India, as well as the establishment of ASEAN-India Crisis Communication Team. To further increase two-way tourist visits and promoting greater people-to-people exchanges, ASEAN and India implemented ASEAN-India Tourism Cooperation Year in 2019.

16. The 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers, held on 19 January 2022, reviewed the existing cooperation and align the projects and activities under the ASEAN-India Tourism Cooperation Work Plan 2021-2022 with the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016-2025, the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and the Post COVID-19 Recovery Plan in ASEAN Tourism; and to consider tapping into the ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund to implement the ASEAN-India Tourism Cooperation Work Plan 2021-2022. The 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers on 4 February 2023 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, endorsed the ASEAN-India Tourism Work Plan 2023-2027, which covers 17 activities for the next five years to support the implementation of the ATSP 2016-2025.

17. Pursuant to the announcement by the Prime Minister of India during the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit held in November 2007, the ASEAN-India Green Fund with an initial contribution of US\$ 5 million was set up in 2010 to support cooperative pilot projects between ASEAN and India for promotion of technologies, aimed at promoting adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. In addition, the ASEAN-India S&T Development Fund (AISTDF) with an initial fund of US\$ 1 million was established to encourage collaborative R&D and technology development between ASEAN and India. In 2007, India made a contribution of US\$ 1 million to the ASEAN Development Fund (ADF). The Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India announced that it added its contribution to the AISTDF from US\$ 1 million to US\$ 5 million, effective 2016. India has further replenished the AISTF in the amount of USD 5 million as announced during the 19<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit in 2022.

18. Further on connectivity, the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit in November 2012 welcomed the establishment of India's Inter-Ministerial Group on Connectivity and encouraged regular exchanges between the Group and the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) to explore concrete ways and means to support the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC), in particular in areas of mutual interest. The 1<sup>st</sup> ACCC-India Meeting was held in Balikpapan, Indonesia in June 2013 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> ACCC-India Meeting was held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar in September 2014. The Meetings served as venues to take stock of the developments in the implementation of the MPAC adopted in 2010, to discuss India's current and future support for ASEAN Connectivity, and to deliberate on ideas and recommended measures to support the implementation of MPAC 2010. The MPAC 2025 which succeeds MPAC 2010 was adopted at the 28<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Vientiane, Lao PDR in September 2016. Existing and emerging funding vehicles and initiatives are identified that could support sustainable infrastructure developments in ASEAN, which includes India's offer of a

line of credit to ASEAN Member States for projects that support physical and digital connectivity.

19. In the areas of agriculture and forestry, cooperation between ASEAN and India has been enhanced further by focusing on addressing challenges of food security and climate change through capacity building, agricultural education, and research and development. The Medium-Term Plan of Action (POA) for ASEAN-India Cooperation in Agriculture and Forestry for 2016-2020 was adopted at the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry (AIMMAF), held in January 2018 in New Delhi, India. To further enhance ASEAN-India cooperation in agriculture and forestry, the 6<sup>th</sup> AIMMAF held on 21 October 2020 via videoconference hosted by Cambodia adopted the Medium-term Plan of Action of ASEAN-India Cooperation in Agriculture and Forestry for 2021-2025. The 7<sup>th</sup> AIMMAF, held virtually on 26 October 2022, agreed to further strengthen and deepen collaboration in the priority areas to address climate change, sustainable agriculture, conservation and nature positive agriculture, climate resilient agriculture, and sustainable soil management to ensure the sustainability of the agro-ecological system.

### **Socio-Cultural Cooperation**

20. Over the years, ASEAN-India socio-cultural cooperation has expanded to include human resource development, people-to-people contacts, cultural exchanges, education, health, biodiversity, climate change and disaster management. All cooperation projects are funded by the ASEAN-India Fund and ASEAN-India Green Fund.

21. India is also actively contributing to the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plans with the implementation of some of the IAI projects/activities, such as Scholarship for Students from CLMV Countries for Two-Year Masters Programme at Nalanda University; the Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDC); the Centres for the English Language Training (CELT) in CLMV countries; the ASEAN-India Network Universities; as well as Doctoral Fellowship in India for ASEAN.

22. In continuing to promote people-to-people contacts to foster ASEAN-India relations at the peoples level, ASEAN and India continue to organise regular programmes/activities, namely ASEAN-India Students Exchange Programmes, Special Course for ASEAN Diplomats, Delhi Dialogue, International Conference on ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilizational Links, ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme, ASEAN-India Young Farmers Exchange Programme, ASEAN-India Youth Summit and the ASEAN-India Network of Think-Tanks, among others. A number of activities were also held to commemorate the 30 years anniversary of ASEAN-India friendship in 2022, including ASEAN-India Artist Camp 2022 and ASEAN-India Music Festival.

23. ASEAN and India are also exploring/enhancing cooperation in other areas, including cybersecurity, science and technology, transport and connectivity, digital economy, green economy, blue economy, fintech, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), start-ups, finance, energy, food security, space, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), natural resource management, public health, sustainable development, smart cities and technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

24. ASEAN and India are committed to enhancing collaboration in addressing the unprecedented and continuing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating the post-pandemic recovery in both the ASEAN region and India. ASEAN welcomes India's support for ASEAN's efforts to recover from the pandemic, including India's contribution of USD 1 million to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, and encouraged India to further support ASEAN's recovery efforts. ASEAN also welcomes India's announcement to resume COVID-19 vaccine exports, and underscores the need for collaboration on vaccines, medicinal products and medical technologies for the treatment of COVID19, including through the sharing of experience with India in research and development, and on making COVID-19 vaccines available, safe, effective and affordable to all as global public goods.

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