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Ministry of External Affairs
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AIC
ASEAN-India Centre at RIS

ASEAN Studies Centre

ISEAS YUSOF ISHAK
INSTITUTE

Eighth Roundtable of ASEAN-India Network of Think-Tanks (AINTT)

Navigating a World in Transition: Agenda for ASEAN-India Cooperation

TENTATIVE AGENDA

DAY I: 7 NOVEMBER 2024 (THURSDAY)

08.30 - 09:30 Registration / Welcome by Organizers

09.30 – 10.30 INAUGURAL

- Remarks by **Prof Sachin Chaturvedi**, Director General, RIS, New Delhi
- Remarks by **Mr Choi Shing Kwok**, Director and CEO, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute
- Remarks by **H.E. Dr. Shilpak Ambule**, High Commissioner of India to Singapore
- Special Address by **H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn**, Secretary-General of ASEAN (tbc.)

10.30 – 11.00 Tea Break and Photo Taking

11.00 – 12.30 SESSION I: CONNECTIVITY AND REGIONAL VALUE CHAINS

Owing to several interrelated factors such as new industrial innovations, growing economic nationalism and intensifying geopolitical contestations, the existing international production system is witnessing considerable downsizing leading to a decline in GVC trade. While the COVID-19 pandemic has further pronounced this trend, evidence also suggests that value chains are becoming shorter, less fragmented and regionally more concentrated. These developments are bound to have serious ramifications for developing countries, including India and ASEAN. In the face of global trade in transition, it has become pertinent for ASEAN and India to focus more on the strengthening of regional value chains for diversifying potential risk and reducing vulnerability. Connectivity is an important factor which determines the fate of cross-border value chains. Inefficient cross-border transport and institutional connectivity create complexities for businesses and limit the growth of regional value chains. This session will deliberate on the connectivity and regional value chains between India and ASEAN to identify constraints and suggest possible ways forward.

12.30 – 14.00 Lunch Break

14.00 – 15.30 SESSION II: ASEAN-INDIA COOPERATION FOR GREEN ENERGY TRANSITION

The ASEAN region and India are extremely vulnerable to the potential negative implications of climate change such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and changing rainfall patterns. Therefore, addressing climate change and transitioning towards sustainable green energy sources is critical for both regions. Realising the urgency, India and ASEAN member states have announced ambitious targets for reaching carbon neutrality and curbing reliance on coal-fired power. However, achieving these ambitious targets is a herculean task. It requires massive investment in infrastructure as well as large-scale innovations which most of the regional countries are not in a position to undertake individually. Therefore, cross-country knowledge sharing, capacity building, technical assistance, collaborative R&D projects and undertaking joint renewable energy projects are critical for ensuring smooth energy transition. This session will look into India and ASEAN countries' current status and strategies for green energy transition and suggest avenues for strengthening cooperation in the green energy sector.

15.30 – 16.00 Tea Break

16.00 – 17.30 SESSION III: DIGITALISATION AND MSME DEVELOPMENT

The growing digitalisation is offering unprecedented opportunities for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). It is providing innovative solutions for several traditional constraints that MSMEs have been facing for a long time. For example, E-commerce platforms are allowing MSMEs to access a wider customer base and export markets without spending huge amounts on logistics. The next-generation technologies also have the potential to facilitate MSME integration in Global Value Chains by simplifying cumbersome custom procedures. However, gains for MSMEs from the ongoing wave of digitalisation are not automatic. In fact, given the prevailing digital divide, financial constraints and lack of capacity, MSMEs are often most disadvantaged and vulnerable to shocks emanating from digital transition. It has been recognised that if left to the market alone, MSMEs may lose their competitiveness due to the rapid digitalisation of society. As MSMEs are at the forefront of employment generation in India and ASEAN, the lack of digitisation among MSMEs threatens to accentuate the economic inequalities, making the digital transformation socially more painful. Against this backdrop, this session will explore the challenges facing MSMEs in India and in the ASEAN regions, and suggest areas of collaboration to promote MSME development and digitalisation.

DAY II: 8 NOVEMBER 2024 (FRIDAY)

09.00 – 10.30 SESSION IV: FINTECH AND CROSS BORDER DIGITAL PAYMENTS

Emergence of Fintech has been changing the way payments are made and financial services are availed or delivered. ASEAN and India are also not isolated from the ongoing fintech revolution. Fintech sectors in both regions have grown tremendously. Apart from improving ease, efficiency and security, fintech holds great potential to reduce transaction cost. Since a large sum of money is transacted between India and the ASEAN region annually, it makes sense for both regions to explore ways to cooperate in the fintech sector and ensure cross-border digital payment connectivity. India and Singapore have already made significant progress in this direction. Both countries have signed “FinTech Co-

operation Agreement” to facilitate regulatory collaboration and partnership and have also linked their digital payment systems for cross-border digital payments. Similar arrangements between India and other ASEAN countries are worth exploring. This session will explore policy and regulatory challenges the fintech sector faces and suggest a roadmap for cooperation to unleash cross-border fintech innovations and digital payments.

10.30 – 11.30 MINISTERIAL SESSION

- Welcome by **Mr Choi Shing Kwok**, Director and CEO, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute
- Special Address by **H.E. Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan**, Foreign Minister of Singapore
- Keynote Address by **H. E. Dr S. Jaishankar**, Hon’ble External Affairs Minister, Government of India
- Vote of Thanks by **Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi**, Director General, RIS

11.30 – 12.00 Tea Break & Photo Taking

12.00 - 13:30 SESSION V: STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL RULE OF LAW USING THE TAC

In recent years, escalating geopolitical rivalries have heightened global fragmentation and increased competition. Neither ASEAN nor India is immune to these geopolitical changes. However, ASEAN demonstrated remarkable foresight in addressing such geostrategic changes as early as 1976 through the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). Rooted in the belief in the rule of law, the TAC enshrines core principles of global peace, security and stability, including the peaceful settlement of disputes in the region. As the global focus shifts toward the Indo-Pacific, the geostrategic transition provides an opportunity for ASEAN to strengthen international law through the TAC. The TAC serves as a conduit through which ASEAN can advocate for regional peace, stability, and security. Given the history of balanced diplomacy and strategic autonomy, India stands poised to play a pivotal role in this endeavor. Against this backdrop, this session will examine the relevance of TAC and propose strategies for making it more effective. Specifically, the session will explore how the TAC can stimulate regional partnerships, facilitate conflict resolution, foster people-to-people connections, harness technological progress, empower multilateral institutions, and encourage responsible governance.

13:30 - 14:30 Lunch Break

14:30 - 16:00 SESSION VI: WAY FORWARD FOR ASEAN-INDIA RELATIONS

This session will host a panel discussion aimed at synthesising key insights from the five preceding technical sessions, with the goal of identifying concrete and actionable steps to enhance ASEAN-India relations in the context of global and regional shifts. Panellists will also reflect on the evolving dynamics of this partnership and offer recommendations for a strategic roadmap that can further strengthen the ASEAN-India partnership, as well as chart the future course for the AINTT. The session can also explore how India’s “Act East” policy and ASEAN’s outward-looking approach, particularly through the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), can converge to create a more resilient and multifaceted economic and security partnership. This convergence is essential not only for deepening bilateral cooperation but also for shaping the future Indo-Pacific order—one that is open, inclusive, rules-based, and stable amid shifting power dynamics in the region. Additionally, the panel may assess opportunities for closer collaboration between

ASEAN and India on global platforms such as the G20, United Nations, and other multilateral forums. The focus will be on how both sides can jointly tackle pressing challenges, including rising trade protectionism, the need for more effective digital governance frameworks, and the urgency of addressing climate change. By working together on these issues, ASEAN and India can bolster their collective influence on the global stage and promote sustainable, equitable growth in line with shared strategic interests.

16:00-16:30: VALEDICTORY SESSION

- Remark by **Mr Rajpal Singh**, Director-General of ASEAN, MFA, Singapore (tbc.)
- **Ms Sharon Seah**, Senior Fellow and Coordinator, ASEAN Studies Centre, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute
- Vote of Thanks, **Dr Pankaj Vashisht**, Coordinator, ASEAN-India Center, RIS

16:30 High Tea and End of the Roundtable.