

# 55<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Day Celebration

## Press Release

### **ASEAN, India looking to boost ties in connectivity**

*Both sides to also promote non-confrontational methods especially in Indo-Pacific*

New Delhi, August 8

Notwithstanding the ongoing geo-political tensions in various regions across the world, the ten-member ASEAN and India are looking to enhance their partnership in connectivity, non-traditional security issues and health, while promoting non-confrontational methods especially in the Indo-Pacific. In the post-pandemic era ASEAN-India cooperation, other areas that are likely to get a boost include digital services, e-commerce, space, Artificial Intelligence, cyber security, smart agriculture, renewable energy and fintech.

H.E. Ms. Pattarat Hongtong, Ambassador, Thailand Embassy in New Delhi, laid emphasis on the ASEAN centrality and the need to augment ASEAN-India partnership in maritime security, partnership to mitigate trans-national crimes, counter-terrorism initiatives and cyber security. Connectivity - physical, digital and people-to-people – also need to be enhanced, she said, adding that advancing health security and sustainable development goals would also be focus areas in this context.

Ms. Hongtong was speaking at a panel discussion on August 8 organized by the ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi, to celebrate the 55th Anniversary of ASEAN. The event aimed to strengthen the important pillars of bilateral relationship including political-security ties, economic cooperation and socio-cultural bonhomie. Incidentally, ASEAN and India are going to have special summit in November 2022.

H. E. Mr. Simon Wong, High Commissioner, Singapore High Commission, referred to the terms like cohesive integrity which identifies ASEAN's balance with the big powers to maintain peace and tranquility in the region. He described ASEAN centrality as a term denoting ASEAN's power to negotiate with the competitive and geopolitical big powers and not to allow them to distort peace in the region. He appreciated India's stance in maintaining peace at this critical juncture when most big powers are fighting with each other. Therefore, he sought a greater role for non-confrontational ways in the Indo-Pacific.

H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi, ASEAN Secretary General, in his address from the ASEAN Secretariat, said after two years of the devastating Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, the region is now reopening to businesses and international exposure. Ms Geetika Srivastava, Joint Secretary (Indo-Pacific), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), India, spoke about the MEA events in 2022 to celebrate the three decade-long ASEAN-India partnership. These include ASEAN-India Parliamentarian Exchange Programme, ASEAN-India Music Festival and Artists

Camp. This is in addition to the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of Delhi Dialogue and the Special Meeting at the Foreign Ministers' level.

Dr Mohan Kumar, Chairman, RIS, said strategic convergence of interests has become inevitable for ASEAN and India due to geopolitical tensions that have now crossed the European boundaries and are troubling Asia; as well as the G-20 Presidency of two Asian countries –that is being held currently by Indonesia, but will be handed over to India later this year. H.E. Mr. Ung Sean, Ambassador, Cambodian Embassy, referred to India's role in upholding ASEAN centrality, while H. E. Mr. Bounneme Chouanghom, Ambassador, Lao PDR Embassy, spoke about the India-Lao PDR ties and India's developmental assistance to Lao PDR to narrow the developmental gaps.

Mr. Masni Eriza, Deputy Chief of Mission, Indonesian Embassy, referred to issues that can build up the upcoming Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between ASEAN and India. He focused on areas like medical capacity building, food security, maritime cooperation, blue economy and building bridges in the Indo-Pacific. In this regard, Indonesia's role is important as well as convergence of interests between ASEAN and India in the maritime domain. H. E. Mr. Moe Kyaw Aung, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Myanmar Embassy spoke about the role of Myanmar as a bridge in ASEAN-India relations from the perspective of Myanmar's geographical proximity and India's Act East Policy.

Mr. Hai Thanh Do, Deputy Chief of Mission, Vietnam Embassy referred to the criticism being faced by ASEAN for not being able to manage some of the inter-state and intra-state conflicts. He then moved to the convergence of interests in the Indo-Pacific in strategic and security terms. H. E. Mr. Dato Alaihuddin Mohammad Taha, High Commissioner, High Commission of Brunei Darussalam, highlighted the importance of promotion of peace, social cohesion and development within ASEAN and in neighborhood.

Amb. Gurjit Singh, Former Indian Ambassador to ASEAN, Indonesia, Germany, Ethiopia, and the African Union suggested that ASEAN needs to prioritize its relationship with India through its own prism and not through the mirror of any other external relationship. Dr. Constantino Xavier, Fellow, CSEP, New Delhi, threw light on the informed choices that ASEAN and India can now make in the geostrategic realm of Indo-Pacific. Bilateral, quadrilateral and multilateral relationships between the ASEAN members and India are significant for the peace in Indo-Pacific. Prof. S.D. Muni, Emeritus Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi drew the conclusion by referring to the cohesiveness in ASEAN-India partnership. Dr Prabir De, Professor and Coordinator, AIC at RIS, also spoke on the occasion. (ENDS)

\*\*\*\*\*

DG Office

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)

Core IV B 4th Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodi Road, New Delhi 110003, India

Tel: 91-11-24682176

Email: dgoffice@ris.org.in