

# **10<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Conference of Indian Association for Asian & Pacific Studies, 2020**

**In collaboration with**

**Asia Centre, Bangkok, Thailand &  
University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India.**

## **Call for papers:**

### **Theme of Conference:**

**From Look East to Act East: Challenges and  
Opportunities in Contemporary India-Southeast Asia  
Relations**

***Date: 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> October, 2020***

**Venue: Asia Centre, Bangkok, Thailand**

### **Overview**

Whereas one can trace India's relations with Southeast Asia (SEA) through history, their interaction has reached unprecedented levels as India moved from its "Look East" policy of the early 1990s, to "Act East" under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The policy of Act East, adopted in 2014, represents a realignment of India's foreign policy, which seeks to build on historical ties between India and SEA.

India had a close connection with different regions of SEA. Land routes through East Bengal, Assam and Manipur transported the Indians to the further east. Indians travelled to Upper Burma through various passes in Manipur hills and to Lower Burma through Arakan and also reached places such as Malay, East Indies and Indochina by crossing the Bay of Bengal.

Trade connections between India and SEA paved the way for cultural diffusion between these two regions. As a result, India left its cultural imprints on SEA societies and culture. The Brahmans introduced Indian court customs, the theory of monarchy, administrative organization on Indian patterns, laws based on Manu's code, Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and, the *Mahabharata* and also works on a variety of subjects like philosophy, medicine, mathematics and religious lore. This led to the spread of Indian culture and civilization in the Southeast Asian region and the period of diffusion continued till the end of the twelfth century. This resulted in a certain degree of spontaneous acculturation process.

These historical linkages lead to present day convergences. Contemporary India-Southeast Asia relations are no longer hampered by Cold War era divergences that prevented a closer relationship between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The collapse of the Cold War structure occasioned a rapprochement of the hitherto Soviet-leaning India with both the West and East. Look East represented an attempt to approach the West and integrate in international trade networks through an ASEAN springboard. Moreover, in 1996, India joined the ASEAN Regional Forum, a regional security forum in which all the world's major powers are participants and on an equal footing, unlike the United Nations Security Council.

The geopolitical configuration in Asia is a multi-polar one, with ASEAN, India, Japan and the United States (the Quartet) aligned with each other. All of them espouse the Indo-Pacific concept. The strong-arm tactics in the South China Sea, has pushed the Quartet closer together as China rises economically and militarily. While the United States and Japan have heavily promoted the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy to hedge against China since 2017, India and ASEAN members, though they have embraced the Indo-Pacific concept, have remained cautious due to fear of antagonizing China.

In this context, India has sought closer collaboration with Southeast Asia to tap into ASEAN's market to promote economic growth, especially to the poorer north-eastern region, as well as to combat China's rise. In turn, ASEAN states received funding from India to support collaborations across political, economic and socio-cultural sectors and in the financial year 2017/2018, India-ASEAN trade has increased steadily and stood at US\$ 81.33 billion. India-ASEAN defence and military ties have also increased, notably with Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam.

India's north-eastern region has a strategic significance given its proximity to Myanmar, an ASEAN member-state that has very close relations with China. Modi's 'Act East Policy' (2014) looked to physical, commercial and cultural, culture connectivities to SEA through NEA to encourage further economic activities in that area. The development of India's north-eastern region remains vital in Modi's political agenda, and is incorporated into *Vision 2020* to promote basic self-sufficiency in that region. With the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) stalled, India has turned to the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) initiative to achieve greater connectivity between India and Southeast Asia. BIMSTEC membership includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The importance of India's northeast is self-evident.

Academics, post-graduate students, policymakers, think tanks and civil society organisations are invited to submit a 300 word (maximum) abstract, addressing one of the themes below, for review.

### **Sub-Themes for paper presenters**

The conference aims to analyze the cultural, historical, economic, military and political relations between India and Southeast Asia. Six themes will be examined:

1. The uses of the past to foster closer ties: culture and soft power diplomacy
2. Colonial/ Post-Colonial experiences and their impact on contemporary relations
3. Economic ties and the prospects for greater trade interdependence
4. India-SEA Connectivity under BIMSTEC.



5. The FOIP concept: The Indo-Pacific strategy complementarities and divergences
6. Security and Strategic ties between India and Southeast Asia

### **Conference Fee**

Conference fees for IAAPS Indian Members (specially subsidised): INR 4000 only

Conference fee for all other participants: US \$ 200

The conference fee covers the cost of the venue, equipment and logistics, lunch and breaks on conference days, certificates for participants, conference communications and staff. The fee does not cover accommodation, local transport and flight.

Information about different hotels for accommodation will be sent in due course once the participants clears up registration fees and conference fees.

### **Registration fees with IAAPS:**

INR 1000 only - flat rate for all IAAPS Indian member participants

US\$ 50 flat rate for all non- member non-Indian delegates

### **Abstract Submission & Payment Deadlines:**

- Abstracts must be submitted to [iaapsbkk2020@gmail.com](mailto:iaapsbkk2020@gmail.com)
- Deadline for abstract submission: 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020
- Communication of acceptance: 1 week after abstract submission
- Submission of Final Paper: 28<sup>th</sup> February , 2020
- Communication for final acceptance—10<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 ( **Only 30-35 best quality research papers will be accepted** )
- Conference Fees to ASIA Centre- 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 (to be paid online to Asia Centre)
- Membership & Registration Fees to IAAPS- 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 (To be paid to Bank Account of IAAPS/ Drafts)

### **Conference Dates**

- 29th October 2020, 7PM-9PM: Welcome Reception
- 30th October 2020, 9AM-5PM: Conference Sessions
- 31st October 2020, 9AM-12PM: Conference Sessions

### **Outcomes**

Conference Proceedings will be published on the website of Asia Centre and IAAPS. Thereafter selected papers will be considered for a peer-review process with a view to producing a Book by a reputable international publisher.

**Conveners**

The Conference is being convened by Asia Centre, Bangkok, Thailand, The Indian Association for Asian & Pacific Studies (IAAPS), Kolkata, India and the University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India and many other institutions will collaborate.

**Venue**

Asia Centre, Phayathai Plaza Building, Bangkok, Thailand

**Contact:**

- [iaapsbkk2020@gmail.com](mailto:iaapsbkk2020@gmail.com)

**Register here: <https://forms.gle/pXVmzTA6CFqpiJ7M7>**