

## **Tenth Biennial Conferences:**

**30<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020,**

### **Highlights 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Conference of Indian Association for Asian and Pacific Studies**

Academic Session Panel 1 discussed Use of History in fostering closer ties in cultural and soft power diplomacy.

Academic Session Panels 2A and 2B discussed Colonial experiences and their impact on contemporary relations.

Academic Session Panel 3 discussed Economic ties and the prospects for greater trade interdependence.

Academic Session Panel 4 discussed India Southeast Asian connectivity through BIMSTEC.

Academic Session Panel 5 discussed Free and Open Trade Policy- the Indo-Pacific strategy complementarities and divergences.

Academic Session Panel 6 discussed Security and strategic ties between India and Southeast Asia.

Special Panel Discussion was on India's Act East Neighbourhood Policy.

The important points which emerged were:

#### **Bangladesh (Mashiur Rahman)**

- The long border stability is instrumental behind forging India's good relations with Bangladesh and India
- Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her party (Awami League) has long standing relations with India and will continue to do so in days to come
- Bangladesh emerging as a leading power can act as a balance between India and China, thus creating new political dynamic in the region.

#### **Sri Lanka (Charitha Fernando)**

- India- Sri Lanka relations is more of strategy and security aspects

- Sri Lanka would engage directly with India in terms foreign affairs and economic development.
- India and Sri Lanka ties not only bounded by strategy and security but also would check on the militarisation aspect in the Indian Ocean.
- Sri Lanka in recent years has seen private investment from countries like Japan to counter looming Chinese influence in the region.

### **Myanmar ( Thin Thin Latt)**

- Myanmar has a long borderline with India so the relations of both the countries is of strategic importance.
- Myanmar Government is keen to attract India's investment and counter-balance Chinese influence in the region.
- India's cultural connectivity with Myanmar is a key step towards forging strong relations between the two.
- India's engagement with Myanmar includes, ICT, Food Processing, Hydro-carbons, India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway, military and defence exercise and last but not the least in educational sectors like IT and research.
- Myanmar wants deeper activities from India to deepen its relations.

### **Vietnam (Do Thu Ha)**

- India's relation with Vietnam predates back to historical times.
- Vietnam doesn't consider India as threat rather as a trust partner in the region.
- India ranks 9th among the trading partners with Vietnam.
- India's relation is crucial and strategically important in the ASEAN region.
- India's investment is much more than her neighbourhood countries like China, Japan and South Korea
- Automobiles and machinery are the foremost item of trade with India. Indian companies like ONGC, Tata have huge stakes in Vietnam.

### **Malaysia ( Mala Rajo Sathian)**

- The three main pillars of India-Malaysia relations are diplomacy, security and trade and last but not the least diaspora ties.
- India –Malaysia security concerns in Andaman Sea is traditionally track two diplomacy which both the countries need to work together.

- In the last couple of years India's relation with Malaysia was at its lowest ebb because of palm oil ban even though India never endorsed it. Former P.M Mahathir's comment that India invaded Kashmir hasn't gone down well with Indian counterparts.
- Slowly things are improving and Malaysia recently signed an agreement to buy 100,000 bags of Indian rice as a part of trade initiatives.
- Indian diaspora is connected with special category of visa and immigrations privileges to OCI in lieu of dual citizenship.
- Malaysia recently slightly tilted towards China causing differences between the two countries.
- Diaspora and Buddhist circuit tourism are the two most prominent aspects which will bind the relation between two countries.

#### **ASEAN (Riajul Damuri)**

- India's economic ties with ASEAN is ever increasing with 200% of trade over the last 15years.
- People to People connectivity, Education especially science and technology with exchange programmes with Indian Universities help in building the social and cultural dimensions.
- Promoting economic co-operation between the two and also emphasis should be given to more people to people connectivity. Thus establishing soft power diplomacy between India and ASEAN.

#### **China (Bali Deepak)**

- India have strategically been successful in bilateral relations with ASEAN,
- India's ACT EAST Policy was because of Indo-Pacific policy and strategy widening security intervening to Asia-Pacific region.
- The main purpose of Indo-Pacific strategy is to marginalise China's hegemony in the region.
- India's proximity with US and declining to join the Belt and Road Initiative have been closely monitored by China.
- India's requires more proactive approach in the region in countering the Chinese influence in the region.

#### **Outcome**

### **Vietnam**

- Buddhist Tourism is an important factor and very good cultural exchange between India and Vietnam.
- India's proactive engagement in Vietnam to counter Chinese influence.

### **Malaysia**

- QUAD is US dominated so Malaysia would never be a part of it, since they are more inclined towards China so they have agreed to join the RCEP.
- Malaysia from time and again has been benefitted from China. But the situation might change with the change of guard.

### **ASEAN**

- ASEAN interest with India involves around mostly on strategic and security dimension in Indo-Pacific region
- China's regional prowess in the background have made ASEAN to form economic, security and strategic relations with India.
- Even most of the countries are part of RCEP, if there is QUAD PLUS then some countries would be likely to be part of it for e.g. Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia

### **China**

- India need a more pragmatic approach dealing with China in terms of digital aspect. Emphasis should be given to construct more border roads to ensure connectivity to remotest region.
- India should be robust on in her relations with China.
- Government of India should have a long -term sustainable action policy with particular emphasis on China.