

Roundtable Discussion

Fostering Maritime Connectivity and Enhancing Supply Chain Resilience between India and ASEAN

Outcome Document



RIS
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AIC
ASEAN-India Centre at RIS



CMEC
Centre for Maritime Economy
and Connectivity
समुद्री अर्थव्यवस्था व संयोजन केंद्र



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Fostering Maritime Connectivity and Enhancing Supply Chain Resilience between India and ASEAN

30 April 2026

India Habitat Centre, New Delhi



RIS

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Preface

Professor Sachin Kumar Sharma

Director General, RIS

The maritime domain has emerged as a critical pillar of economic growth, regional integration, and strategic stability in the Indo-Pacific. For India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), maritime connectivity is not merely a matter of transportation and logistics; it is the foundation upon which trade, investment, production networks, and broader economic cooperation are built. As the economic partnership between India and ASEAN continues to deepen, ensuring seamless connectivity and resilient supply chains has become increasingly important.

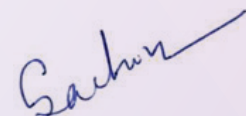
Recent disruptions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, climate-induced events, and challenges in major shipping routes have exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chains. These developments have reinforced the need for countries to strengthen connectivity infrastructure, diversify supply networks, and enhance their capacity to respond to unforeseen disruptions. In this context, maritime connectivity and supply chain resilience have emerged as strategic priorities for both India and ASEAN.

Recognising the importance of these issues, the ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) organised a Roundtable Discussion on “Fostering Maritime Connectivity and Enhancing Supply Chain Resilience between India and ASEAN” on 30 April 2026. The roundtable brought together policymakers, scholars, industry representatives, maritime practitioners, and strategic experts to deliberate on the opportunities and challenges associated with strengthening maritime linkages and building more resilient supply chains between India and ASEAN.

The discussions reaffirmed the importance of maritime connectivity and resilient supply chains as key enablers of ASEAN-India economic integration. Participants highlighted the need for closer cooperation and practical policy measures to strengthen regional connectivity, facilitate trade, improve logistics efficiency, and enhance resilience in an increasingly uncertain global environment. The deliberations also underscored the importance of translating shared aspirations into concrete and outcome-oriented cooperation.

This outcome document captures the principal insights and recommendations that emerged from the discussions. It reflects a shared commitment to advancing connectivity, strengthening economic linkages, and fostering a more resilient regional economic architecture. It is my hope that the report will contribute to ongoing policy discussions and support future initiatives aimed at deepening ASEAN-India cooperation in these critical areas.

I commend the ASEAN-India Centre at RIS for undertaking this timely initiative and thank all participants for their valuable contributions.



Sachin Kumar Sharma



Introduction

India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) share a deep and evolving partnership anchored in their geographic proximity and maritime interconnectedness. The maritime domain linking India and ASEAN constitutes one of the most dynamic economic corridors in the Indo-Pacific, facilitating a substantial share of global trade, energy flows, and manufacturing supply chains. The maritime connectivity between the two regions is not merely a logistical and supply chain necessity but a geoeconomic imperative that underpins regional integration, economic growth, and strategic stability.

In recent years, the significance of strengthening maritime connectivity has grown amid rising geopolitical uncertainties, supply chain disruptions, and increasing pressure on critical sea lanes. While India-ASEAN maritime trade continues to expand, structural challenges such as infrastructure gaps, regulatory fragmentation, and security concerns persist. At the same time, emerging opportunities, ranging from digital trade platforms to sustainable maritime infrastructure, offer

new avenues to deepen cooperation and enhance resilience.

Against this backdrop, the Roundtable Discussion on “Fostering Maritime Connectivity and Enhancing Supply Chain Resilience between India and ASEAN”, held on 30 April 2026 at Casuarina Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi (Hybrid), brought together policymakers, industry stakeholders, scholars, and maritime practitioners to deliberate on key challenges and opportunities in the sector. The discussions focused on identifying practical pathways to strengthen maritime connectivity, improve logistical efficiency, and build resilient and diversified supply chains between India and ASEAN that would also benefit the Indo-Pacific.

This outcome document synthesises the key insights, policy recommendations, and strategic perspectives that emerged from the deliberations. It aims to contribute to ongoing policy discourse and support efforts to advance a more integrated, secure, and resilient India-ASEAN maritime partnership.

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Summary of Proceedings



Global supply chains, need to transcend from being not only efficient, but also resilient, secure, safe, stable, robust, and compliant in an increasingly complex trade environment.

Dr Nisha Taneja

Senior Visiting Professor,
Indian Council for Research
on International Economic
Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi,
India

Session I: Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Connectivity: Trade and Infrastructure Dimensions

Dr Nisha Taneja, Senior Visiting Professor, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi, India.

Chairing the first session, Dr. Taneja set the tone by framing the discussion against the backdrop of a rapidly evolving and increasingly demanding global trade environment. Reflecting on developments over the past decade, she observed that the very definition of an efficient supply chain has undergone a notable transformation. Suggesting that efficiency in supply chains, though necessary, is not sufficient, as supply chains today are expected to be resilient, secure, stable, and compliant with a widening range of regulatory and strategic requirements. This expanding set of expectations underscores the growing complexity of sustaining trade flows in uncertain times.

She emphasised the need to bridge the often artificial divide between trade and infrastructure in policy discussions. She further highlighted that by bringing these two aspects together within a single session, the panel has created the necessary space to examine how physical infrastructure, logistics systems, and trade patterns interact and shape one another.



Looking ahead, three key areas will shape maritime supply chains: decarbonisation through green shipping corridors, digitalisation via paperless trade and single windows, and resilience—shifting from efficiency-driven models to systems built with redundancy and crisis-response capabilities.

Ms. Azhar Jaimurzina Ducrest
Chief of Transport, Connectivity and Logistics, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Dr. Taneja also drew attention to ongoing efforts by India to establish more direct maritime routes with ASEAN countries, with the aim of reducing reliance on existing transshipment hubs. However, she cautioned against viewing maritime connectivity in isolation. Instead, she argued for a more comprehensive approach that considers the entire logistics chain, from production centres to end consumers. This includes not only maritime transport but also hinterland connectivity, multimodal integration, and the seamless movement of goods across different stages of the supply chain.

She concluded by reiterating that the current global context marked by heightened uncertainty and disruptions has made trade more challenging than ever. It is imperative to adopt a holistic and adaptive approach to maritime connectivity, an approach that integrates infrastructure, trade dynamics, and supply chain requirements into a coherent framework.

Ms. Azhar Jaimurzina Ducrest, Chief of Transport, Connectivity and Logistics, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Ms. Ducrest grounded her intervention in both data and regional policy experience by offering a macro-level view of India-ASEAN maritime connectivity while underscoring the interplay between trade performance and logistics systems. She began by noting the scale and significance of the relationship, with bilateral trade reaching approximately USD 123 billion in 2024-25, accounting for around 11 per cent of India's global trade.

The central theme in her remarks was the overwhelming importance of maritime transport in sustaining this relationship. Nearly 90 per cent of India-ASEAN trade by volume moves by sea, a pattern consistent across the wider Indo-Pacific. She argued that maritime connectivity was not just one component of the trade ecosystem, but its mainframe. On the supply side, she pointed to significant capacity expansion in Indian ports

over the past decade, with sustained growth in cargo handling. At the same time, she highlighted that shipping activity was growing faster than the number of major ports required, which indicated that maritime infrastructure was lagging behind the supply chain flows.

She identified a set of mutually reinforcing drivers behind the growth in maritime trade. These include; first, policy and institutional momentum, reflected in the elevation of India-ASEAN ties and a range of supporting initiatives; second, infrastructure development and technological advancements, supported by long-term planning frameworks and investments in port capacity and multimodal integration; third, geostrategic convergence in the Indo-Pacific, where both India and ASEAN share an interest in secure and reliable shipping routes.

Despite these positive trends, Ms. Ducrest pointed out persisting structural gaps. Dependence on a few transshipment hubs, limited hinterland connectivity (especially across subregions), and uneven regulatory practices continue to constrain efficiency. She also drew attention to the need for better integration of inland transport systems, including waterways, as part of a more holistic connectivity strategy.

She identified three emerging areas of opportunity. First, decarbonisation as it is set to reshape maritime transport, with growing regulatory and market pressure to green shipping corridors. Second, digitalisation, particularly the adoption of paperless trade systems and maritime single windows that offer significant gains, though implementation remains uneven. Third, resilience which is developing into a definitive concern, requires a shift from purely efficiency-driven models towards systems that incorporate redundancy and crisis-response mechanisms.

She concluded by emphasising the importance of regional cooperation frameworks in supporting these transitions, suggesting that sustained institutional engagement and coordinated policy action will be



Underscoring the importance of coherent and coordinated policy frameworks in unlocking the full potential of maritime connectivity and strengthen resilient supply chains, prioritizing the review of trade agreements, harmonization of standards, and enhanced digital trade facilitation is essential.

Dr. Peter Brian M Wang

Deputy Head, Centre for Economics and Public Finance Studies at the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), Malaysia

critical to unlocking the next phase of India-ASEAN maritime connectivity.

Dr. Peter Brian M Wang, Deputy Head, Centre for Economics and Public Finance Studies at the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), Malaysia

Dr. Wang approached the aspect of maritime connectivity from a policy-centric lens, making a deliberate shift away from the conventional emphasis on physical infrastructure. At the outset, he framed his central argument on infrastructure, stating that while necessary, it is insufficient on its own. Without supportive regulatory frameworks, trade facilitation mechanisms and resilient institutional frameworks, even the most advanced ports and shipping systems cannot deliver optimal outcomes. Hence, he argued the point that maritime connectivity must be understood as equally dependent on soft infrastructure as well as physical assets.

Dr. Wang situated his remarks within the broader importance of maritime trade, noting that the overwhelming share of global and regional trade continues to move by sea. For ASEAN economies in particular, maritime transport is deeply embedded in economic activity, supporting not only trade flows but also regional production networks and industrial linkages. He cautioned that maritime resilience can no longer be treated as a purely logistical concern. This, he opined, was due to growing intersections with economic security, inflation management, industrial competitiveness, and national security considerations, especially in light of recent global disruptions.

Turning to challenges, Dr. Wang identified a range of risks confronting maritime trade. These include traditional security concerns such as piracy, as well as disruptions stemming from geopolitical tensions and chokepoint vulnerabilities. At the same time, operational inefficiencies, particularly in last-mile connectivity, continue to constrain the effectiveness of port-led improvements. He argued



Maritime connectivity between India and ASEAN must be understood as a multidimensional construct—spanning physical, digital, economic, industrial, regulatory, and people-to-people linkages. Strengthening tourism, skills, and energy ties, leveraging near-coastal shipping, and reimagining chokepoints as growth ‘pivot points’ can transform regional trade.

Cmde. (Dr.) Shishir Shrotriya (Retd.)

Coordinator, Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity (CMEC) at RIS

that the proliferation of trade restrictions, sanctions, and divergent standards has significantly increased the cost and complexity of cross-border trade. Compliance burdens, especially for the smaller companies are rising due to multiple documentation requirements and inconsistent technical standards. While ASEAN has made progress in tariff reduction, non-tariff measures continue to act as substantial impediments.

Dr. Wang suggested a set of practical policy directions. First, he underscored the importance of reviewing existing formats and frameworks, upgrading existing trade agreements, particularly with a focus on reducing non-tariff barriers. Second, he called for greater harmonisation of standards through mechanisms such as mutual recognition arrangements and regulatory cooperation. Third, he highlighted the role of digital trade facilitation, ranging from interoperable customs systems to electronic documentation. This, he stressed, would reduce transaction costs and improve overall efficiency. Finally, he stated that trade policy reforms can have a multiplier effect on maritime connectivity by increasing trade volumes, improving predictability, and enhancing the viability of logistics investments.

Cmde. (Dr.) Shishir Shrotriya (Retd.), Coordinator, Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity (CMEC) at RIS

Cmde. (Dr.) Shrotriya offered a wide-ranging and layered perspective on India-ASEAN maritime connectivity, situating it within India’s broader maritime visions such as SAGAR and MAHASAGAR. His intervention moved beyond conventional discussions of ports and shipping lanes, as he presented connectivity as a multidimensional construct encompassing physical, digital, regulatory, economic, industrial, and people-to-people linkages.

Dr. Shrotriya drew attention to the often-overlooked dimensions of connectivity, particularly economic and industrial integration, as well as

cultural and people-to-people ties. He identified tourism, skills, knowledge exchange, and energy linkages as areas where deeper engagement could significantly strengthen the broader connectivity ecosystem.

He noted that while existing sea lanes remain robust, there is considerable scope to expand connectivity through alternative routes, particularly in the Bay of Bengal region. He highlighted the strategic importance of maritime chokepoints, not merely as vulnerabilities but as potential “pivot points” for growth. Rather than viewing them solely through a risk lens, he encouraged reimagining these nodes, such as straits and channels, as opportunities for economic and logistical expansion.

A key area of emphasis in his remarks was the potential of coastal shipping. He described this as a relatively undersubscribed and highly promising avenue for India-ASEAN cooperation. By enabling more direct and frequent linkages, coastal shipping could act as a practical enabler of regional trade, particularly when supported by appropriate bilateral agreements and regulatory facilitation.

He also pointed to the role of port-led development and neighbourhood industrialisation, stressing the need to develop and integrate ports with adjacent economic zones and hinterland logistics corridors. He further put forward the idea of “virtual trade corridors,” which can streamline trade processes by integrating physical infrastructure with digital and regulatory systems.

While concluding, he underscored the need for more granular, country-specific approaches to cooperation. Rather than treating ASEAN as a monolithic bloc, he suggested that targeted bilateral and subregional partnerships built around complementary strengths would yield more tangible outcomes.



Maritime connectivity gains lie as much in operational efficiency as in infrastructure. Faster port processes must be matched by strong hinterland links and reliable shipping services. Incentives for carriers, short-sea networks, and sustained policy support are key to making connectivity viable.

Dr. Pritam Banerjee

Professor and Head, Centre for WTO Studies (CWS), Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), New Delhi

Dr. Pritam Banerjee, Professor and Head, Centre for WTO Studies (CWS), Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), New Delhi Dr. Banerjee focused on the operational and micro-level realities of maritime connectivity, examining how incremental improvements in port efficiency, logistics, and service design can significantly influence trade outcomes. While acknowledging the broader structural issues already raised, he emphasised that many of the immediate gains lie in addressing bottlenecks at the level of port operations and logistics ecosystems.

He began by highlighting recent improvements in the performance of major Indian ports, particularly in container handling. He stated that in the past several years, key ports have seen a marked reduction in dwell time, a critical indicator of efficiency, owing to a combination of policy and technological interventions. These include increased automation in cargo handling, the use of AI-driven risk management systems for customs clearance, and the expansion of trusted trader programmes such as the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) scheme. Initiatives like “green channel” clearance for a large share of cargo and automated duty processing have reduced procedural delays, enabled faster throughput and thus lowered transaction costs.

He also cautioned that port-side efficiency gains must be complemented by improvements in hinterland connectivity. A significant share of logistics costs in India, he noted, arises from inland transport rather than maritime shipping itself, largely due to an overreliance on road transport. The ongoing development of dedicated freight corridors and rail infrastructure is expected to address this imbalance, though gaps, particularly along the eastern coast, remain a work in progress.

Expanding the lens to the regional level, Dr. Banerjee mapped the broader Bay of Bengal port ecosystem, pointing to both emerging opportunities and persistent constraints. While several ports

across India and neighbouring countries are being developed or upgraded, last-mile connectivity and supporting infrastructure still lag.

A central concern he raised was the lack of adequate shipping services linking these ports. Infrastructure alone, he argued, does not guarantee connectivity; it must be matched by regular, cost-effective maritime services. Presently, major global shipping routes tend to bypass much of the Bay of Bengal, resulting in limited frequency, higher costs, and longer transit times for the Bay's regional trade. This, in turn, discourages smaller players who rely on predictable and affordable logistics.

To address this, Dr. Banerjee suggested that ports, many of which now operate under public-private partnership models, can play a more proactive role. Drawing on international examples, he outlined practical measures such as incentivising shipping lines through discounted port charges, introducing loyalty programmes for higher cargo volumes, and offering transshipment concessions to attract traffic. These interventions, while requiring financial support and policy backing, could help build traffic density and make routes commercially viable.

In light of the foregoing, he underscored the importance of promoting short-sea and feeder shipping networks within the region, and schemes that subsidise coastal shipping and reduce handling costs could be extended to the Bay of Bengal to stimulate regional connectivity. In his view, creating a networked system of ports linked through frequent and reliable services would significantly reduce costs and transit times, making trade more competitive.

Concluding his remarks, Dr. Banerjee stressed that maritime connectivity initiatives require sustained support over time to achieve scale and viability, hence the need for policy continuity and long-term commitment.

Session II: Building Resilient Supply Chains



The goal of India-ASEAN supply chain cooperation is diversification, not substitution, and the policy architecture needs to reflect that distinction.

Cmde. Abhay Kumar Singh (Retd.)

Research Fellow, MP-IDSA, New Delhi

Chair: Cmde. Abhay Kumar Singh (Retd.)

Research Fellow, MP-IDSA, New Delhi

Chairing the second session, Cmde. Abhay Kumar Singh (Retd.) framed the discussion around the importance of supply chain resilience, a concept interpreted differently across the India-ASEAN landscape. He opined that while India tends to frame resilience in terms of reducing dependence on imports from a single country, several ASEAN economies emphasised diversification without disrupting existing production linkages, and the importance of regional hubs and their central role in global supply chains.

He further pointed out that the recent tariff escalations by the United States were shocks as compared to the 2008 global financial crisis. These shocks exposed ASEAN economies to vulnerabilities while also incentivising deeper regional integration. Hence, he stated that supply chain disruptions are increasingly seen as national security concerns, a shift starting from the COVID-19 pandemic period. He further highlighted that India's limited integration into ASEAN value chains and the modest outcomes of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement were limiting supply chains.. He also stated that the goal of ASEAN-India supply chain cooperation should be diversification rather than substitution, and therefore, policy architectures must align with this approach.. He flagged three interconnected priorities that emerged from the first session that will also impact supply chains and their resilience, digital logistics, green infrastructure, and stronger government-industry collaboration. While inviting the panellists to present their views, he observed that India's future role will depend on its credibility as a reliable and competitive partner.



Resilience is about creating the ability of the supply chain to continue operating in the face of a risky event or destruction.

Dr. Arshinder Kaur

IIT Madras



Whatever supply chains India and ASEAN have engaged in are not confined to India and ASEAN, it is well beyond India and ASEAN and encompass a larger group of countries.

Dr. Amitendu Palit

Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economics), Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Dr. Arshinder Kaur spoke about the evolving perspectives on supply chain resilience and logistics risk management. She noted that while the COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased awareness of global supply chain vulnerabilities and disruptions, such risks had existed due to financial shocks, natural disasters, and geopolitical events. She argued that traditional resilience thought processes, which focused on identifying types of risks, should shift toward assessing the loss of critical capabilities such as sourcing, transportation, manufacturing, communication, financial flows, and distribution, irrespective of the nature of the disruption.

She further explained that the concept of resilience was being extended to viability. This concept of viability was the ability of supply chains to survive and adapt through structural redesign, reconfiguration, and long-term transformation, rather than merely returning to pre-disruption states. The concept included strategies such as supply chain diversification, alternative sourcing, infrastructure modernisation, multimodal integration, and digital transformation, and used tools like real-time tracking systems and blockchain platforms. She also highlighted the importance of innovation and modular product and network design, citing post-COVID semiconductor shortages as an example of rapid supply chain reconfiguration. She concluded that achieving supply chain viability required coordinated efforts in digitalisation, capacity expansion, cybersecurity, and regional collaboration. This route would enable India and ASEAN to develop more adaptive and resilient logistics systems.

Dr. Amitendu Palit outlined the expanded view of supply chain resilience in the context of India-ASEAN cooperation and global trade disruptions. He noted that while supply chain resilience had become a widely used concept in recent years, it was often only partially understood. He defined resilience as not only the ability to prevent disruptions but, more importantly, the ability of supply chains to recover



I mentioned the dynamics, which is really characterised by what is known as a strategic Centre 'Vuka'. No, it's not a planet which has been discovered by Star Wars; it really stands for vulnerability, uncertainties, and complexity. These are the characteristics and features which are shaping, particularly, the logistics.

Prof Nazery Khalid

Adjunct Professor, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, and Business Development Director, LBB International

quickly and restore functionality after exogenous shocks. In the India-ASEAN context, he emphasised that supply chains operated across multiple regions and global partners, making resilience a matter of broader international coordination. He also referenced the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), which included provisions for supply chain cooperation among member countries. He noted that although global attention had shifted away from IPEF, it remained a relevant platform for advancing regional supply chain integration and coordination.

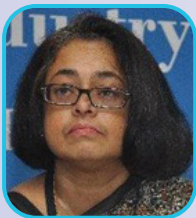
He examined major risk factors affecting global cargo movement, including piracy, extreme weather events, and increasing geopolitical conflicts and wartime disruptions affecting maritime routes. He highlighted the vulnerability of key shipping choke points such as the Suez Canal, Malacca Strait, and Panama Canal, where disruptions had triggered significant supply chain breakdowns. He stressed the need to strengthen risk identification, insurance and reinsurance mechanisms and improve information sharing among stakeholders. Dr. Palit also emphasised the importance of harmonised digital standards as ASEAN moves towards a unified digital economy framework. In this regard, he noted that India-ASEAN digital integration remains limited and needs a boost. Finally, he suggested that future resilience strategies should focus on developing alternative shipping routes, strengthening multimodal connectivity, and adopting green shipping corridors. He also argued that such measures could enable inherently resilient and sustainable supply chains rather than purely reactive systems.

Prof. Nazery Khalid highlighted the growing importance of supply chain resilience in the context of India-ASEAN trade relations and global disruptions. He noted that India and ASEAN were close trading partners with steadily increasing trade volumes and values, mainly through diverse exchanges in commodities, energy products, agriculture, and cultural goods. He emphasised that recent global

conflicts and geopolitical tensions had intensified concerns about supply chain stability and regional security. He stated that, as a result, supply chain resilience, once a peripheral concept, was becoming a strategic priority. This was visible in the increasingly embedded corporate decision-making at the executive levels influenced by fluctuating dynamics in politics, technology, finance, ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) requirements, and global consumption patterns.

He further explained that modern supply chains operated in a “VUCA” environment characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. This stress required a continuous understanding of the environment, coupled with fast adaptation and innovation from all stakeholders. He then outlined several key mega trends shaping logistics and supply chains. These included shifts in production and sourcing patterns driven by globalisation and protectionism, rapid technological transformation through AI, automation, drones, and machine learning, and the growing importance of ESG compliance and green shipping practices. He also highlighted the increasing demand for skilled human capital, evolving models of competitive collaboration, stricter regulatory frameworks, climate change impacts on logistics infrastructure, and the rise of specialised logistics services. In conclusion, he emphasised the growing shift to customer-centric and decentralised supply chain systems. He also stated that addressing these interconnected mega trends is essential for building robust, resilient, and cost-effective global supply chains.

Dr. Saon Ray highlighted that recent global developments in the Persian Gulf had significantly increased uncertainty in energy and financial markets, with major implications for supply chain resilience. She noted that disruptions in oil prices and geopolitical tensions, including conflicts in energy-producing regions, had contributed to heightened volatility in global supply chains.



We can actually think about, especially between India and ASEAN, in the context of supply chains, is policy coordination and areas like standards, they have become very important.

Dr. Saon Ray

Senior Visiting Professor,
Indian Council for Research
on International Economic
Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi

She also referred to earlier trade policy shocks such as US tariff escalations and sanctions, which had further intensified policy unpredictability. In the context of India and ASEAN, she pointed out convergence on shared vulnerabilities. These included energy dependence, supply concentration in critical commodities and minerals, and exposure to global financial pressures. She quoted the impact of currency volatility on India's trade and export competitiveness.

She flagged key approaches to strengthening supply chain resilience, with a focus on energy diversification, as well as financial and policy coordination. She emphasised the need to reduce dependence on single suppliers of energy and other critical imports, as both India and several ASEAN countries continued to rely heavily on limited sources. Additionally, she stressed the importance of deeper policy coordination between India and ASEAN, particularly in areas such as harmonisation of standards and regulatory alignment. She stated that while such aspects had been discussed earlier, progress remained limited. She concluded that stronger coordination and diversification strategies were essential to address ongoing disruptions and building more resilient regional supply chains.

Key Recommendations and Takeaways

Building on the deliberations of the roundtable on “Fostering Maritime Connectivity and Enhancing Supply Chain Resilience between India and ASEAN” held on 30 April 2026, these discussions highlighted that maritime connectivity is central to trade, economic integration, and regional stability. In light of increasing geopolitical uncertainties, climate risks, and supply chain disruptions, there is a pressing need for coordinated policy, infrastructure, and institutional responses. The following recommendations and takeaways emerged from the discussions:

- Accelerate the review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) with a focus on reducing non-tariff barriers and harmonising product and technical standards.
- Enhance regulatory harmonisation by aligning customs procedures, standards, and compliance requirements across India and ASEAN, including mutual recognition arrangements to reduce delays and compliance costs.
- Leverage sectoral complementarities in industries such as electronics, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, automotive, textiles, and blue economy to build resilient integrated regional value chains.
- Promote diversification of supply chains by encouraging alternative sourcing strategies, developing multiple trade routes, and reducing overdependence on specific ports or transshipment hubs.
- Strengthen supply chain transparency and resilience by improving data sharing, logistics visibility, and risk assessment mechanisms across the region.
- Align cooperation initiatives with broader regional strategies such as SAGAR, MAHASAGAR, and Indo-Pacific frameworks to ensure coherence and long-term sustainability.
- Strengthen hinterland multimodal connectivity by integrating maritime transport with rail, road, and inland waterways to ensure seamless movement of goods from origin to destination, thereby reducing transit time and logistics costs.
- Accelerate port modernisation and efficiency with a focus on capacity

- expansion, automation, and last-mile connectivity.
- Develop green shipping corridors and invest in sustainable maritime infrastructure, including the adoption of low-carbon fuels such as green hydrogen, ammonia, and methanol, and thus promote environmentally sustainable port operations.
 - Encourage coastal and short-sea shipping between India and ASEAN countries to improve regional connectivity, lower logistics costs, and increase the utilisation of smaller ports.
 - Enhance maritime security cooperation through joint exercises, information sharing, and capacity building to address non-traditional maritime threats.
 - Promote inclusive connectivity by extending benefits to smaller economies, emerging ports, and less-developed regions within ASEAN and India.
 - Facilitate greater private sector engagement, including MSMEs, in regional value chains and logistics networks through supportive policies and access to finance.
 - Promote public-private partnerships in port development, logistics infrastructure, and supply chain management to leverage private sector efficiency, investment, and innovation.
 - Strengthen institutional mechanisms for crisis response by developing coordinated regional frameworks to manage disruptions such as conflicts, pandemics, and geopolitical and climate-related shocks.
 - Focus on integrating physical, digital, regulatory, and people-to-people connectivity to create a holistic framework for maritime and economic cooperation.
 - Expand digitalisation through interoperable port community systems, digital documentation, electronic bills of lading, and single window systems to improve transparency and efficiency.
 - Encourage pilot projects such as digital corridors, green ports, and multimodal logistics hubs to test innovative approaches. Subsequently, scale successful models across the region.
 - Invest in capacity building and skill development in areas such as maritime governance, logistics management, digital systems, and port operations to support long-term cooperation.
 - Encourage academic and policy collaboration between institutions in India and ASEAN to generate evidence-based research, policy insights, and innovative solutions for enhancing maritime connectivity and the resilience of supply chains.



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RIS specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. It is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues. The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. Through its following centres/forums, RIS promotes policy dialogue and coherence on regional and international economic issues.



The word “DAKSHIN” (दक्षिण) is of Sanskrit origin, meaning “South.” The Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence in November 2023. The initiative was inspired by the deliberations of Global South leaders during the Voice of the Global South Summits. DAKSHIN stands for Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative. Hosted at the RIS, DAKSHIN has established linkages with leading think tanks and universities across the Global South and is building a dynamic network of scholars working on Global South issues.



AIC at RIS has been working to strengthen India’s strategic partnership with ASEAN in its realisation of the ASEAN Community. AIC at RIS undertakes research, policy advocacy and regular networking activities with relevant organisations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN countries, with the aim of providing policy inputs, up-to-date information, data resources and sustained interaction, for strengthening ASEAN-India partnership.



CMEC has been established at RIS under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPS&W), Government of India. CMEC is a collaboration between RIS and Indian Ports Association (IPA). It has been mandated to act as an advisory/technological arm of MoPSW to provide the analytical support on policies and their implementation.



FITM is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Ayush and RIS. It has been established with the objective of undertaking policy research on economy, intellectual property rights (IPRs) trade, sustainability and international cooperation in traditional medicines. FITM provides analytical support to the Ministry of Ayush on policy and strategy responses on emerging national and global developments.



BEF aims to serve as a dedicated platform for fostering dialogue on promoting the concept in the Indian Ocean and other regions. The forum focuses on conducting studies on the potential, prospects and challenges of blue economy; providing regular inputs to practitioners in the government and the private sectors; and promoting advocacy for its smooth adoption in national economic policies.



FIDC, has been engaged in exploring nuances of India’s development cooperation programme, keeping in view the wider perspective of South-South Cooperation in the backdrop of international development cooperation scenario. It is a tripartite initiative of the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, academia and civil society organisations.



FISD aims to harness the full potential and synergy between science and technology, diplomacy, foreign policy and development cooperation in order to meet India’s development and security needs. It is also engaged in strengthening India’s engagement with the international system and on key global issues involving science and technology.



As part of its work programme, RIS has been deeply involved in strengthening economic integration in the South Asia region. In this context, the role of the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) is very important. SACEPS is a network organisation engaged in addressing regional issues of common concerns in South Asia.



Knowledge generated endogenously among the Southern partners can help in consolidation of stronger common issues at different global policy fora. The purpose of NeST is to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks for collaboratively generating, systematising, consolidating and sharing knowledge on South South Cooperation approaches for international development.



DST-Satellite Centre for Policy Research on STI Diplomacy at RIS aims to advance policy research at the intersection of science, technology, innovation (STI) and diplomacy, in alignment with India’s developmental priorities and foreign policy objectives.

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