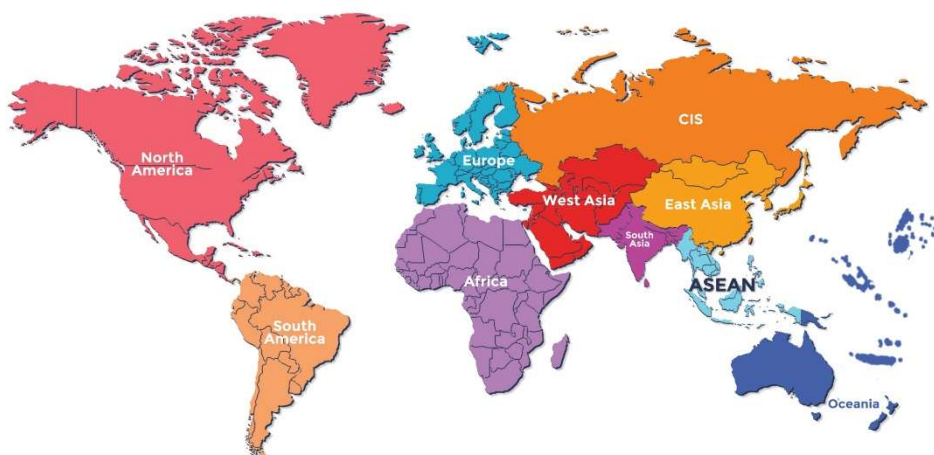




**REIMAGINE THE WORLD**

**FUTURE OF PARTNERSHIPS**

A FICCI- Eram Group Initiative



# KNOWLEDGE PAPER

## FUTURE OF INDIA- ASEAN CONNECTIVITY PARTNERSHIPS

SEPTEMBER 14- 15, 2021

### ASEAN DIVISION

FEDERATION OF INDIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (FICCI)  
FEDERATION HOUSE, TANSEN MARG, NEW DELHI, INDIA



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## SECTION 1

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### BACKGROUND

In this VUCA world, leadership is as much about innovation, as much as it remains to be an ‘art’, in an environment where change is the only constant. An environment wherein independence and interdependence will go hand in hand when we look at future global partnerships. Global leaders continue to strive for excellence while making their businesses resilient and adaptable. At the same time business leaders ought to focus on sustainability and gender diversity, as fundamental principles for their future partnerships. Challenges presided over by opportunities forced us to ‘reimagine the future’ of economic and development partnerships, that touch lives of millions around the world.

FICCI envisages that a platform needs to be created to reimagine business - **LEADS** (Leadership, Excellence, Adaptability, Diversity, Sustainability), which is an Annual International Flagship program of FICCI.

### CONTEXT

**LEADS 2021** is planned on **14-15 September, 2021**, in a **hybrid format** with an overarching theme of ‘**Future of Partnerships**’. It will facilitate full-day engagements aligned with time zone differences with East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, ASEAN & Oceania, Europe, Africa, West Asia, Americas, and the Pacific.

**Session Brief:** India- ASEAN Connectivity is the key to the future of economic prowess. The session will focus on exploring a leadership vision to identify opportunities and challenges for improving infrastructure and digital connectivity, facilitating the flow of people across borders, closer people-to-people contact. This would foster greater opportunities for regional interaction and elevate sustainable economic growth to next level.



## SPEAKER PROFILES



### **Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways; and Minister of AYUSH, Government of India**

Sarbananda Sonowal is the current Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Minister of AYUSH in the Government of India. He is a former Chief Minister of Assam and member of Assam Legislative Assembly. He has also served as the Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Government of India, from 2014 to 2016.



### **Mr. Devin Narang, Country Head-India, Sindicatum Renewable Energy Company, India**

Devin Narang is Country Head of Sindicatum Renewable Energy India, a leading developer, owner and operator of clean energy projects in India, Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam. He is the scion of the Narang Group, one of the oldest Industrial groups in India, with business interest in distilling, brewing, Sugar, Banking and Insurance.



### **Mr Harshavardhan Neotia, Co-Chair, India-Singapore CEO Forum, Past President, FICCI and Chairman, Ambuja Neotia Group, India**

Harshavardhan Neotia is presently Chairman of Ambuja Neotia Group. The Group operates across five business verticals: Real Estate - covering the entire gamut of housing, retail and commercial spaces, Hospitality - including hotels, resorts, Healthcare with multispecialty hospitals, Education, and Startup Incubation. He also serves as the Honorary Consul of Israel in West Bengal.



### **Ms Mridula Iyer, Managing Director and Head of Treasury & Trade Solutions, CITI Group, India**

Mridula Iyer is head of Treasury & Trade Solutions for Citi South Asia, covering India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Over the past 22 years, she has worked in multiple roles in diverse businesses across Cash Management, Trade and Securities Services, Compliance as well as innovation and digital capabilities for clients.



**Mr Isidro A. Consunji, Chairman and President, DMCI Holdings Inc. & Chairman, Philippine Overseas Construction Board (POCB), Philippines**

Mr Isidro Consunji is the Chairman and President of DMCI Holdings, Inc. He is also the Chairman of the Philippine Overseas Construction Board; Board Member of the Construction Industry Authority of the Philippines and member of the Board of Directors of many other prestigious organisations in Philippines.



**Dr Ruth Banomyong, Dean - Faculty of Commerce & Accountancy, Thammasat University, Thailand**

Dr Ruth Banomyong is Dean at the Faculty of Commerce & Accountancy, Thammasat University in Thailand. His main research interests are in the field of multimodal transport, international logistics, trade facilitation, logistics development policy, supply chain performance and humanitarian supply chains. He has published over 100 papers and reports in journals.



**Dr Robert Yap, Executive Chairman, YCH Group, Singapore**

Dr Robert Yap is the Executive Chairman of YCH Group, Singapore's leading end-to-end supply chain management company with operations spanning across Asia Pacific. Over the last 4 decades, he has played a pivotal role in the logistics and supply chain field. He is the President of the Singapore National Employers Federation.



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## SECTION 2

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### DISCUSSION AGENDA

India and Southeast Asia share a long cultural history, which over the years has helped shape economic and commercial relations between them. This partnership garnered an impetus following the launch of India's 'Look East Policy' in the early 1990s, rechristened 'Act East' in 2015.

The launch of 'Act East Policy' ushered in an era of reinvigorated partnership between India and Southeast Asia. Indian policymakers had long ago realised the strategic importance of the ASEAN region. The Act East Policy was a push in the right direction, focused on strengthening relations through greater economic and cultural exchanges.

India-ASEAN relations have evolved over time, with India graduating from the Southeast Asian grouping's Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 1992 to a Summit-level Partner in 2002. Since then, both sides have been actively engaged in fostering economic, security, political, and cultural cooperation.

ASEAN is central to India's overall external engagement with the Indo-Pacific region. India is committed to further strengthen partnership with the ASEAN through stronger surface, maritime and air-connectivity and digital-link. The Governments have prioritised India- ASEAN Connectivity as the key to the future of economic prowess. Spurring multi-faceted connectivity across all domains, including infrastructure, digital and air, is a gamechanger in fructifying the potential of burgeoning strategic partnership between India and ASEAN.

Both sides need to review opportunities and challenges in improving infrastructural and digital connectivity and facilitating flow of people across borders for people to people contact. This would foster greater opportunities for regional engagement and elevate sustainable economic growth to next level.

The governments and industry leaders of both regions need to look at accelerating major connectivity projects and envision new ideas and initiatives that will integrate these two hubs of growth, dynamism and entrepreneurial energy. There should be greater focus on promoting connectivity initiatives pivoted around sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence and people mobility.

#### **Master plan on ASEAN connectivity (MPAC) 2025**

ASEAN Countries recognise the benefits of regional connectivity and adopted the Master Plan of ASEAN Connectivity 2025 focused on five strategic areas: sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence and people mobility.



Improved connectivity can drive a wide range of social, economic and commercial benefits:

- Better transport connectivity between nations leads to improved economic growth and trade.
- Improved regional ICT infrastructure unlocks innovation, new competition and huge social benefits
- Greater energy connectivity allows for better resource planning, energy pooling and fuel source diversification.

MPAC 2025 is focused on promoting economic integration amongst member nations for creating an inclusive and competitive trade bloc before the year 2025. This goal will only be achieved by improving cross-sectoral connectivity across the region. The plan has already given birth to an ASEAN digital data governance framework that seeks to drive digital innovation and create a stronger digital agenda in the region.

The Masterplan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 identifies digital innovation as one of five strategic areas to achieve a seamlessly connected ASEAN, as well as a significant potential source of economic activity, and points to the need for backbone infrastructure, regulatory frameworks for new digital services, support for sharing best practice on open data, and equipping micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises with capabilities to access new technologies.

Although the MPAC is a plan of ASEAN, it also emphasises the connectivity with the neighbouring countries including the EAS countries.

### **Modes of Connectivity**

- i. **Infrastructure Connectivity:** India- Myanmar- Thailand Trilateral highway is one of the major routes of India – ASEAN Connectivity. The Indian side has helped construct two key stretches of the 1,360-km trilateral highway in Myanmar, but work on several other sections and the upgrade of nearly 70 bridges has been held up by a variety of factors. India believes the highway, which will run from Moreh in Manipur to Mae Sot in Thailand, will allow it to access markets across the Asean region and boost people-to-people ties.

The early completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and its extension to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam can be a vibrant economic growth corridor for trade and transport facilitation between North-East and South East Asian countries. Continued commitment and investment are needed in these infrastructure initiatives, as well as in soft infrastructure such as standardisation, increased automation in customs, and upgraded border facilities to facilitate the seamless movement of goods.

To develop connectivity through water, ASEAN and India are working on the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP). The project was initiated by the Indian government in 2008 and is entirely funded by India. The purpose is to seek an alternative route through Myanmar for the transportation of goods to the northeast region of India. The KMMTTP connects Kolkata in India to Sittwe and Paletwa in Myanmar by sea and river respectively.



- ii. **Digital Connectivity:** Asean is a fast-growing consumer market with a growing middle class and a population that is increasingly digitally connected. As such beyond movement of goods and physical connectivity, it is also important for Asean and India to explore ways to enhance digital connectivity.

If the MPAC 2025 is implemented successfully, digital technologies in ASEAN will have grown to more than \$500 billion by 2025. Technology will be adopted in the region in a bigger scale, efficiency in business and governance will be a notch higher, and products and services from the region will stand a stronger chance of competing in the global market. In order to progress on digital trajectory, ASEAN countries have to focus on strengthening its digital infrastructure and train the talent pool with advanced digital skills. Indeed, the full potential of the ASEAN digital transformation still lies in the future and there is immense potential for collaboration between India and ASEAN in this area.

ASEAN Countries should consider partnering with India for better integration of digital economies and both the countries should enable the sharing of data and avoid data localisation. There should be greater impetus to accelerate our efforts to integrate our digital realms and enable more seamless flow of data, services and payments.

- iii. **Air Connectivity:** Air connectivity is an important mode of transportation to carry tourist and business travellers, high-value fragile goods and perishable products from one place to another in the shortest time. Besides, it also provides significant social benefits by facilitating communication between different parts of the world and by providing greater access to remote areas.

Flow of ASEAN passengers coming to India has been much lower than the Indian passengers going to ASEAN or transit through ASEAN. Hubs like Bangkok, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur equipped with bigger and performing airlines continue to attract passengers and air cargos from India. Today, out of 10 ASEAN countries, only five ASEAN countries like Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand have direct flights with India and vice versa. For the rest five ASEAN countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, Brunei), there is no direct flight but have inter-connection from other airports, of which Indonesia and the Philippines are two prominent ASEAN countries with which India has substantial business and tourism interests.

- iv. **People to People Connectivity:** Establishing connectivity will enable to promote people to people connectivity through cooperation in business and tourism. There is need to develop air connectivity to enhance tourism in the unexplored areas of ASEAN countries. Tourists from ASEAN Countries are mainly interested in Buddhist pilgrimage. However, there is huge potential in other tourist destinations in India such as cruise, heritage and culture, spiritual and medical tourism. Both ASEAN and India need to integrate all stakeholders and build a roadmap for tourism cooperation and student exchange programmes in order to enhance people to people connectivity.





### Key Questions for discussion during the session

1. Transport connectivity is critical to India-ASEAN relations and essential for the seamless movement of goods and services across borders. We would like to hear your views on how both sides should work together to ensure progress and overcome impediments?
2. India's ASEAN engagement needs a digital push. Please share your views on how India can expand digital connectivity with ASEAN, considering India's solid digital infrastructure and booming digital economy and the transforming digital landscape of ASEAN?
3. As we continue to push for better connectivity with Southeast Asia through the connectivity projects under Act East Policy, we would also like to hear your views on how essential is "physical and soft connectivity" for building India-ASEAN ties?
4. Connectivity has now become a buzzword. How can connectivity between India and ASEAN be further developed? What are the biggest connectivity challenges between India & ASEAN?
5. We would like to hear your thoughts on the role of smart logistics infrastructure to strengthen supply chain resiliency and trade connectivity within the ASEAN region and the countries around them? Also, how do you think this is essential for promoting competitiveness, inclusiveness and enabling the ASEAN region to be one formidable economic bloc, enhancing its position on the global value chain?

### Conclusion

Connectivity is not just a new buzzword for globalisation, but an important imperative for all economies seeking accelerated growth. With Act East Policy of India, there has been growing linkages and economic convergences between India's North-East States and ASEAN Countries in recent years. On physical connectivity, we cannot avoid a reference to the flagship infrastructure projects which are in progress, including the Trilateral Highway connecting India's Northeast to Thailand, the Dawei Deep-sea Port in Myanmar, and the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project.

We are no more limiting the concept of connectivity exclusively to physical connectivity, but also including digital and people to people connectivity to strengthen business linkages. The fusion of digital technologies and the increasing data centric industries is blurring the lines between the physical and digital spheres. **With the** growing reliance on digital connectivity, demand is likely to ramp up further due to the imminent roll out of 5G, IoT-linked devices, data localisation and cloud adoption. India-ASEAN need to prioritize various forms of connectivity between ASEAN and India, expanding, enriching and diversifying them to ensure greater mutual benefit than in the past.



## SECTION 3

### SOCIAL MEDIA COVERAGE

**FICCI LEADS @FICCILEADS - Aug 5**  
The #ASEAN session at #LEADS2021 will focus on exploring a leadership vision on opportunities and challenges in improving infrastructural & digital connectivity and facilitating the flow of people across borders for people-to-people connect.  
Register at [ficcileads.in](http://ficcileads.in)

**FICCI LEADS @FICCILEADS - Jul 16**  
Indian-ASEAN Connectivity is the Key to the future of economic prowess.  
Be part of an interactive session on the Future of India-ASEAN Connectivity Partnerships at #LEADS2021 from 14-15 Sept at [ficcileads.in](http://ficcileads.in)

**FICCI LEADS @FICCILEADS - Jul 25**  
Indian-ASEAN Connectivity is the Key to the future of economic prowess.  
Be part of an interactive session on the Future of India-ASEAN Connectivity Partnerships at #LEADS2021 from 14-15 Sept at [ficcileads.in](http://ficcileads.in)

**FICCI LEADS @FICCILEADS - Jul 31**  
Indian-ASEAN Connectivity is the Key to the future of economic prowess.  
Be part of an interactive session on the Future of India-ASEAN Connectivity Partnerships at #LEADS2021 from 14-15 Sept at [ficcileads.in](http://ficcileads.in)

**Mr. Isidro A. Consunji**  
Chairman and President, DMCI Holdings Inc. & Chairman, Philippines Overseas Construction Board  
Philippines

**Dr. Ruth Banomyong**  
Dean, Faculty of Commerce & Accountancy, Thammasat University  
Thailand



# LEADS 2021

LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE ADAPTABILITY DIVERSITY SUSTAINABILITY

## REIMAGINE THE WORLD

**Ms. Mridula Iyer**  
Managing Director and Head of Treasury & Trade Solutions,  
CITI Group, India

“ At #LEADS2021, global leaders from Asia, Europe, Africa, CIS, Americas & the Pacific will share their vision on "Future of Partnerships." Looking forward to sharing my thoughts on Future of India ASEAN Connectivity. Partnerships at #LEADS2021 as the world learns to operate amidst a new normal. ”

REGISTER ON [WWW.FICCILEADS.IN](http://WWW.FICCILEADS.IN)

FICCI LEADS @FICCILEADS · Jun 24

Indian-#ASEAN Connectivity is the Key to the future of economic progress. Be part of an interactive session on the Future of India-ASEAN Connectivity Partnerships at #LEADS2021 from 14-15 Sept at [ficcileads.in](http://ficcileads.in) #FICCILEADS #GlobalBusinessSummit #GlobalLeaders

FICCI and 9 others

### ASEAN SESSION

FUTURE OF INDIA-ASEAN CONNECTIVITY PARTNERSHIPS

14 SEPTEMBER 2021  
TIME: 11:30-12:30 (INDIA/ST/0600-07:00(CMT))

India-ASEAN connectivity is the key to the future of economic progress. The session would feature an interactive session aimed at leveraging people-to-people connectivity and sustainable economic growth to the next level.

REGISTER HERE  
[WWW.FICCILEADS.IN](http://WWW.FICCILEADS.IN)

Program Partner: Platinum Partner: Session Partner:

12 views · Liked by sonali\_mitra18

ficcileads "Greetings from the Philippines! Join me to hear my thoughts on partnership opportunities between Philippines and India to support digital technologies and promote sustainable economic growth in the ASEAN Session at #LEADS2021 on 14th September 2021" - Mr Isidro A. Consunji, Chairman and President DMCI Holdings Inc. & Chairman, Philippines Overseas Construction Board.

#FICCILEADS #globalbusiness #globalbusinessopportunity #globalleaders #philippines #asean #india #digital

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30 August

15 views · Liked by sonali\_mitra18

ficcileads "Greetings! Please join me in my session on the future of India-ASEAN Connectivity Partnerships on 14th September 2021, 11:30 AM IST. This is a part of #LEADS2021 - A Global thought leadership initiative. Do join me." - Dr Ruth Banomyong, Dean - Faculty of Commerce & Accountancy, Thammasat University, Thailand Register for #FICCILEADS at [www.ficcileads.in](http://www.ficcileads.in)

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26 August



Established in 1927, FICCI is the largest and oldest apex business organisation in India. Its history is closely interwoven with India's struggle for independence, its industrialization, and its emergence as one of the most rapidly growing global economies.

A non-government, not-for-profit organisation, FICCI is the voice of India's business and industry. From influencing policy to encouraging debate, engaging with policy makers and civil society, FICCI articulates the views and concerns of industry. It serves its members from the Indian private and public corporate sectors and multinational companies, drawing its strength from diverse regional chambers of commerce and industry across states, reaching out to over 2,50,000 companies.

FICCI provides a platform for networking and consensus building within and across sectors and is the first port of call for Indian industry, policy makers and the international business community.



**LEADS 2021** is a unique multi-faceted 2-day global thought leadership initiative curated as an engagement platform for insights into five fundamental questions that underlie the quest for global economic prosperity with sustainability, inclusivity and social wellbeing. This year, this programme shall be organised from 14-15 September, 2021. FICCI LEADS is an endeavour to evolve a shared vision among global leaders, to reimagine economic growth on the pillars of globalisation and 'Atma-Nirbhar' economy.

In the backdrop of self-reliance, economic resilience and multilateralism, the focus would be 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges and giving a fresh meaning to global business value chains. This FICCI initiative is curated towards this objective at a time when we also need to reaffirm solidarity across borders with optimism for the future. FICCI LEADS 2021 will be a confluence of global leaders, influencers and opinion shapers across the spectrum of world economy. The program is open to select audience by special invitation only over 100 countries and India.