INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES

web: www.issi.org.pk
phone: +92-51-9204423, 24
fax: +92-51-9204658

Report – Pakistan ASEAN Experts Dialogue

"Pakistan-ASEAN: Shared Future and the Way Forward"

July 1, 2021

Rapporteurs: Sarah Akram & Ume Farwa *Edited by: Malik Qasim Mustafa*

PICTURES OF THE EVENT

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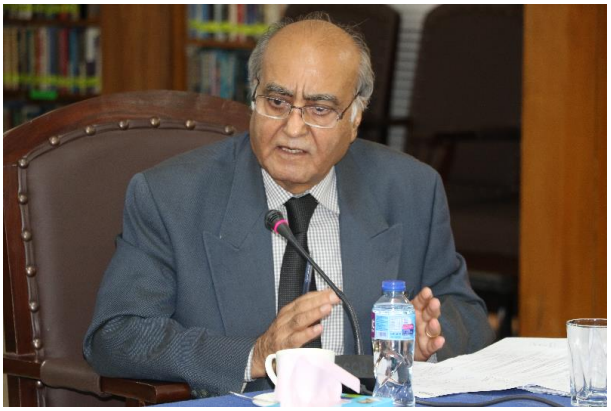


The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with the Indonesian Embassy and the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI) hosted the Pakistan ASEAN Experts Dialogue titled, "Pakistan-ASEAN: Shared Future and the Way Forward" on July 1, 2021. The dialogue included the participation of experts from Pakistan as well as from the ASEAN countries. The members of the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad included the Chairman of the Committee, H.E. Mr Adam M. Tugio, Ambassador of Indonesia in Islamabad; H.E. Mr Nguyen Tien Phong, Ambassador of Vietnam; Mr Abdul Mubdi Osman, Charge d'Affaires, High Commission of Brunei Darussalam; Mr Lutfee, Charge d'Affaires, Embassy of Thailand; Mr San Yu Kyaw, Minister Counsellor, Embassy of Myanmar; Mr Dan Erwin Bagaporo, Third Secretary and Vice Consul, Embassy of Philippines and Mr Deddy Faisal Ahmad Salleh, Charge d'Affaires, Malaysia who joined on zoom.

Speakers from Indonesia and Pakistan made short presentations on three dimensions of Pakistan-ASEAN cooperation including political and security cooperation, economic collaboration, and socio-cultural cooperation. The speakers included: Dr Dewi Fortuna, Indonesian Academy of Sciences; Dr Fithra Faisal Hastiadi, Executive Director of Next Policy; Dr Shofwan Al Bana, Executive Secretary, ASEAN Study Centre; Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI; Dr Usman Chohan, Director, Economic Affairs CASS and Ambassador Mian Sanaullah, former ambassador of Pakistan to Indonesia.

While introducing the dialogue, Mr Najam Rafique Director CSP-ISSI, stated that Pakistan enjoys close, friendly ties with all ASEAN members. As a Sectoral Dialogue partner, Pakistan and ASEAN agreed to cover cooperation in many areas including trade; industry; investment; environment; science and technology; drugs and narcotics; tourism and human resources development. Since the initial agreement in 1997 to establish Sectoral Dialogue Relations, several steps have been taken by Pakistan to enhance engagement and the commitment to deepen trade and economic linkages with ASEAN member states under its Vision East Asia policy. However, relations between Pakistan and ASEAN nations have not been utilised to their full potential. Part of the reasons that have impinged on exploring the full potential lies in the disruption caused by domestic compulsions and regional tensions including Pakistan's role in the war on terror which have collectively hindered the conduct of a robust and effective engagement with Southeast Asia.

The growing trend in globalisation and new realities in Asia are now pushing Pakistan towards strengthening its comprehensive relations with the countries in Southeast Asia. As part of Prime Minister Imran Khan's efforts to reinforce his government's policy focus towards geo-economics, the country now stands ready to pursue active regional connectivity with the countries of Southeast Asia. Both Pakistan's Vision East Asia and ASEAN Community Vision 2025, comprising the ASEAN political-security, economic and socio-cultural components, provides a blueprint to further integrate, synergize and harness the immense potential of the peoples and economies of the region. For Pakistan therefore, there are prospects to revive and strengthen its cooperation with ASEAN countries, including becoming a full dialogue member of ASEAN. To explore the avenues for extended cooperation, the Pakistan-ASEAN Experts Dialogue today seeks to bring together experts and practitioners of policy from Pakistan and Indonesia to discuss and make recommendations for a comprehensive engagement both at the multilateral and bilateral level covering political and security cooperation, economic engagement and socio-cultural interaction.

Ms Mahrukh Khan, Research Fellow CSP-ISSI, gave an introductory presentation on Pakistan ASEAN relations, outlining the past and present state of relations and identified that Pakistan continues to deepen and strengthen political, economic and cultural ties with ASEAN and its member states in line with its 'Vision East Asia' policy.

In his keynote address, the chief guest at the occasion, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, stated that Pakistan's relations with ASEAN and how we can work together for a shared future is an important conversation. He further said that it is heartening that many experts, including from the ASEAN region, will be contributing to this Dialogue. These deliberations will undoubtedly offer new insights on further deepening and enriching the Pakistan-ASEAN relationship. ASEAN has come a long way since its inception in August 1967. The dim outlook of the 1960s contrasts sharply with the high performing and buoyant dispensation of the ASEAN region today. Indeed, ASEAN has transformed into a vibrant 10-member Organisation, an increasingly integrated economic community and a central pillar of regional architecture. With an overall GDP of more than US$3 trillion, ASEAN is now the 5th largest economy in the world and on track to become the 4th largest by 2050. ASEAN is also the leading destination of foreign direct investment and the most successful regional economic

integration initiative in the developing world. Taking a step further in November 2020 at the 37th ASEAN Summit, ASEAN and 5 trading partners signed the agreement on Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). ASEAN represents the finest examples of 'open regionalism.' The way ASEAN's farsighted leadership has forged dialogue and cooperation across the region and beyond, while also retaining ASEAN's centrality, is truly remarkable.

ASEAN's success as a regional organisation and East Asia's undisputed economic potential have long been recognised. Countries from different parts of the globe wish to strengthen their engagement with ASEAN. Pakistan is no exception! In line with our "Vision East Asia" policy, Pakistan has worked assiduously to forge a closer partnership with ASEAN. Over the past three decades, Pakistan-ASEAN relations have continued to grow. Pakistan attained the status of Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 1993. The inaugural meeting of the ASEAN-Pakistan Joint Sectoral Dialogue was convened in 1997 in Islamabad. This Sectoral Dialogue Partnership covers a broad range of areas including trade; industry; investment; environment; science and technology; combating drugs and narcotics; tourism and human resource development.

Pakistan acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia on July 2, 2004, in Jakarta. On the same day, Pakistan was also admitted as the 24th participant of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). ASEAN and Pakistan signed the Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat Terrorism on the sidelines of the 12th ARF Ministerial in 2005. Cooperation under the Sectoral Dialogue Partnership has been developing in diverse areas. Several cooperation projects have been completed with support from the ASEAN-Pakistan Cooperation Fund. Some of these relate to fostering closer B2B linkages as well as facilitation of trade. Today, two-way annual trade is in the range of US$7 billion. Both sides remain distinctly conscious that this is far below the real potential of Pakistan and ASEAN. Tourism from Pakistan to the ASEAN region has been on the rise in recent years. Pakistani students are increasingly looking for education opportunities in universities in ASEAN countries. In recent years, the size of the Pakistani Diaspora has also grown in ASEAN countries. Yet, it is also clear that engagement across all areas of common interest has yet to reach the optimal level.

He said the desire to further strengthen cooperation with ASEAN stems, not just from economic considerations. It has compelling cultural logic as well. Pakistan shares historical and

geographical linkages with the region. Pakistan has the commonality of faith with several members of ASEAN and shares ancient Buddhist heritage with the others. Since medieval times, our lands have been connected through the sea. This connectivity was part of the larger enterprise of bringing West Asia, the Middle East and Central Asia together with the East in a web of linkages in trade and commerce. This connectivity helped the exchange of big ideas and enabled Islam and other religious traditions like Buddhism to traverse the regions. ASEAN, the world and Pakistan are facing common challenges and uncertainties today -- whether it be the global economic slowdown due to the COVID-19; geostrategic competition at the global and regional levels; challenges to multilateralism; transnational crime; disruptive technologies; climate change; environmental degradation and marine debris. The future prosperity of our people should not be held hostage to shifting geostrategic interests. Close partnerships remain crucial in enabling our regions, which span the Pacific and Indian Oceans, to tackle these challenges and advance the shared objectives of peace, progress and prosperity.

The Foreign Secretary further said that Pakistan is resolved to upscale its engagement with ASEAN members -- at both bilateral and institutional levels. This is also part of our shifting focus to geo-economics. Pakistan is working to further enhance political, economic and socio-cultural links with all member states. In trade, we encourage our experts to closely examine how Pakistan could benefit by engaging with Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). In investment, we encourage ASEAN member countries to consider participation in the CPEC projects and invest in Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Most importantly, Pakistan's commitment to expanding cooperative ties with ASEAN is reflected in our desire to become a Full Dialogue Partner (FDP). The FDP status would be Pakistan's across-the-board engagement with the region. It would be a win-win for both sides as Pakistan would be the only FDP of ASEAN which would also be a member of SAARC, ECO and SCO. While we pursue a full dialogue partnership, let us fortify our practical cooperation in areas identified in Pakistan-ASEAN Sectoral Dialogue Partnership. The following could be prioritised:

First, strengthen Pakistan-ASEAN connectivity in all domains. In transportation, communication, cyber and between our ports and among our peoples. This soft and hard connectivity will be mutually beneficial for Pakistan, ASEAN and even regions like Central and West Asia that are contiguous with Pakistan. Second, support our business communities to

comprehensively upgrade our economic cooperation as ASEAN countries move up on the value chain in manufacturing and services. Third, focus on tourism as a low hanging fruit. Fourth, explore avenues of cooperation in Science & Technology, IT and higher education. Fifth, deepen our cultural exchanges. This will help generate awareness of what binds us together and how can we live in harmony in our diversity. He concluded by encouraging members of the diplomatic community and academia present to make full use of this forum to contribute ideas and suggest newer ways of raising Pakistan-ASEAN cooperation to a higher level.

In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI, was of the view that this is the start of a process and that such dialogues help in generating ideas for future engagement.

While giving his remarks, H.E. Adam Mulawarman Tugio, Chairman of the ASEAN Committee in Pakistan and the Ambassador of Indonesia in Pakistan stated that on behalf of all ASEAN Heads of Missions in Islamabad, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the ISSI in collaboration with ACI on the promotion of ASEAN-Pakistan relationship. I would like to thank Heads of Missions for their kind supports in the dialogue between ASEAN-Pakistan Experts. Among us, there are the ASEAN Head of Missions, experts and government officials, business communities, staff of diplomatic missions. I am convinced that the presence of all of you will contribute to a fruitful discussion in this webinar dialogue. He said that the dialogue is to follow up the discussion between the ACI Heads of Missions with Foreign Secretary H.E. Sohail Mahmood to bolster public awareness about their relations and its potential to a wider public audience about ASEAN-Pakistan relation in Pakistan. Several dialogues will be conducted as a part of the commemoration of the ASEAN anniversary which will be held on August 8, 2021. The ACI has been engaging several research centres in Islamabad to explore possible collaboration to have round table discussions on ASEAN and Pakistan to promote the ASEAN-Pakistan relationship. The ACI has explored the following set of activities with several research groups and thinks tanks such as the ISSI, Center for Global and Strategic Studies (CGSS) and Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI). He further said today's dialogue will be held in collaboration with the ISSI, aiming to hear ASEAN and Pakistani's expert perspectives and expectations on strengthening Pakistan-ASEAN relations particularly on how dialogue partners could take mutual beneficial cooperation of their engagement with ASEAN in all three pillars. It

is to be learnt that the Practical Action Plan of ASEAN-Pakistan published by the ASEAN Secretariat July/September 2020 identified 11 areas of potential sectoral cooperation encompassing all three pillars. ASEAN is a dynamic organisation of 10 members, spanning an area of 4.4 million square kilometres. It is the third-largest market with a population of over 649 million and a GDP exceeding US$2.9 trillion or the fifth largest economy in the world. We underscore the achievements of ASEAN's establishment: "Foes have become friends and partners in development. We share a common desire for peace, security, stability and prosperity. People-to-people linkages have increased, bringing the region closer together. More importantly, regional stability and rapid economic progress in ASEAN have improved the lives of its peoples and attracted worldwide attention and investors."

ASEAN and Pakistan have great potential for cooperation in various sectors. Pakistan's total bilateral trade with ASEAN is over US$7 billion while the trade between Indonesia-Pakistan reached up to US$2.3 billion in 2020. With almost 1 billion people of ASEAN combined with Pakistan itself. It suggests that there is huge scope for Pakistan to scale up its economic engagement with ASEAN through its member-states. ASEAN member countries continue to support close friendly ties with Pakistan as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner and an active member of the ARF. Indonesia supports Pakistan when it was accorded the sectoral dialogue status of ASEAN at the 26th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on July 23, 1993. Indonesia also supports Pakistan to be an FDP of ASEAN. Due to the moratorium, the process of FDP is still pending. ASEAN encourages Pakistan's collaboration with the ASEAN region particularly in the areas of trade and investment, education, human resources development and tourism which could bring huge economic benefits to Pakistan. ASEAN and Pakistan have many similarities including strong cultural and religious affinity. There are approximately 242 million Muslims which are about 42 per cent of the entire population, with majorities in Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia as well as Southern Thailand and parts of Mindanao in the Philippines respectively. Talking about Pakistan's Vision East Policy, ASEAN highly values Pakistan's 'Vision East Asia' policy.

The implementation of this policy, we believe will contribute to further strengthen political, economic and cultural ties with ASEAN and its member states. To this end, Pakistan's outreach to ASEAN needs to be deepened at a political level among others through the exchange of high-level visits and those of the business community to make their presence felt. In particular,

ASEAN invites Pakistan to pay more attention to the millennial generation and the development of information technology including social media. ASEAN has become a regional organisation with great potential for Pakistan to strengthening the cooperation both organisationally and bilaterally with its member countries. By strengthening cooperation between the two parties, the number certainly still has a huge potential to be increased until it reaches the ideal level. Indonesia with other ASEAN countries also supports the efforts being made by Pakistan in conducting feasibility studies in the context of establishing FTA cooperation between Pakistan and ASEAN. Some steps that could be considered by Pakistan in strengthening cooperation with ASEAN countries are as follows:

On trade and investment cooperation, Pakistan can expand its offer of cooperation in its CPEC project to ASEAN member countries, where the CPEC projections will not only make Pakistan a hub for Central Asia but also the western part of China. Like other countries, Indonesia personally also has an interest in exploring the potential for cooperation in the context of the intended CPEC. Strengthening trade cooperation at the bilateral level with ASEAN member countries can be also actively carried out through engagement with business actors including Chambers in Pakistan, which is quite active, compared to other countries. By exercising this constructive dialogue, we do hope that the sincere efforts of ACI to enhance and promote ASEAN-Pakistan relations will be fruitful as ASEAN Missions in Islamabad always stand ready to work together towards strengthening cooperation with Pakistan both in the bilateral and global frameworks.

During the first working session, titled, “Pakistan-ASEAN: Political and Security Cooperation,” Prof. Dr Dewi Fortuna, from the Indonesian Academy of Sciences (LIPI) in her presentation shed light on ASEAN and its regional security architecture for building an ecosystem for peace and security in the region. Dr Fortuna, while talking about ASEAN and the regional security architecture, said that the best way to look at the principles the modalities and the substance of ASEAN’s vision about regional security building is the ASEAN outlook in the Indo-Pacific which came a short time ago in 2000 to 2019 from there the first the principles of how ASEAN looks at the world and the principles of the desired security architecture for the region can be seen.

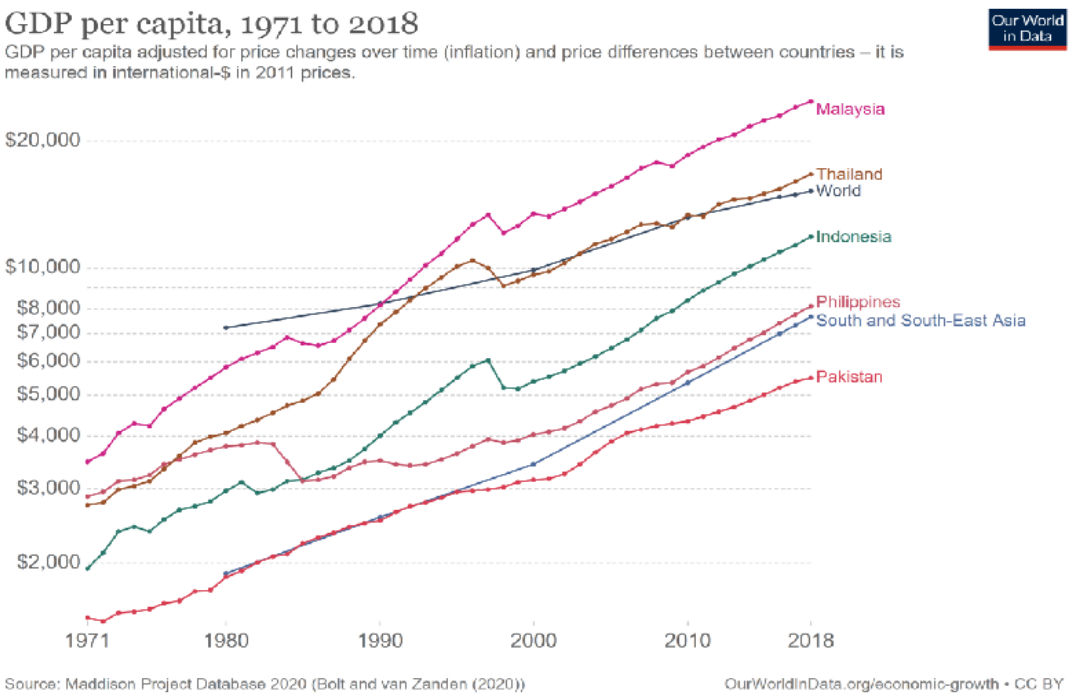
Moreover, she said that one can look at the modality and then can look at the substance. Firstly, on principles, we can see that from the outlook on the Indo-Pacific which bring together the various principles that have been created and implemented by ASEAN since its foundation in 1967, the first principle is particularly that we have the treaty of amity and cooperation which embodies all of those principles and also the treaty of amity and cooperation. Dr Fortuna stated that we must look at the ASEAN vision of inclusivity and work in two areas of cooperation, the normative sphere and the technical areas. She also said that ASEAN states have a policy of openness and envision an open regional architecture and that is no perception of exclusivity. Dr Fortuna further said that there is great potential for Pakistan ASEAN relations with more intense substantive cooperation.

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, in his presentation, stated that there is no zero-sum game and he talked about the global and regional perspectives and then also shed light on Pakistan ASEAN political and security cooperation. Ambassador Chaudhry stated that we are living at a time when the world order is changing and everyone is well aware of the crumbling that has started in terms of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, the tendency to interfere and intervene in other states. He said the world order is changing and multilateralism is on the retreat and unilateralism is on the ascendancy. He said that unilateralism to one extent could be good but it could also be fatal in certain cases alongside that the global norms are also changing and the kind of euphoria that was seen after the demise of the Soviet Union, the globalisation phase is fading out and what can be seen is that whether it is immigration or free trade or xenophobia or other global norms are now getting affected.

Another most important indicator of how the world is changing is the major power competition that is now affecting Asia first and foremost and the reference is towards the US-China competition that is intensifying and is going to manifest itself in different ways for different countries of Asia including of course Pakistan and ASEAN countries as well. While looking at the region, he said that in the context of the Indo Pacific region, the great power competition could create problems if a new Cold War starts, with new alliances and alignments and countries will have to make choices, which if happens, will put the ASEAN countries as well as Pakistan in a very difficult position.

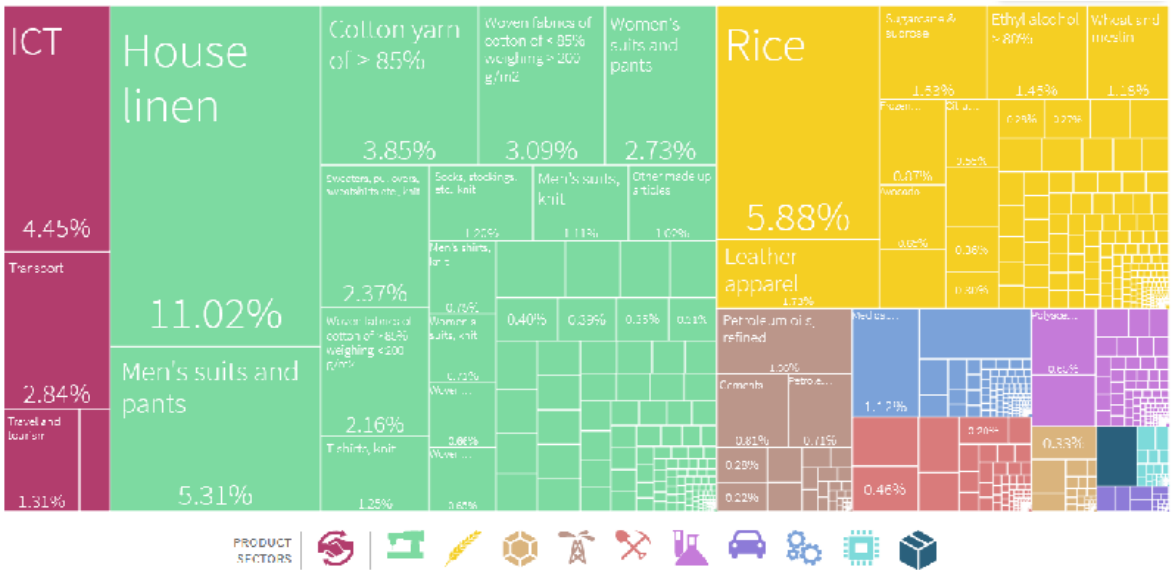
Ambassador Chaudhry stated that Pakistan has had limited cooperation with ASEAN so far but we had a sectoral dialogue partnership but for good 24 years it has not moved on and we need a quantum leap forward in the substantive engagement of Pakistan with ASEAN countries to justify full dialogue partnerships so that is where we are but we need to make efforts in that regard. He also identified common areas of cooperation between ASEAN and Pakistan and by deepening its connectivity with ASEAN countries; there could be cooperation in issues of mutual concern, specifically in areas like countering terrorism and militancy. Ambassador Chaudhry concluded by saying that we could begin by exploring common domains and also by starting academic as well as track two conversations which can be moved to track 1.5 later on. He said there is immense potential for a solid and useful relationship between ASEAN and Pakistan and since ASEAN and Pakistan both have good ties with the US as well as China, they can help each other in finding room for cooperation and in achieving a fine balancing act in this regard.

In Session-II on "Pakistan-ASEAN: Dimension of Economic Cooperation," Dr Usman spoke at length about Pak-ASEAN economic relations. He appreciated Pakistan's foreign policy shift to geo-economics and expressed his optimistic views on building deeper economic ties. He briefly touched upon the history of Pak-ASEAN economic relations. In the 1990s, the economic relations began with sectoral dialogue partners in the areas of trade, industry, investment, environment, science and technology, drugs and narcotics, tourism and human resources development. In 2004, after the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, Pakistan became the 24th member of the ARF. In 2005, a Joint Feasibility Study for ASEAN-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was conducted with the aim to enhancing and expanding the overall ASEAN-Pakistan economic engagement. Later on, in 2002, the ASEAN Economic Ministers agreed to apply a moratorium on the proposal of Pakistan for an ASEAN-Pakistan FTA. After this agreement in 2016, ASEAN's exports to Pakistan reached US$5.5 billion while imports by ASEAN stood at US$0.8 billion.

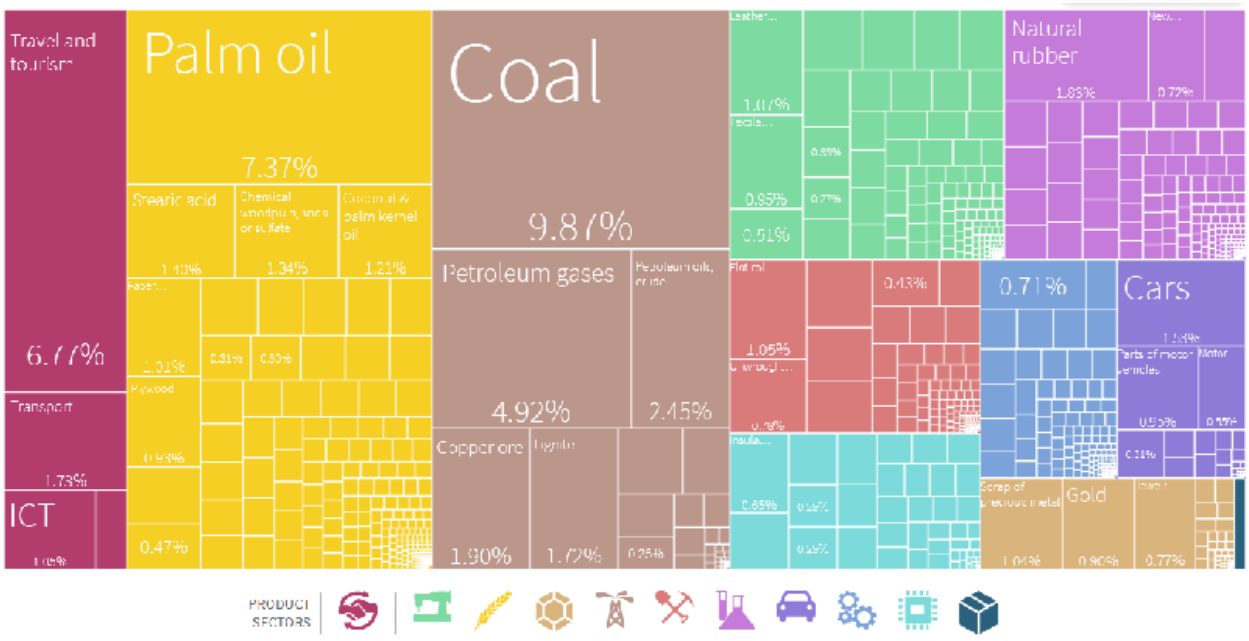


He underscored the economic complexities between Pakistan and ASEAN countries which, according to his perspective, were quite high in the case of Indonesia and Vietnam; high in the case of Thailand and the Philippines; very high with regards to Singapore; and low in the case of Pakistan, Laos and Cambodia.

Pakistan – Economic Complexity



Indonesia – Economic Complexity



Discussing the prospects of establishing a Free-Trade Area, he argued that despite the high potential of establishing an FTA, three factors must be taken into consideration from Pakistan:

- It is a deficit country
- It has low economic complexity
- Low trade complementarities

To move forward, high-potential areas of trade complementarities must be explored. He proposed three suggestions in this regard:

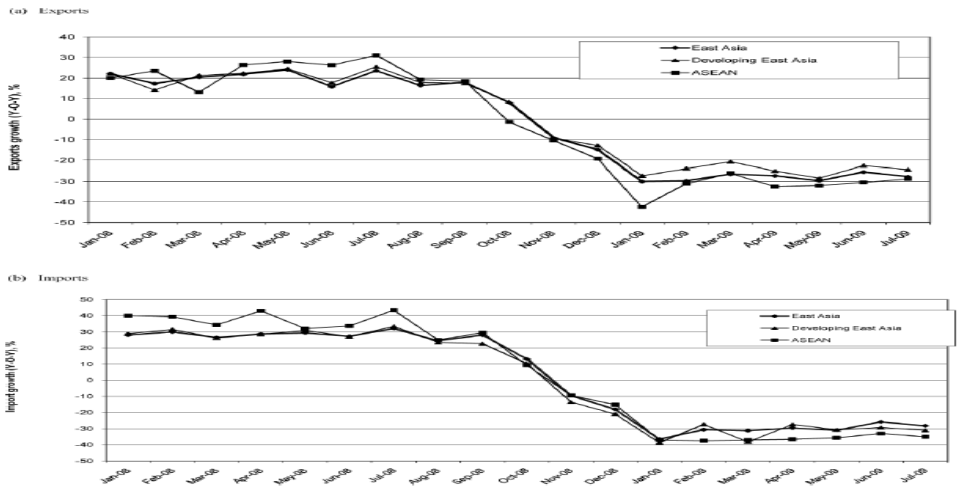
- Consider substitution to mitigate deficits
- Work on quality assurance of our products
- Focus on service sector such as education, health, tourism

The second speaker of the session, Dr Fithra Faisal Hastiadi established a strong link between the global production network and ASEAN economies. He explained the dynamics of this subject

with special reference to Indonesia. International trade has increased for intermediate goods along with the development of the global production network and the spread of distribution among countries. He analysed the opportunities to reap gain from economic globalisation through participation in global production networks.

Diagram1: Growth of Merchandise Trade in East Asia (EA), Developing Countries In East Asia (DEA), and the ASEAN period

Jan 2008- Nov 2009 (y-o-y,%)



He shared the results of his empirical study which was an attempt to assess the growth of the industrial sector. The study found out that the period 1988-2015 shows that there is a significant relation to real export variables, including real exchange rate and labour cost.

Based on industry characteristics, reflected from the variable value to weight ratio, shows the differences in inter-industry constant values and each of which is empirically significant. The industrial sector of ICT has the greatest influence on the participation rate of the global production network, followed by the transport equipment industry then resourced based industry and the last is the machinery industry while the rest is the industry is shown in other manufacturing groups. Therefore, Dr Hastiadi concluded that the industry characteristics greatly affect the level of participation in global production networks.

He further claimed that in Southeast Asia (ASEAN-5), in general, the highest participation rate in Malaysia was followed by the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia. Countries in other Asian regions, China and India are at the highest level of participation in all industries. The strength of the Chinese economy is undoubtedly where the rapid development of industrial and logistics infrastructure, supported by the ability of labour with competitive wages in all industries.

Indonesia's participation level is lagging in many industries, especially the automotive industry among others due to the lack of infrastructure, lack of disclosure policy (FDI openness), low labour quality and high trade costs compared to other ASEAN countries.

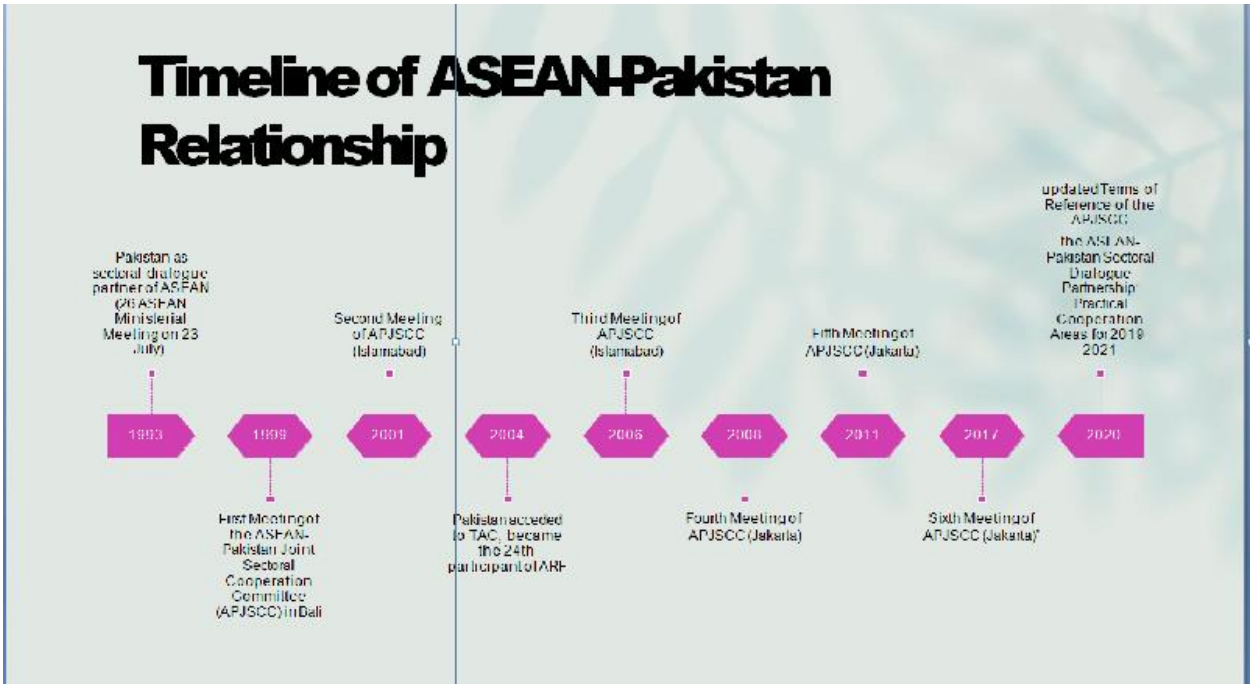
Industrial characteristics still greatly affect the participation rate of the global production network with the ICT industry (electronics and telecommunication) having the highest participation level, followed by the transportation industry, resource-based industries (rubber, metal, cotton, yarn and minerals) and machinery (industrial machinery and generators). Trade contractions that occurred in the economic crisis of 1997/1998 and the economic shock of 2008/2009 affect the participation level in the global production network in a certain period, especially in the Asian region. The use of structural break in research is very important to be considered to be able to see the change of participation rate in short term and portrait specifics on the economy of a country in a certain period. Based on these findings, he proposed the following mentioned recommendations to strengthen industrial cooperation:

1. Up-gradation of human resource development
2. Up-gradation of logistical infrastructure
3. Promotion of trade liberalisation
4. Improvement of business climate to encourage investment

In Session-III on "Pakistan-ASEAN: Future of Socio-Cultural Cooperation," Ambassador Mian Sannaullah stressed upon considering the social network of ASEAN countries. Talking about the concept of the ASEAN community, he elaborated on its three main pillars: political-security, economic and socio-cultural. He said that the impact of social and cultural linkages cannot be

ignored in Pakistan-ASEAN relations. He argued that the globalised world had made this an imperative for the people to nurture deeper socio-cultural ties. For any business or entrepreneurial activity to be successful, it is important to have deep insight into the country's socio-cultural. For instance, he said, bypassing the socio-cultural sensitivities in doing business can lead to harm than benefit. The concept of the ASEAN Community stands on three pillars: security, economy and socio-cultural linkages. This shows the importance of the socio-cultural side while interacting with the ASEAN community.

Dr Shofwan Al Banna in his presentation suggested that the exchange of inspirational ideas and personalities are of critical importance. He referred to the works of Pakistan's national poet, Muhammad Iqbal who is a well-known literary figure in Indonesia. He said that there is ample room for cooperation in the fields of academic exchange and people-to-people contacts. Dr Al Banna said that it is time to make people-to-people contact stronger between Pakistan and ASEAN countries. He presented the timeline of Pak-ASEAN relations which is as follows:



He was of the view that three primary factors are necessitating a deeper Pak-ASEAN relation in the immediate future:

- The evolving construct of Indo-Pacific

- The need to stay balanced amidst current major powers rivalry
- The growing importance of ASEAN and Pakistan

In the field of socio-cultural cooperation, Pakistan and ASEAN have ample space to collaborate. He identified science and technology, climate change, tourism, drugs and narcotics and human resource development as main areas of cooperation. For further cooperation, he said that t is important to identify practical cooperation programmes at national and sub-national levels, then align them with the existing national or sub-national programmes while allocating some segments of them as ASEAN-Pakistan cooperation. He referred to Indonesia's Darmasiswa or BSBI Scholarships and DIKTI's World Class Professor Programme.

During the interactive session, the panellists further discussed the opportunities and prospects to make Pakistan-ASEAN relations highly productive. Mr Abdul Mubdi Osman, CDA, Brunei Darussalam, Mr Deddy Faisal Ahmad Salleh, CDA, Malaysia; Mr Yu Kwaw, Counsellor, Myanmar; Mr Dan Bagporo, 3rd Secretary, Philippines; Mr Muhammad Lutfee Useng, CDA, Thailand; H.E. Nguyen Phong, Vietnam lauded Foreign Secretary's suggestions and said that economic, socio-cultural and politico-security areas are the main potential areas of cooperation for Pakistan and ASEAN. They all were of the view that the dialogues like these should be held regularly to maintain a positive upward trajectory.

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Tugio put forth the proposal for an interactive engagement between Pakistan and ASEAN to analyse each aspect of Pak-ASEAN relations. Pakistan and ASEAN should use both the organisational and bilateral channels to nurture their relations. The practical and functional aspects should be taken into consideration for better productive outcomes. Especially, in terms of trade, one should be very practical and factor in all the possibilities and challenges in moving the relations forward.

In his vote of thanks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI, thanked all the participants for making this dialogue a successful event while making a case for nurturing socio-cultural ties and economic linkages with the ASEAN countries. Pakistan and ASEAN interacted with each other both at the collective and individual levels. This is the first time that Pak-ASEAN relations are being discussed at a non-governmental level. ASEAN has come a long way

in establishing itself as an influential organisation. It has become the fifth-largest economy in the world. It is a very vibrant organisation with its charter now. News vistas of politico-security cooperation are also opening up, for example, Asian Regional Forum.