

Seminar on India-Myanmar Relations: Looking from the Border

Civil society and media representatives of Myanmar and North Eastern States of India have called for the urgent need to commence regular flight services between Mandalay and Imphal and Bodh Gaya to give a push to connectivity as also to promote Buddhist tourism. They also called for the earliest completion of the Integrated Check Post being built in Moreh which will house all regulatory agencies like immigration, customs, border security together with support facilities like warehouses, banks, quarantine office etc.

There was unanimity on these points among the civil society and media representatives, academics and former civil servants and Government officials who participated in the two-day seminar on “India-Myanmar Relations” Looking from the Border” organized by the Delhi-based Institute of Social Sciences and Burma Centre Delhi with the support of the Heinrich Boll Foundation on September 28-29, 2015.

While delivering the keynote address, Mr Rajiv Bhatia, former Indian Ambassador to Myanmar, said that India’s ‘Act East Policy’ is not a mere replacement of ‘Look East Policy.’ The policy switch focuses on action and implementation. If the earlier emphasis was on economic cooperation; now the accent is on strategic cooperation. Ambassador Bhatia further said that Myanmar “is going to play the role of a major window to India’s increasing trade & commerce with South East Asian nations”. He hoped that a liberal democratic Myanmar will emerge after the November 8 general elections. He also batted for an inclusive growth in the northeastern region so that the relationship with Myanmar could sustain without any hindrance.

Mr. Tapir Gao, former Member of Parliament from Arunachal Pradesh, described Myanmar as “the heart of ASEAN”. He expressed the hope that a new era in India-Myanmar relations would dawn. However, he urged the civil society, media and other stakeholders to help provide a clear blueprint as to how the North Eastern Region can act as the game changer.

Lian BawiThang of Chin Human Rights Organization welcomed India’s engagement including in the Kladan Multi-modal Project, but also called for transparency.

Mr Ting Oo from Arakan Rivers Network drew the attention towards people’s apprehensions about land confiscation.

Others who addressed the seminar included Mr Preet Mohan Singh Malik, former ambassador of India to Myanmar, Sanjoy Hazarika, journalist, W Nabachandra Singh, president of Indo-Myanmar border traders' union, Mr Khin Maung Win of Democratic Voice of Burma and Dr Axel Harneit-Sievers, director, Heinrich Boll Stiftung.



Photo Caption: Mr. Rajiv Bhatia, Former Ambassador to Myanmar delivering the Keynote Address. From left: Dr. Ash Narain Roy, Director, Institute of Social Sciences; Dr. Axel Harneit-Sievers, Director, Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS), New Delhi; Mr. Tapir Gao, Former MP, Arunachal Pradesh and Dr. Alana Golmei, Director, Burma Centre Delhi