

Private players, too, are collaborating with national universities in the region. NIIT started its SEA operations in partnership with the Malaysian government for the Multimedia Super Corridor project. Now it has expanded to Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia. Since 1997, NIIT has partnered with leading universities in Indonesia. In Vietnam, NIIT started operations in 2001 with three centres in Ho Chi Minh City. Today it has 34 education centres across 15 provinces. Ajai Lal, senior vice-president, international education business, NIIT, says the move to SEA was the logical step. “The reasons for expansion in SEA were two-fold. Firstly, we had a market quite like India that was aspiring to make a mark in the IT industry, and secondly, the proximity to India and their understanding of IT’s contribution to India was a considerable advantage.” NIIT recently set foot in Brunei and Laos and is hopeful of entering Cambodia soon.

“We are also in advanced talks in the Philippines. We plan to double our students in Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia.”

Going ahead, Indian companies will see huge potential for collaboration in the automotive, ICT, pharma and biotechnology, machinery and supporting engineering industries and services sectors like education and tourism. Mitra says development of transport links will remain an important area for cooperation. “To be competitive, countries have to cooperate in infrastructure facilities. Indian industry can capitalise on the immense potential in CLMV countries, particularly in infrastructure, agro & food processing, IT and technology transfer.”

India definitely is looking east. With active negotiations for Indo-Malaysia CECA, India is on the heels of closing the pact with Malaysia by the year-end. Even as there is immense scope of engagement between India

and SEA, Amitendu Palit, senior research fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, says the ‘look east’ policy does not appear well-defined. “Economic diplomacy is a major component of the policy. India, however, needs to shape the policy in such a way that it becomes a more involved participant in the region. Indian investments are picking up in the region, but Indian SMEs are yet to figure prominently in the networks. India lags much behind Chinese presence and efforts in the region. China’s FTA with ASEAN is far bigger in scale and scope than India’s, and its strategic engagement—in terms of public diplomacy and development assistance—is also much larger.”

<http://www.financialexpress.com/printer/news/647993/>