

PM's Statement at the 9th Asian-India Summit

November 19, 2011
Bali, Indonesia

"It is a pleasure for me to be amongst friends today. The city of Bali epitomises the age-old civilisational links between India and Indonesia, and indeed between India and South East Asia.

I thank you, Mr. President, for hosting the 9th ASEAN-India Summit, and for the excellent arrangements made for our meeting.

I would like to begin by expressing India's solidarity with the people of Cambodia and Thailand as they deal with the floods that have badly effected their countries.

India is extremely pleased with the practice of annual Summits with ASEAN. Our partnership with ASEAN is one of the cornerstones of our foreign policy, and the foundation of our 'Look East' Policy.

In the relatively short span of our full dialogue partnership with ASEAN we have put in place a rich agenda of cooperation. This has benefited both of us and is contributing to the processes of integration and transformation of the Asia-Pacific region.

Since our last Summit in Hanoi, we have made concrete progress.

On the trade and economic front, the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement for Trade in Goods has come into effect in all ASEAN Member States and India following its ratification by Cambodia on 1st August, 2011.

India's trade with ASEAN has increased by 30% in 2010-2011 and has crossed the 50 billion US dollar mark. With such a rate of growth we should be able to achieve our trade target of 70 billion US dollar by 2012.

The inaugural India-ASEAN Business Fair was held in New Delhi in March 2011 along with meetings of the India-ASEAN Business Summit and Business Council. Investments from both sides are steadily growing.

The 9th ASEAN-India Economic Ministers Consultations were held in August 2011 in Manado. The Ministers have agreed to a structured private sector engagement in the five areas of pharmaceuticals, innovation and skills training, information technology, manufacturing and infrastructure.

I seek your support for the early conclusion of a commercially meaningful Services and Investment Agreement. This would create a positive atmosphere for the implementation of the India-ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement as envisaged in our Framework Agreement of 2003. We should endorse the decision taken at the last round of negotiations in October 2011 to conclude the Agreement by March 2012.

The first ASEAN-India Meeting on Agriculture was held in October 2011, and the first meeting of the India-ASEAN Green Fund was held in Cambodia in October 2011.

At our Summit last year, we had called for developing a long-term vision for the strategic partnership between ASEAN and India. We have taken the first step in this direction by constituting the ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Group. The Group has been tasked to draft a

ASEAN-India Vision 2020 document and has already held two meetings in August 2011 and October 2011.

The successful implementation of the ASEAN-India Plan of Action for 2004-2010 listing specific items of cooperation was followed by an 82-point Plan of Action for the period 2010-2015. We adopted this ambitious Plan in the Hanoi Summit.

India has forwarded a number of cooperative projects as part of this Plan as well as part of the 50 million US dollar ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund to the ASEAN Secretariat. We look forward to an early response from the ASEAN side.

The expansion of our cooperation in the fields of science and technology, space and information technology has generated considerable enthusiasm on both sides. So too has our cooperation in the area of training, capacity building and human resource development in various sectors.

Several projects are under implementation under the ASEAN-India Science and Technology Fund. Based on the feedback from the ASEAN, our Department of Space has revised its proposal for a five year project for establishing a tracking and reception station and data processing facility for the ASEAN countries and training of ASEAN personnel. We will convene a meeting of Heads of Space Agencies of India and ASEAN in early 2012.

We have already offered to assist in the Master Plan on ASEAN ICT Connectivity and in particular on the establishment of an e-network in the CLMV countries for tele-medicine and tele-education.

Our experience with initiatives to promote people-to-people exchanges has been excellent.

I invite ASEAN countries to participate actively in the Nalanda University project on which work has begun.

The visa on arrival facility for six ASEAN countries is now in place. We should ensure that the Memorandum of Understanding on strengthening tourism cooperation between ASEAN and India is signed at the earliest, preferably at the meeting of the ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers planned to be held in Indonesia in early 2012.

India hosted a group of 100 students from ASEAN countries in September 2011. Based on the positive feedback, we will increase this number to 250 students per year.

We wish to institutionalize the ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme for a period of three years. Under this India will be ready to host two groups of 20 ASEAN journalists each year and ASEAN countries could in turn consider hosting Indian journalists to ASEAN Member States.

Greater physical connectivity between India and ASEAN remains our strategic objective. There are several proposals under consideration with regard to land and sea connectivity. These include the India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway, its extension to Laos and Cambodia and the development of a new highway also linking Vietnam.

We also have a study on a Mekong-India Economic Corridor conducted by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia which proposes the linking of corridors in the peninsular, and possibly the north east regions of India with the East Asian region.

I would suggest that all these different proposals should be studied in an integrated manner by our officials so that we take considered decisions to optimize our resources and efforts.

India welcomes the growing cooperation with ASEAN on security issues, and our association with ASEAN led forums. These have focused on maritime security, counter-terrorism, training, exercises and disaster management.

Excellencies, it gives me great pleasure to extend a personal invitation to all of you to attend the special ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in India. This will be a historic occasion for us. I wish to propose the dates of December 20th and 21st, 2012 for the Summit to be held in New Delhi.

India looks forward to working closely with Cambodia, as the incoming chair of ASEAN, and with all other Member States to prepare for this Summit. We would like the Summit to be the culmination of a year-long celebration of the India-ASEAN partnership.

The events we propose to hold in the run up to the Summit include the holding of the fourth round of the Delhi Dialogue in February 2012 and meetings of the ASEAN-India Ministers for New and Renewable Energy and Agriculture as well as an India-ASEAN Business Fair. We also propose a year-long calendar of cultural activities.

We look forward to organizing the ASEAN-India Car Rally to mark the Summit. The Rally will serve to highlight the strong bonds between ASEAN and India, and spread the message of solidarity, enterprise and creativity which are the hallmarks of our region.

We also propose to send a Sail Training Ship "Sudarshini" on an expedition to ASEAN countries along the route of the monsoon trade winds.

Excellencies, I believe that our cooperation is on the right path. Given the global economic downturn, there is today an even greater urgency to our cooperation.

I wish to place on record my deep appreciation to Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia for the role that Cambodia has played as Country Coordinator for India.

I also wish to once again thank His Excellency President Yudhoyono for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality extended to India for this Summit. I thank you."