

Prime Minister's statement at the 8th India-ASEAN Summit

October 30, 2010

I thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your warm welcome and generous hospitality. It is a pleasure for all of us to gather here on the auspicious occasion of the commemoration of 1000 years of the establishment of the city of Hanoi.

I deeply condole the loss of lives and property in the recent tsunami in Indonesia and floods in Vietnam. I wish the people of Indonesia and Vietnam an early recovery from the unfortunate tragedy.

I thank Cambodia, and especially Prime Minister Hun Sen, for his strong support to India as country Coordinator and look forward to our continuing close association with Cambodia.

For the past five years the achievement of the India-ASEAN partnership has been to initiate cooperation in a diverse range of sectors covering political and security ties, economic cooperation and the promotion of socio-cultural links.

I commend the officials of both sides for developing a Plan of Action to implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity for the years 2010-2015. It is an ambitious road map and the 82 Action Points reflect the vast potential and desire to develop a multi-faceted India-ASEAN relationship.

Our experience of implementation shows that we need to work very hard at all levels if we have to accelerate the pace of engagement as outlined in the Plan of Action. I recall that the theme of the ASEAN Summit this year is "Vision to Action". This theme is equally appropriate for our own partnership.

I invite the ASEAN Secretary General Dr. Surin Pitsuwan to visit India to review the mechanisms and procedures in place so that the pace of implementing agreed projects can be speeded up.

I would urge that the two sides make further efforts to identify concrete projects for cooperation under the India-ASEAN Science & Technology Fund, India-ASEAN Green Fund and the US \$ 50 million India-ASEAN Fund announced last year.

Excellencies,

India believes that ASEAN is the core around which the process of economic integration of the Asia-Pacific region should be built. India's economy has been growing rapidly for the past few years. This year we hope to achieve a growth rate of 8.5%. In the coming years, we hope to sustain a growth rate of 9-10% per year which will offer many opportunities for trade and investment. Our government has undertaken programmes for a massive transformation of rural India that is creating a huge and booming rural market for goods and services.

We hope that all formalities for implementing the India-ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement by all ASEAN States are completed at an early date. The conclusion of a Services and Investment Agreement will be an important step in our goal of comprehensive economic cooperation.

In recent years, there has been a substantial increase in people to people exchanges as a result of better air connectivity between India and ASEAN. More than 3 million Indian tourists visit ASEAN every year and about 380 flights connect Indian and ASEAN cities every week. This is well below the potential.

Excellencies

We invite many more tourists from the ASEAN countries to visit India to see the splendor of its rich cultural heritage. I am happy that the text of the ASEAN-India MoU for cooperation in Tourism has been finalized. I am also pleased to note that ASEAN will soon establish an ASEAN Promotional Chapter for tourism in Mumbai.

As a concrete measure, I am happy to announce that we will extend our visa on arrival facility to nationals of Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines and Laos with effect from 1st of January 2011.

We have always accorded high priority to the countries covered by the "Initiative for ASEAN integration". We hope to upgrade the level of youth exchanges as well as establish Vocational Training Centres in each of these countries.

Connectivity is another important area of our cooperation. As a further measure to support the ASEAN Master Plan on Connectivity, we will offer 100 IT scholarships to each of the 10 ASEAN countries over the next 5 years.

Science & Technology should be another focus area for our cooperation. We are ready to set up a Centre for Tracking and Data Reception and an Imaging facility for the ASEAN countries. This Centre would utilize data provided by Indian remote sensing satellites and harness it for multiple developmental applications. I propose a meeting of the heads of our space agencies in India which could work out exact details of cooperation.

Our cooperation in political and security matters is progressing well, including through expanded bilateral exchanges. These are important areas of our cooperation not only because of the common threats that we face but also because such cooperation helps to built mutual trust and understanding.

India looks forward to hosting the commemorative India-ASEAN Summit in India in the year 2012. This will be a land mark event and we must begin preparations early. The Eminent Persons Group should be set up quickly so that it can formulate a vision statement towards a long term strategic partnership between ASEAN and India that could be the theme of the Summit.

Thank you.

Hanoi
October 30, 2010