

04 SEP 1996

India-Asean

INDIA REGARDS FULL DIALOGUE PARTNER STATUS AS A BREAKTHROUGH

By: Mahesh Prasad

NEW DELHI, Sept 4 (Bernama) -- India regards its acceptance by Asean as a full dialogue partner as a "breakthrough" in its "Look East" Policy.

The new status conferred on it "points to the intrinsic and emerging complementarities between the dynamic and fast consolidating economies of Asean and the large economy of India," according to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs' Annual Report 1995-96.

Special attention continues to be given to forging close economic and political ties with Asean countries, it says.

The report made a special reference to former Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's visit to Malaysia and Singapore senior minister Lee Kuan Yew's visit to India, which "contributed towards growing mutual understanding."

That India attaches great importance to its relations with Asean is also evident from special articles and news analysis pieces carried by the Indian newspapers on Indo-Asean relations in the wake of the visit to Malaysia of India's Minister for External Affairs Inder Kumar Gujral.

The country is anxiously looking forward to the visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to receive the Jawahar Lal Nehru Award for International Understanding, scheduled for November.

"India's bilateral relations with Malaysia continued to be cordial," the External Affairs Ministry's report, says, adding: "The high point was the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narasimha Rao to Malaysia in August 1995."

"A 24-member business delegation was in Kuala Lumpur to coincide with the Prime Minister's visit. The Prime Minister had candid and useful exchange of views with the Malaysian leadership, including King Tuanku Ja'afar, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim and Senior Economic Adviser Tun Daim Zainuddin," the report says.

On India's bilateral trade with Malaysia, the report says it continued its upswing with overall value reaching Rs2677.91 crores (US\$765 million -- a crore is 10 million) during the year 1994-95 as against Rs1711.20 crores (US\$488 million) in 1993-94.

Investment proposals from Malaysia worth Rs353 crores (US\$101 million) were approved till end of August 1995 making it the sixth largest investor, the report says.

India's trade with Malaysia nearly doubled to Rs42.720 million (US\$1220 million) in 1995-96 (April 1995 to March 1996) from Rs 2,438 million (US\$696 million) in the previous year, according to figures made available by the Commerce Ministry.

As regards investment, Malaysia has emerged fifth with the approval of investment totalling Rs 24,944 million (US\$712 million), according to the annual report of the Ministry of Industry. -- BERNAMA

MP JK