

3Cs - Commerce, Connectivity and Culture - to be future focus areas of cooperation
between ASEAN member states and India: Sushma Swaraj
9th edition of Delhi Dialogue gets under way

NEW DELHI, July 4, 2017. The focus areas of cooperation between ASEAN member states and India for the future can be described in term of 3Cs - commerce, connectivity and culture. India places ASEAN at the heart of its 'Act East Policy' and center of the dream of an Asian century. India was making efforts on all fronts to enhance physical and digital connectivity with ASEAN, said **Ms. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs, Government of India**, at the **9th edition of Delhi Dialogue** organized by **FICCI in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and Observer Research Foundation (ORF)**. The theme of the event was '**India and the ASEAN: Charting the Course for the Next 25 Years**'.

In her keynote address, Ms. Swaraj said that as we celebrate 50 years of ASEAN and 25 years of ASEAN-India relationship, the discussions over the next two days of the Delhi Dialogue take on a special relevance for it provides an opportunity to reflect on past as well as to focus on better harnessing, the immense potential for India-ASEAN cooperation and bringing peace and prosperity to the people of India and ASEAN.

Speaking about the recently launched GST, Ms. Swaraj said that it was the biggest tax reform since independence. It has opened new opportunities for trade, investment into India. She invited the ASEAN member countries to take advantage of these opportunities and invest in India.

Mr. Hirubalan V P, Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Political-Security Community Department, ASEAN Secretariat, said that the relationship between India and ASEAN has been broad-based and multifaceted which includes sectors such as IT, cyber, infrastructure and culture, to name a few. Once the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is in place, economic opportunities would be enhanced. He added that with anti-globalization, less tolerance towards other cultures and protectionism becoming global issues, enhanced collaborative efforts were needed to address them.

Mr. Sarbananda Sonowal, Chief Minister of Assam, said that with India's Act East Policy, Northeast has become the centre of the policy and has given a renewed vision for development to the region. There were issues such as lack of physical and digital connectivity which were being addressed with the development of new infrastructure. He added that Assam had a robust inland waterways system which was used by the British for transportation of goods and this needed to be revived to boost transportation of goods.

Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam, said that besides cooperating on the political and security front, connectivity, infrastructure, education and tourism offered immense opportunities for cooperation between India and ASEAN. He added that India and ASEAN region together presented a huge market to be explored.

Mr. U Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister, Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor, Myanmar, said that India and ASEAN shared a partnership in wide-ranging sectors. It was

hoped that the RCEP would be concluded by the end of this year and it would further boost trade and investment between India and ASEAN member states.

Ms. Preeti Saran, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, said that in the past 25 years, all three pillars of India-ASEAN partnership – security, economic and socio-cultural, have registered good progress. While celebrating the strong foundations of our shared values with a host of commemorative events in 2017, there was a need to work together to chart our future course of action to strengthen our common destiny. To address this need, the 9th edition of Delhi Dialogue is appropriately themed ‘India and the ASEAN: Charting the Course for the Next 25 Years’.

Dr. Jyotsna Suri, Past President, FICCI and CMD, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, said that there was a need to look at exploring innovative ways to expand the collaboration. Connectivity between the North East and the South East neighbours need to be now used for more commercial importance. Trade would be immensely expanded when North East India would collaborate with South East in Asia. She added, “We are now positioned strongly to pool in our energies and synergies towards shaping an economically secure and strong architecture in the region which is open, inclusive, balanced and equitable. This will mark the true celebration of our relationship of 25 years.”

On the occasion the India-ASEAN Women Business Forum (IAWBF) was launched in the presence of the Ms. Swaraj and Indian and ASEAN leaders. The ASEAN Co-Chair **Ms. Pacita Juan, Chair of ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs Network (AWEN)** and Indian Co-Chair **Ms. Vinita Bimbhet, Immediate Past President, FICCI Ladies Organization (FLO)** were also present.

The vote of thanks was delivered by **Dr. Samir Saran, Vice President, ORF**.

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