

PRESS RELEASE



India-ASEAN boosting connectivity



New Delhi—3 September 2014: India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi will intensify efforts to improve institutional and physical connectivity with ASEAN to further economic integration with the region and beyond.

The first ever joint symposium was held by Indian Government and Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), 'Raising India's competitiveness in Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Connectivity' was held today in New Delhi.

With its "Look East Policy," India hopes to forge closer economic relations with ASEAN and East Asia through domestic reforms that would facilitate trade and investment. However, the people-to-people connectivity is equally pivotal to strengthen the multidimensional cooperation. Deepening connectivity, strengthening infrastructure and expanding manufacturing for economic growth was the key to enhance India's competitiveness in connectivity with the region.

These were the sentiments echoed during the one-day symposium to enhance India's competitiveness and its linkage with East Asia, which was attended by senior Indian official and experts from India and ASEAN. The symposium was opened with a key-note speaker by H.E. Nguyen Cam Tu, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam.

H.E. Nguyen Cam Tu said that the India-ASEAN relations have developed a good foundation for economic growth for the past two decades. Both are also partners of the ongoing negotiation on Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. He reiterated that connectivity will further increase economic growth and strengthen the production networks in this part of the world.

Senior Indian officials attending the symposium included Mr. Rajeev Kher, Secretary, Department of Commerce, and Mr. Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs

and Ambassador Shyam Saran, Chairman, RIS. Regional experts included Prof. Fukunari Kimura, Chief Economist, ERIA, Dr. Bibek Debroy, Economist, Center for Policy Research, Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of South and South East Asia, Office, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and The Pacific (UNESCAP). Indian experts attending the symposium were Mr. Adil Zaidi, Director, Government and Transaction Advisory Services, Ernst and Young, India, Dr. Rajat Kathuria, Director and Chief Executive, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, Dr. A. K. Krishna Kumar, Executive Director, Cluster Development Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS), Dr. Jayant Menon, Economist, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Economist, Center for Policy Research.

The sessions of the joint symposium were moderated & introduced by Mr. K. M. Chandrashekar, Former Cabinet Secretary, Government of India, Mr. Jaco Cilliers, Country Director, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lord Meghnad Desai, Economist and Mr. Alok Sinha, Former Secretary, Government of India and Former MD & Chairman, Food Corporation of India (FCI).

Mr. Rajeev Kher and Mr. Anil Wadhwa further explained how the Indian government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi would pursue the foreign policy towards ASEAN and the whole gamut of connectivity.

Mr. Rajeev Kher said that the trade volume between ASEAN and India will increase from the current \$80 billion level with the conclusion of ASEAN-India Trade in Services and Investment. India will intensify efforts to improve institutional and physical connectivity with ASEAN to further economic integration with the region and beyond.

At the symposium, Prof. Hidetoshi Nishimura, Executive Director of ERIA and Ambassador Shyam Saran, Chairman, RIS, also presented ERIA-RIS joint study on "India's Dynamism for East Asia Summit Country".

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