

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:963
ANSWERED ON:29.11.2005
LOOK EAST POLICY
Sarma Dr. Arun Kumar

Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

- (a) the back ground and concept of the `Look-East Policy` of the Government;
- (b) whether this policy exceptionally differs from any other initiative taken by the Government earlier;
- (c) if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the thrust area identified and present status of its implementation?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI P.R.KYNDIAH)

(a),(b)&(c): As per the information received from the Ministry of External Affairs, the `Look East Policy` was initiated in the early 90s to strengthen India`s overall relations with the countries of Southeast Asia and East Asia. The earlier engagement with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was built on an idealistic conception of Asian brotherhood, based on shared experiences of colonialism and of cultural ties. However, the policy of strengthening relations with ASEAN is not a stand-alone initiative. We are actively engaged in the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC), which brings together India and five ASEAN countries. Another significant pillar of the `Look East` approach is our membership of the Bay of Bengal initiative for Multi " Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) bringing together some countries of SAARC and ASEAN.

(d): ASEAN`s economic,, political and strategic importance in the larger Asia Pacific region and its potential to become a major partner of India in trade and investment is a significant factor in our `Look East Policy`. India and ASEAN also have convergence in their security perspectives. Since 1996, India has been an active participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). A Framework agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between ASEAN and India was signed by the Prime Minister of India and the Heads of Nation/Government of ASEAN members during the Second ASEAN-India Summit on 8th October, 2003 in Bali, Indonesia. This Agreement includes provisions relating to Free Trade Area in Goods, Services, Investments and has identified various areas of economic cooperation. During the 3`4 ASEAN India Summit in Vientiane on November 29-30, 2004, PM signed an agreement on `India - ASEAN Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity`.