

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3317
ANSWERED ON:09.12.2009
INDIA S RELATIONSHIP WITH ASEAN
Meinya Dr. Thokchom

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India's relationship with the Association of South East Asian Nations(ASEAN) has immensely improved recently;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether India is signing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with ASEAN;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the time by which FTA is likely to be signed?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS(SHRI S. M. KRISHNA)

(a) Yes.

(b) At the recently concluded India-ASEAN Summit on 24th October, 2009, a strong desire was noted among the ASEAN countries to substantially strengthen their links with India in all areas. At the Summit, the ASEAN countries were deeply appreciative of the fresh initiatives announced by India. These included a Round Table for Policy inputs, negotiations for open skies policy, further simplification of the visa regime for business and tourism, exchange programme for the youth, commencement of exchange between parliamentarians of India and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly and preparations for commemoration in 2012 of the 10th anniversary of India's Summit-level dialogue with ASEAN and 20 years as a sectoral dialogue partner. Prime Minister offered US\$50 million to participate in ASEAN's work plans in areas such as education, energy, agriculture and forestry, SMEs and ICT.

(c) to (e) An India-ASEAN Trade-in-Goods agreement was signed on 13th August,2009 at Bangkok,as the first step towards an FTA.The Government has been engaged in continuous discussions with ASEAN for early conclusion of the FTA.