

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:355
ANSWERED ON:17.12.2014
LOOK EAST POLICY
Rio Shri Neiphiu

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the present status of the "Look East Policy" along with the benefits accrued to India since its launch by the Government;
- (b) whether any review of LEP has been conducted by the Government and if so, the details and the findings thereof;
- (c) whether India proposes to augment the volume of trade with the South East Asian countries in the coming years; and
- (d) if so, the action plan chalked out by the Government in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 355 REGARDING "LOOK EAST POLICY" FOR ANSWER ON 17.12.2014

(a) Look East Policy (LEP), which started in early 1990s, marked India's focus on the extended neighbourhood in the ASEAN. LEP, which was originally conceived as an economic initiative, has gained political, strategic and cultural dimensions and established institutional mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation. The North East of India has been a priority in our LEP, especially in providing connectivity and in developing it as a bridgehead for economic and people- to-people exchanges with countries of the ASEAN. We have upgraded our relations to strategic partnerships with Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, ROK, Australia and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and forged close ties with all countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Further, apart from ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS), we have also been actively engaged in regional fora such as Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). LEP has expanded our priority to the extended neighbourhood, projected our growing regional and global profile and advanced our mutual stakes in peace, prosperity and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

(b) LEP is a proactive policy involving regular monitoring and review. It has been actively pursued in recent decades to deal with regional developments and has evolved both in terms of sectoral areas under coverage as well as its geographical spread. In recent months, there has been emphasis on an "Act East Policy" with a more pragmatic approach.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) India is in the process of strengthening trade relations with South East Asian countries. We have concluded bilateral Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with Singapore and Malaysia, Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with ROK and Japan and Early Harvest Scheme with Thailand as well as the India-ASEAN Agreement on Trade in Goods. These are being reviewed for further benefit and CECA negotiations are underway with others. India has accorded special emphasis on enhancing trade relations with Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV countries). The India-ASEAN Agreement on Trade in Services and Agreement on Investment, signed by India and all the ASEAN member countries, except Philippines, will come into force on 1 July, 2015 and add momentum to trade. India is negotiating Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) with ASEAN and other regional partners to augment the volume of trade and to strengthen regional cooperation.