

First ASEAN-India Joint Cooperation Committee Meeting

New Delhi, 14–16 November 1996

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A formal institutional linkage was established between ASEAN and India when the ASEAN-India Sectoral Dialogue relationship was inaugurated in 1993. The Fifth ASEAN Summit in Bangkok in 1995 decided to upgrade this to Full Dialogue Partnership. The full Dialogue Partnership was followed by India's participation at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference in Jakarta in July 1996. At that Conference, the ASEAN and Indian Ministers outlined a vision of a shared destiny and intensified cooperation in all fields.

2. Pursuant to the decision on ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership, an ASEAN-India Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) was established. The JCC is a key institutional mechanism for providing substantive content and implementing programmes of cooperation. Although comprehensive, the JCC will focus on actualising ASEAN-India cooperation in trade and investment, science and technology, tourism, infrastructure, human resource development and people-to-people interaction.

3. The First Meeting of this JCC was held in New Delhi from 14–16 November 1996. This Meeting was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs of India, Shri I.K. Gujral.

4. The Meeting was attended on the ASEAN side by delegations from ASEAN-Brunei Darussalam, ASEAN-Indonesia, ASEAN-Malaysia, ASEAN-Philippines, ASEAN-Singapore, ASEAN-Thailand, ASEAN-Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Heads of Missions in New Delhi.

5. The Indian delegation was led by Shri A.N. Ram, Secretary (Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs and included representatives of Ministers of Commerce, Finance, Science and Technology, Tourism, Human Resource Development, Surface Transport, Railways and Industry.

6. The JCC Meeting was co-chaired by Shri A.N. Ram, Secretary (Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs of India and Mr. Michael Cheok, Director General of ASEAN-Singapore.

7. In his Inaugural Address, Minister of External Affairs, Shri I.K. Gujral recalled the vision set out by the ASEAN Ministers and himself during the Post Ministerial Conference in Jakarta in July 1996. He referred to the importance of ASEAN and India to the geo-political complex to which they belonged and to each other in their own right. He affirmed that historic linkages, economic complementarities and policy

coherence meant that ASEAN-India relations would henceforth be predicated on intrinsic value. The context of Pan Asian, Asia-Pacific and South-South Cooperation dynamics was invoked. He saw the JCC as providing the necessary institutional mechanism for giving practical meaning and sustaining the momentum of ASEAN-India Full Dialogue Partnership.

8. In his Opening Statement, Secretary (Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs and Co-Chairman of the JCC, Shri A.N. Ram mentioned that the JCC mechanism recaptures the traditional depth and closeness of ASEAN-India relations in a contemporary idiom. Just as the ASEAN-India dimension has assumed special significance in India's Asian and global foreign policy perspectives, the economic content of that equation is itself gaining prominence. The JCC has the responsibility for sustaining economic cooperation and taking a comprehensive view, including in the realm of culture, academics, education, media and popular contact. It could provide additional dimensions and upgrade cooperation efforts by taking up functional and coordinated overview of multiple Dialogue processes. He also recalled the long-term objective of fostering AFTA-Indian linkage as outlined in the Ministers' Statements during the Jakarta PMC. Briefly, the JCC could act as an agent of change and substantial transformation in ASEAN-India relations, synthesising the natural ingredients of cooperation in a mutually rewarding manner.

9. In his Opening Statement, the Director General of ASEAN-Singapore and Co-Chairman of the JCC Mr. Michael Cheok stated that the establishment of a Full Dialogue Partnership demonstrates ASEAN's and India's commitment towards a renewed and strengthened relationship. According to him, ASEAN and India have established the necessary mechanisms which will lay the foundation for more specific content and focus to be injected into the dialogue process. ASEAN and India can further harness this synergy in the relationship to strengthen economic linkages. The establishment of Working Groups on Trade and Investment, and Science and Technology underscore the pivotal role of these sectors. As the dialogue matures, the much needed "human touch" will come from people-to-people exchanges, human resource development and tourism cooperation.

10. The first JCC focused attention on establishment of institutional mechanisms in specific sectors of cooperation as well as discussed ways and means of expanding the intensifying ASEAN-India cooperation in the identified areas of trade, investment, science and technology, tourism, human resource development, infrastructure and people-to-people interaction. A significant outcome of the JCC was the establishment of the ASEAN-India Working Groups on Science and Technology and Trade and Investment. The terms of reference of the Working Group on Science and Technology were adopted, and those on the Working Group on Trade and Investment are expected to be finalised shortly.

11. The overarching objective of trade and investment cooperation is to establish institutional linkages and programmes for trade and investment facilitation and promotion. This will include ASEAN-India cooperation in the field of standards and quality. The Working Group on Trade & Investment will also examine possibilities of AFTA-India linkage. The JCC agreed to establish a tie-up between ASEANWEB and its Indian counterpart and a technical expert will be deputed from India for the purpose. The AIBC is to act as a vehicle for expanding relations between ASEAN industry/professional/trade associations and their Indian counterparts.

12. The Indian delegation made a multi-media presentation on "Technology Vision 2020" by way of future cooperation possibilities, covering a wide range of activities like food processing, health, agriculture, engineering, electronics and communications, services and their cross-sectoral linkages. The JCC recognised India's expertise in the field of science and technology and agreed that further consolidation of cooperation in the three agreed areas of Advanced Materials, Biotechnology and Information Technology as well as possible new areas would be examined by the Working Group on Science and Technology. Approved projects will be implemented in Advanced Materials relating to "Wear Resistant and Thermal

Barrier Coatings for Automotive and other Applications”, “Development of Raw Material and NdFeB Markets and Application Engineering” and in Information Technology entitled “Multimedia in Education”. In addition, a large number of project profiles are being worked out in the field of Biotechnology, particularly in the areas of Agricultural Biotechnology, Animal Biotechnology, and Biofertilizers.

13. There was agreement that scope for ASEAN-India cooperation in tourism was considerable and that continuation of familiarisation tours and tourism seminars, including upgradation of tourism infrastructure were important areas of cooperation. An ASEAN-India Week including tourism, trade-related and other events is to be held in 1997. A study for preparing a tourism profile from the perspective of ASEAN-India cooperation is to be commissioned under the ASEAN-India Fund.

14. Extensive discussions were held in human resource development highlighting the scope of cooperation in the fields of education and training, including vocational training, English Language study, and such technical disciplines as ports automation and management. The ASEAN Secretariat will prepare a study on capabilities and requirements of ASEAN and India in order to focus on the sectors of cooperation in this rich and diversified area. This study will also include suggestions for cooperation among the centres of excellence. As a means of strengthening human resource development and augment interaction between academics and intellectuals from ASEAN and India, a study is to be commissioned for strengthening and setting up India study centres in ASEAN member countries and South East Asia study centres in India.

15. In the field of infrastructure, India made presentations on policy and opportunities for ASEAN-India cooperation in the railways, ports and highways, and power sectors. The JCC agreed that this being a vast sector involving a number of Ministries on both sides exchange of information relating to investment opportunities could be tackled by establishing focal points in ASEAN and India for direct contact. ASEAN-wide mechanisms could be used in the area of mining, transportation and communications. It was felt that infrastructure was an important area which could profit from an ASEAN consortium approach *vis-à-vis* India. Available ASEAN-wide mechanisms could also be used and information disseminated to respective private sectors.

16. The JCC reaffirmed enhanced people-to-people interaction and welcomed India’s proposal for an ASEAN-India Lecture Series to promote awareness of the potential for ASEAN-India cooperation among our peoples. The organising of an ASEAN-India Week would also help towards this end.

17. Concurrently with the JCC Meeting, the ASEAN-India Business Council also had a very productive session. The highlights include ASEAN participation at the India Engineering Trade Fair (IETF) ’97, visit of ASEAN business delegation for the IETF ’97 and holding of an ASEAN-India Round Table involving captains of business and industry from both sides. Indian participation at the ASEAN Business Summit scheduled to be held in Jakarta in March 1997 along with a full meeting of the AIBC, continuation of work on the ASEAN-India Business Directory brought out by the India-ASEAN Economic Cooperation Committee (IAECC) the Indian counterpart of AIBC, and sectoral buyer-seller meets.

18. The External Affairs Minister of India had announced India’s offer to establish a high-tech, state-of-the-art Informatics Training Centre in ASEAN. The NIIT, which is already active in many ASEAN countries, made a presentation on the project to be established in an ASEAN country on a commercially self-sustaining basis. The Government of India will meet some initial establishment costs and provide scholarships to [a] hundred ASEAN students every year for training in this institution.

19. The JCC reviewed the use of the ASEAN-India Fund. It expressed its deep appreciation for India’s contribution to the ASEAN-India Fund totalling over US\$500,000 (Rs. 170 lakhs approx.) todate. It also provided broad guidelines for future projects to be financed under this Fund.

20. The next Meeting of the JCC will be held in Singapore in about 18 months’ time. The exact dates will be decided through diplomatic channels.

21. The JCC expressed sincere appreciation to the Government and the people of India for the warm hospitality accorded to the ASEAN delegates and excellent arrangements made to ensure that the meeting was a success. The JCC was held in an atmosphere characterised by the traditional spirit of ASEAN and Indian solidarity and cordiality.

SOURCE: ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta.