

Opening Remarks by External Affairs Minister at 12th India-ASEAN Meeting in Nay Pyi Taw

August 09, 2014

Your Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, Foreign Minister of Brunei Darussalam,

Your Excellency Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam,

Your Excellency Mr. Hor Narmhong, Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister of Cambodia,

Your Excellency Mr. Marty Natalegawa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia,

Your Excellency Mr. Sihasak Phuangketkeow, Acting Foreign Minister of Thailand,

Distinguished Leaders of Delegations from Lao PDR, Myanmar, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

1. It is a privilege to be amongst our ASEAN friends today. I would like to, at the very outset, convey my gratitude to our Hosts, Myanmar, for the very warm welcome and hospitality extended to me and my delegation and the excellent arrangements made for our meetings. I would like to congratulate Myanmar and put on record that we are delighted to be part of this moment of achievement for Myanmar, as ASEAN Chair. I would also like to express our gratitude to our Country Coordinator Brunei Darussalam for their very able stewardship of the ASEAN India strategic partnership since 2012, which built on the progress made with Cambodia earlier, and is taking the relationship to new heights before the baton hands over to Viet Nam next year.

2. The ASEAN-India strategic partnership owes its strength to the fact that our 'Look East' to ASEAN meets your 'Look West' towards India. There is synergy and a sense of fraternity in our partnership, as we look towards a shared future of peace and stability, economic growth and prosperity in our region.

3. I have had occasion to discuss some of these ideas with Parliamentarians from ASEAN countries in my previous capacity as Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. I remember your unanimous presence in New Delhi to mark the 20th anniversary celebrations. The overwhelming involvement of people across ages and professions in the various events that year in all the ASEAN countries and India were evidence of the deep and longstanding connections between our countries, past and present.

4. I am looking forward to now working with you all for taking these sentiments of comfort and collaboration between us to new heights across the three pillars and bring greater speed to some long pending issues.

5. To the 5 Ts of the Government of India – Tradition, Talent, Tourism, Trade and Technology, I would like to reiterate the value of a ‘C’ before them all in foreign policy – the ‘C’ of connectivity in all its dimensions, geographic, institutional and people-to-people. I would like this ‘C’ of connectivity to translate into tangible and urgent action on the ground, bringing our capacities together to mutual benefit.
6. We have an impressive array of 26 cross-sectoral annual dialogue mechanisms between ASEAN and India. We should soon be drafting our next Plan of Action for 2016-2021. The Vision Statement and the Report to the Leaders by the ASEAN India Eminent Persons Group are good reference points but our interpretation of these needs to be grounded in the geo-political realities of today and the common aspirations of our people for growth and development.
7. As you are on the brink of achieving your long cherished goal of the ASEAN Community by 2015, I bring to you the assurance of the new Government in India that we would like to stand with you and take the trajectories of our common interests higher in the coming years, both in terms of achievement and relevance to our bilateral ASEAN+1 relationship and also in terms of the multilateral ambition at the regional and global levels.
8. Before I conclude my opening remarks, I would like to acknowledge the presence of 8 Indian journalists in the room under the ASEAN India Media Exchange Programme. They were in Thailand before reaching Nay Pyi Taw. There has been good feedback on this programme and I would like to suggest that we look to its continuation for another three years.

Thank you.