

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2127
ANSWERED ON:07.12.2005
CONSTITUTION OF GROUP OF ASEAN
Singh Kunwar Rewati Raman

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether in view of slow progress on a free trade deal among SAARC nations, the Government is planning a free trade agreement with the 10-member group of the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN); and

(b) if so, the details in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a&b): The Committee of Experts on the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) met in Kathmandu on 29-30 November, 2005 to settle outstanding issues to ensure entry into force of the SAFTA Agreement, as agreed, with effect from 1 January, 2006. India signed a framework agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation with ASEAN on 8 October, 2003. Negotiations are currently underway with ASEAN for the establishment of an India-ASEAN Free Trade Area in goods.