

Recommendations of the National Consultations in MGR Project

The three National consultations in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam were held on 23rd, 25th and the 29th of August, 2005. The deliberations threw up interesting generalisations that were cutting across all countries.

1. Lack of data had hampered the study
2. The sample size of the perception survey was rather small and although seems insufficient from technical sampling exercise yet it was representative of the general feeling amongst the target group in all countries.
3. The level of awareness was rather poor about Indian business or about the countries in the GMS region. This was directly related to the efforts of the local embassies of the respective countries in other countries.
4. The language factor was a strong impediment to kick-start growth and sufficient steps had to be taken to arrive at a reasonable competency in the language of international trade – English. This was acutely felt in Laos and Vietnam.
5. Lack of institutional framework regarding trade did not enthuse the business community to start trading with the other countries as investment guarantees were not present.
6. Cultural exchange can catalyse the trading relationships as this will help understand the culture of the people.
7. Permanent presence of goods manufactured in the countries with sufficient exhibition area needs to be the need of the day. Participation in trade fairs and exhibitions would help dispel a lot of ignorance currently prevailing amongst these countries.
8. Information needs to be disseminated in the local language and not merely in English.
9. Detailed studies need to be undertaken in various sectors to identify trading and investment opportunities.
10. Trade facilitation measures should include information dissemination as a key area. This would include easier norms and rules and regulations for effecting trade amongst countries. Standards should be international and not country specific else they act as non trade barriers too.
11. The current project will serve no purpose unless a detailed study is undertaken with a much larger time frame and a larger sample is covered.
12. There is an acute problem of mindset amongst the people and especially regarding certain countries that business will not reach there.
13. The role of the Chambers of Commerce was very weak and had to be strengthened.
14. Dire need for capacity building through language training, information provision, guidance and hand holding was felt.
15. The exercise had to be inclusive of all stakeholders in the country.
16. Business should work and be part of official delegations to the countries.

17. Cooperation amongst countries should not be restricted to geo-political agendas but should be more comprehensive in the nature of economic cooperation.
 18. The region needs to sort out its problems and enhance trade by itself and not look externally for help.
 19. Role of infrastructure and trade facilitation measures was key to the success of trading within this region.
 20. Trade should not be restricted to a narrow segment of products but should be more broad based.
 21. Rather than look at the WTO format for solution of bilateral issues, bilateral solutions should be adopted for enhancing trade between countries of this region.
 22. Acute requirement felt to improve direct connections between countries rather than through round-about means.
 23. Social trends should be taken cognisance of in determining the way in which development should be encouraged.
 24. Visa regimes need to be liberalised
 25. Rather than have a macro approach for cooperation it is necessary to identify the states and the particular sectors which can pursue the India-GMS country trade with greater momentum.
 26. Require that Tier II companies should get involved in the trading rather than merely be the effort of Tier I companies.
 27. There is lack of faith in the Government mechanism as despite the inclination of the Govt to encourage trade the traders at times feel harassed by the local authorities. This needs to be addressed by the Governments as well as the Chambers of Commerce.
 28. SWAP trade has a lot of potential and should be explored.
 29. Soft credit by Government institutions is critical at times for enhancing trade.
 30. A regional approach for investment is necessary rather than a country specific approach.
 31. Indian tariffs are yet considered rather high and act as barriers to increase trade.
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