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Overview

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# Canada and the Association of South East Asian Nations

## Introduction

Half a world away, Canada is developing valuable economic and political relations with the six member countries of ASEAN. ASEAN, the Association of South East Asian Nations, includes the Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. Overcoming initial difficulties, the members of ASEAN have forged economic, political, and cultural ties among themselves and with the international community. As a primary focus of its Asia-Pacific policy, Canada is developing strong links with these countries through the association and, equally importantly, on a bilateral basis.

## Background

Prior to 1967, the countries of Southeast Asia were deterred from closer co-operation by difficult political relations. Up until 1965, Malaysia and Indonesia had been engaged in a border war, the Philippines disputed the Malaysian sovereignty over Sabah, and Singapore's withdrawal from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965 had strained relations between these two neighbours.

In 1967, the countries of the region faced difficult economic times. As producers of primary commodities, they competed with each other in the international market. They produced 95 per cent of the world's hemp, 85 per cent of its natural rubber, 67 per cent of its tin and copra, 60 per cent of its copper, and much of its palm oil, coffee, sugar and timber.

As well, the problems of diverse historical, religious, and developmental backgrounds were

