

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:602

ANSWERED ON:27.07.2005

VISIT OF FOREIGN DIGNITARIES

Gaikwad Shri Eknath Mahadeo;Mane Smt. Nivedita;Rao Shri Sambasiva Rayapati;Singh Shri Kirti Vardhan;Yadav Shri Anirudh Prasad (Sadhu);Yaskhi Shri Madhu Goud

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) Visits by foreign dignitaries to India during the last two months, till date;
- (b) the issues on which deliberations were held with each of the dignitaries;
- (c) whether any bilateral agreements were signed with them;
- (d) if so, the details thereof with the gain likely to be accrued to India as a result of these agreements;
- (e) the details of visits undertaken by the PM and EAM during the above period;
- (f) the details of discussions held and outcome thereof; and
- (g) the steps taken by the Government to strengthen relations with these countries?

Answer

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

Part-I (a) to (d) & (g) The details of the foreign dignitaries who visited India during the last two months, till date; the issues on which deliberations were held with each of the dignitaries; and bilateral agreements signed with them with details thereof with the likely gains which are to be accrued to India as a result of these agreements, are give below, country wise:-

AFGHANISTAN

Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Afghan Foreign Minister visited India from 3-4 July 2005 and Dr. Zalmi Rassoul, Afghan National Security Adviser visited India on 13 July 2005. Bilateral relations including India`s assistance programme to Afghanistan and regional issues of common concern were discussed in their meetings with Indian leaders.

As part of international effort, India is committed to support Afghanistan`s economic reconstruction. India`s aid commitment is over US\$ 500 million for the period 2002 - 2008. We have undertaken, in consultation with Afghan government, projects in virtually all parts of Afghanistan, covering a wide range of sectors.

SRI LANKA

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga visited India on June 2-4, 2005. The whole range of bilateral relations and other issues of mutual interest were discussed during the visiting President`s meetings with Prime Minister, Finance Minister, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Panchayati Raj.

There is excellent political understanding at the highest levels between India and Sri Lanka. This is reflected in the frequent high-level visits, regular contacts at official levels and an expanding institutional and juridical framework. Negotiations to finalise a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement are underway to facilitate further growth in economic ties; India remains engaged in the post-tsunami national reconstruction effort in Sri Lanka; three credit lines are running; a number of development projects are in various stages of implementation. A number of steps have also been taken to expand cooperation in other sectors and facilitate further people-to-people contact.

MYANMAR

The Minister of Energy of Myanmar, Brig. Gen. Lun Thi visited India from 5-7 July 2005 at the invitation of the Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Shri Mani Shanker Aiyar. During the visit, discussions were held on the various options for evacuation of natural gas from Myanmar to India as well as on participation of Indian companies in exploration and production of hydro-carbons in Myanmar. In addition, Government of India announced extension of a line of credit of US\$ 20 million for revamping the Thanlyin refinery in Myanmar.

THAILAND

Thai Prime Minister Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra paid a working visit to India on 3 June 2005. During the visit, he held talks with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and called on Chairperson UPA, Smt. Sonia Gandhi. Minister for HRD, Shri Arjun Singh called on the Thai PM. Talks covered a wide range of bilateral issues including the exchange of high level visits, FTA negotiations, civil aviation matters, and cooperation in the fields of defence, security, science and technology, education, tourism as well as disaster relief. India-Thai cooperation in regional forums such as ASEAN and BIMSTEC as well as on multilateral issues also figured in the discussions.

An MOU on Educational Exchange Programme (EEP) was signed during the visit. The MOU was signed by HRD Minister Mr. Arjun Singh and the Thai Foreign Minister Kantathi Suphamongkhon. Thai PM's visit reflected a reciprocal desire to broaden and deepen our mutual engagement and maximize the opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation in diverse areas.

SINGAPORE

The Prime Minister of Singapore Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, paid a State Visit to India from 28-30 June 2005. During the visit, the Singapore Prime Minister called on the President and Vice President, and had one to one as well as delegation level talks with the Prime Minister. He also had separate meetings with the Minister of External Affairs, Minister of Finance, Minister of Commerce and Industry, former Prime Minister Shri A.B. Vajpayee as well as with the Chairperson of the UPA. The discussions covered the entire gamut of our bilateral relations with Singapore, India's growing partnership with the ASEAN and several international issues of mutual concern.

A Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) between the Republic of India and the Republic of Singapore, a Protocol amending Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion, Side letters to CECA and Agreement between the Government of India and the Government of Singapore concerning Mutual Legal assistance in Criminal Matters were signed.

The CECA is a comprehensive package including an FTA that covers, inter alia, trade in services, investment, financial services, movement of natural persons, electronic commerce, intellectual property rights, cooperation in science and technology, education and media. It also incorporates an improved Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement. The India-Singapore CECA is the first such Agreement to be signed by India with another country. It comes into effect on August 1, 2005. Signing of CECA would open new avenues for cooperation in trade in goods, services, technology, flow of capital and professionals between the two countries. The Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty on Criminal Matters will help carry forward ongoing bilateral security cooperation.

AUSTRALIA

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer visited India from June 6 to 9, 2005 for the next round of Ministerial Framework Dialogue. In New Delhi, FM Downer called on PM Dr. Manmohan Singh and the Ministers for Defence and Environment as well as Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission. Downer held talks with EAM on June 8, 2005. Downer also visited Chennai on 6th and 7th June where he met the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and addressed the Indo-Australian Chamber of Commerce. No bilateral agreements were signed during the visit. The visit reinforced the reciprocal desire to maximize the opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation in diverse areas and helped carry forward the momentum of renewing ties between India and Australia in bilateral and regional framework.

INDONESIA

Mr. Ali Alatas, former Foreign Minister of Indonesia and UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on UN Reforms for the Asia Pacific Region visited India from July 12-15, 2005. The issue of UN reform which is expected to come up in the deliberations of the 60th U.N. General Assembly Session in September 2005, was discussed in detail with the above dignitary. No bilateral agreements were signed during the above visit. The discussions served to clarify the positions with regard to various aspects of UN Reforms and assess the possible areas for future cooperation.

PALESTINE

President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), President of Palestinian National Authority accompanied by Palestinian Foreign Minister Nasser Al Kidwa undertook a working visit to India on 19th and 20th May 2005.

President Abbas and his delegation called on the President and held discussions with Prime Minister and EAM on the revival of the Middle East Peace Process and also briefed Hon'ble Prime Minister about the recent developments on Middle East Peace Process in the post-Arafat era. India reiterated its commitment to Palestinian cause and sovereign, independent Palestinian state. During the meeting India announced \$15 million as grant to Palestine.

India and Palestine have traditionally good relations. India was one of the first countries to recognise the State of Palestine in 1988 and opened Representative Office in Gaza Ramallah in 1996. India is a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause and supported various resolutions at UN and other international fora. Since inception of Palestinian National Authority (PNA), India has extended an aid of \$3.96 million. During the visit of President Abbas India also pledged an additional aid of \$15 million for the reconstruction of Palestine. We have been also offering scholarships under ICCR for higher studies for Palestinian students. Several short and medium-term courses are also being offered regularly for Palestinian officials including diplomats. In February 2005, India has appointed a special envoy for West Asia in Middle East Peace Process in an endeavour to enhance our engagement with the region.

SUDAN

Dr. Mustapha Osman Ismail, the Sudanese Foreign Minister, visited India from 6-8 June 2005. The Sudanese Foreign Minister called

on PM and held wide-ranging discussions with EAM and MOS (EA) on bilateral, regional and multilateral organizations and issues as well as on enhancing bilateral political and economic cooperation, trade and investment. The Indian leaders briefed the Foreign Minister on the steps taken to improve India's relations with its neighbours.

India has traditionally good relations with Sudan and welcomed the formation of the new Government of National Unity on 9th July 2005 under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between North and South Sudan. In March 2005, India sent 20,000 MTs of wheat as humanitarian assistance for the people of Darfur in Western Sudan.

India and Sudan are also cooperating in key sectors such as hydrocarbons, railways, IT and small-scale industries. India pledged a concessional bilateral line of credit of US \$ 100/- million and a separate bilateral grant of US \$ 10 million for carrying out various development projects in Sudan as part of the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Sudan under the CPA. During 2004-2005, Sudan was allotted sixty slots, one of the biggest such allotments, under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme.

USA

Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State on UN Reforms, USA visited India on May 26, 2005. The issue of UN reform which is expected to come up in the deliberations of the 60th U.N. General Assembly Session in September 2005, was discussed in detail with the dignitary. No bilateral agreements were signed during the above visit. The discussions served to clarify the positions with regard to various aspects of UN Reforms and assess the possible areas for future cooperation.

GUATEMALA

Mr. Jorge Briz Abularach, Minister of External Relations of Guatemala, visited India from May 1-7, 2005. The issues on which deliberations were held include strengthening of bilateral relations, cooperation in IT, service and manufacturing sectors, opening of resident embassies in the respective capitals, cooperation in international fora, support to India's bid for a permanent seat in the expanded UNSC etc.

An MOU on Foreign Office level Consultations was signed during the visit. It is expected that the MOU will lead to monitoring of the bilateral relationship and coordination of the respective positions on issues of mutual interest.

Part - II (e) & (f) The details of visits undertaken by the Prime Minister (PM) and External Affairs Minister (EAM) during the above period, and the details of discussions held and outcome in such cases are given below country wise:

Details of visits undertaken by PM RUSSIA

Prime Minister visited Russia from 8-10 May 2005 at the invitation of President Putin to participate in the 60th anniversary of the Victory Day. PM met President Putin in a bilateral meeting and discussed a range of bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual concern. No agreement was signed.

THE UK

Prime Minister visited The UK from July 6-9, 2005 for the G-8 Summit. Discussions were held on issues relating to global economy, climate change and sustainable development. The outcome of the meeting is the initiation of a new dialogue between G-8 nations and other countries with significant energy needs, consistent with the aims and principles of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change

USA

At the invitation of President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh accompanied by External Affairs Minister paid a visit to the United States from July 18-20, 2005.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Bush declared their resolve to transform the relationship and establish a global partnership between the two countries. Discussions were held on various aspects of multifaceted cooperative relationship. These included potential for bilateral cooperation in the fields such as economic and trade relations, revitalizing the India-U.S. Economic Dialogue and launching a bilateral CEOs Forum. Energy, environment, democracy and development, combating terrorism, non-proliferation and security, completion of the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) initiative, high technology, space, civilian nuclear technology, science and technology, agricultural education, fight against HIV/AIDS and disaster relief operations, were the other areas of focus for bilateral cooperation.

Recognizing the significance of civilian nuclear energy for meeting growing global energy demands in a cleaner and more efficient manner, the two leaders discussed India's plans to develop its civilian nuclear energy program. President Bush conveyed his appreciation to the Prime Minister over India's strong commitment to preventing WMD proliferation and stated that as a responsible State with advanced nuclear technology, India should be entitled to the same benefits and advantages as other such States. The President indicated to the Prime Minister that he would seek agreement from Congress to adjust U.S. laws and policies, and the United States will work with friends and allies to adjust international regimes to enable full civil nuclear energy cooperation and trade with India, including but not limited to expeditious consideration of fuel supplies for safeguarded nuclear reactors at Tarapur. In the meantime, the United States will encourage its partners to consider India's request for its inclusion in ITER and Generation IV International Forum. The Prime Minister conveyed, that India would reciprocally agree that it would be ready to assume the same responsibilities and practices and acquire the same benefits and advantages as other leading countries with advanced nuclear technology, such as the United States.

There has been steady progress in relations between India and the US in recent times. There is a strong commitment on both sides to carry this process forward and to further widen, deepen and strengthen these ties. Frequent contacts at political as well as at official levels and the regular bilateral dialogue on a wide range of issues of mutual interest is reflective of the qualitative transformation in bilateral ties. Prime Minister's visit has resulted in taking this relationship to higher plane.

Details of visits undertaken by EAM

SRI LANKA

EAM Shri K. Natwar Singh visited Sri Lanka on June 9-11, 2005. EAM co-chaired the sixth meeting of the India-Sri Lanka Joint Commission along with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister. During his meetings with the Sri Lankan President, Prime Minister and other leaders, the whole range of bilateral relations and other issues of mutual interest were discussed. Ways and means of adding further momentum and substance to the existing excellent bilateral relations were also discussed.

KOREA

EAM visited Seoul on June 1, 2005 during a transit halt and held bilateral talks with Foreign Minister of Republic of Korea (ROK) Mr. Ban Ki-Moon. Both sides reviewed the current state of bilateral relations and expressed satisfaction over the recent positive developments in the relationship following the visit of the ROK President to India in October 2004. Government of India attaches great importance to development of relations with ROK. The 'Long-term Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity' established between the two countries during the visit of the ROK President to India in October 2004 symbolises the political commitment on both sides to fully utilise the substantial potential and opportunities for deepening mutually beneficial cooperation by taking advantage of their economic complementarities and political convergences.

RUSSIA

EAM visited Vladivostok on 2nd June 2005 to participate in the Fourth India-Russia-China Trilateral Ministerial Meeting. Issues of mutual concern were discussed. The three Foreign Ministers agreed that terrorism should be combated in a consistent, sustained and comprehensive manner without any double standards. They underscored the need for coordinated action between the law enforcement authorities of the three countries to act against illegal drug-trafficking and other manifestations of trans-border crimes. They acknowledged the considerable potential for mutually beneficial cooperation between Russia, India and China in such spheres as transport, agriculture, energy and high technologies. EAM also met the Russian and the Chinese Foreign Ministers separately in bilateral exchanges.

KAZAKHSTAN

EAM visited Astana, Kazakhstan from 4-5 July, 2005 as the Head of the Indian delegation for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit Meeting. In addition to attending the Summit meeting, where India was admitted as an 'Observer' of the SCO, EAM had bilateral meetings with leaders of delegations of SCO Member and Observer countries. The member countries decided to strengthen the fight against terrorism, separatism, extremism and other challenges and threats. They would also endeavour to expand cooperation among themselves in the economic field in multilateral forums, which should lead to enhanced trade, and economic cooperation amongst the members.

SENEGAL

EAM visited Senegal from 25-26 May 2005. He held wide-ranging discussions with the President and Foreign Minister of Senegal on bilateral relations. Both sides noted with satisfaction the steady growth in terms of trade, investment and exchange of high level visits. EAM also discussed UN reforms and India's claim to a permanent seat in expanded UNSC. Senegal expressed its support for India's legitimate claim to permanent membership with veto power. India has approved various lines of credit for Senegal for implementation of projects in areas such as irrigation, transport, railways, IT, steel, infrastructure, agriculture, SMEs etc. India is setting up a Technology Demonstration Centre in Dakar which will help increase bilateral cooperation in the SME and other areas. India is conducting a feasibility study and detailed project report for a 900 km railway link between Dakar and Ziguinchor in Senegal.

THE UK

EAM visited the UK on 27 June 2005. EAM delivered a speech at Chhatam House on 'India in the next decade' and held bilateral talks with Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. Bilateral, regional and global developments of mutual interest were discussed. The UK side agreed to review the Travel Advisory on India. The UK is India's strategic partner and bilateral relations are marked by frequent exchange of high level visits.

EAM also visited London from July 8-11, 2005 to attend the G-4 Foreign Ministers Meeting. The G-4 Foreign Ministers met in London on 8th July with the Foreign Minister of Ghana as Chairman of the African Core Group of Three. They agreed to explore a common draft resolution and the prospects of joint action.

ITALY

EAM visited Italy on 20-21 June 05 and met with his counterpart, Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Mr. Gianfranco Fini. EAM and Foreign Minister Fini reviewed progress in bilateral relations since President Ciampi's visit to India in February 2005. EAM also met with 20 leading Italian CEOs with whom he expressed deep interest in expanding bilateral trade investment and economic cooperation. Indo-Italian relations are marked by civilizational links and are based on shared values and mutual interest.

HUNGARY

EAM visited Hungary from June 23-25, 2005 at the invitation of his Hungarian counterpart. The entire gamut of Indo-Hungarian relations was reviewed, including measures to strengthen cooperation in the economic and commercial sphere, science and technology, culture, education. An Economic Cooperation Agreement was signed. EAM unveiled the bust of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore at Balaton Fured. Efforts are being made to further diversify and deepen bilateral ties in all areas of mutual importance. Institutional mechanisms such as Joint Commission and Foreign Office Consultations are being actively pursued.

NORWAY

EAM paid an official visit to Norway on June 16-17, 2005 at the invitation of Norwegian Foreign Minister Jan Petersen. EAM co-chaired the first Indo-Norwegian Joint Commission Meeting. Bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual concern have been discussed with focus on strengthening economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries. Institutional mechanisms like Joint Commission; Foreign Office Consultations have been activated. A Joint Working Group (JWG) on Hydrocarbons is being used to forge close cooperation in energy sector. New JWGs on S&T and Culture have been established and JWGs on Trade & Investment and Shipping have been proposed.

BELGIUM

EAM visited Brussels to attend the meeting of G-4 Foreign Ministers held in Brussels on June 22, 2005. During their meeting in Brussels on June 22, 2005, G-4 Foreign Ministers discussed their efforts at furthering UN Security Council reform. They expressed their resolve to introduce the text of the framework resolution, leading to its adoption by the General Assembly after AU and CARICOM Summit meetings in July.

USA

EAM visited USA to attend the Meeting of G-4 Foreign Ministers held in New York from July 16-17, 2005. On July 17, 2005, Foreign Ministers of the Group of 4 (Brazil, Germany, India and Japan) and Ministers from the African Union Follow-Up Mechanism on the Reform of the United Nations (Nigeria, South Africa, Libya and Egypt) met and discussed the way forward and prospects for common action between the AU and the G-4 with regard to UN reform and the reform of the Security Council. They agreed to establish a joint mechanism and directed their Permanent Representatives to work expeditiously to explore ways to overcome the differences and arrive at a common position.