

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2906

ANSWERED ON:10.05.2006

VISITS BY FOREIGN DIGNITARIES

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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of visits by foreign dignitaries to India during the last two months;
- (b) the issues on which deliberations were held with them;
- (c) whether any bilateral agreements were signed on the occasion;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) the details of visit undertaken by the Prime Minister and External Affairs minister during the above period;
- (f) the details of discussions held and the outcome thereof; and
- (g) the steps taken by the Government to further improve the relations with these countries?

Answer

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

Part-I (a) to (d): The details of foreign dignitaries who visited India during the last two months, issues on which deliberations were held with them, bilateral agreements signed and the details thereof are given below, country wise.

1. BANGLADESH

The Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Begum Khaleda Zia paid a State visit to India from March 20-22, 2006. During the visit, comprehensive discussions were held on the entire gamut of bilateral relations. Both sides discussed regional and international issues of mutual interest. Both sides also agreed on the need to maintain high-level political dialogue between two countries. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to work closely together to find mutually satisfactory solutions to outstanding bilateral issues.

Two agreements were signed during the visit. These were the Revised Trade Agreement and the Agreement for Mutual Cooperation for Preventing Illicit Trafficking in Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and Related Matters.

2. AFGHANISTAN

At the invitation of PM, Mr Hamid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, paid a State visit to India from April 9-13, 2006. During the visit he held talks with Indian leaders on a wide-range of bilateral issues as well as regional and international matters of common interest. India expressed full support to the goal of a sovereign, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan, which is also necessary for peace, security and stability in the region. Issues pertaining to transit, security situation, and security of Indian workers in Afghanistan were also discussed.

Three MoUs were signed between India and Afghanistan on April 10, 2006 in presence of Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. The summary of the three MoUs are given below:

(i) MoU on cooperation in the field of education was signed between the Minister of Human Resource Development and the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, on behalf of Afghanistan's Ministry of Higher Education. The MoU will encourage the development of contacts and cooperation between the educational institutions of the two Governments, based on their respective academic and educational needs. A Joint Working Group will be constituted to implement the MoU.

(ii) MoU on the field of Rural Development was signed by Minister of Rural Development and Afghanistan's Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. The MoU will encourage, develop and strengthen technical cooperation between the two countries in the field of rural development, including, development and maintenance of rural access and connectivity; rural water supply and sanitation and village-based irrigation schemes; generation of wage and self-employment opportunities for the rural poor; development of rural infrastructure using the wage employment programme; and sector-specific human resource development,

including assistance in setting up of a dedicated institution for rural development in Afghanistan.

(iii) MoU on cooperation in the field of Standardization was signed between Director General, Bureau of Indian Standards and Charge d' Affaires of Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi. This MoU calls for co-operation in the field of standardisation by enhancing and strengthening technical cooperation in the fields of standardization, certification, testing, measurement and quality assurance systems with the aim of exchange of necessary information and expertise between the Bureau of Indian Standards and Afghanistan National Standardisation Authority.

India's total aid assistance to Afghanistan is approximately US \$ 650 million. This is a substantial amount for a non-traditional donor like India. India has taken projects in varied sectors including humanitarian, infrastructure, health, rural development, education, etc. India has undertaken some of the large infrastructure projects including Dams, power transmission lines and roads in Afghanistan. In order to improve the relations further, India and Afghanistan has decided to set up a Joint Committee headed by Commerce Ministers, which will review the implementation of the Preferential Trade Agreement. In addition, India offered a line of Credit of US \$ 50 million to encourage Indian businessmen to undertake project exports to Afghanistan.

3. IRAN

The Iranian Vice President Mr. E R Mashaei visited India from 23-29 March 2006. Mr. Mashaei who is the Chairman of the Cultural Heritage and Tourism organization of Iran attended the Amir Khusro International Seminar organized by the Jamia Millia University. During the visit the Vice President met the Prime Minister of India, wherein the two leaders emphasized the importance they attach to the bilateral relations between the two countries, and the need to strengthen them, particularly in the energy sector. Both leaders agreed on the need for an early meeting of the India - Iran Joint Commission. On Iran's nuclear issue, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated that India respects Iran's rights to peaceful uses of nuclear energy consistent with its international rights and obligations. India would like the matter to be resolved within IAEA through dialogue, discussion and diplomacy.

4. AUSTRALIA

Australian Prime Minister John Howard paid a State visit to India from 5-9 March 2006. Deliberations were held on bilateral relations and cooperation in the field of education, information and communication technology, energy and science & technology. Following six bilateral Agreements/MoUs, covering various sectors, were signed during the visit:

- (i) Trade and Economic Framework
- (ii) Air Services Agreement
- (iii) MoU on Cooperation in Defence
- (iv) MoU on Customs
- (v) MoU on Biotechnology
- (vi) Letter of Intent on the establishment of a Strategic Research Fund for funding bilateral scientific projects.

5. QATAR

The first Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabor Al Thani visited India from 18-10 April 2006. Discussions were held on ways and means of enhancing investment cooperation, energy cooperation and supply of LNG, security related issues and welfare issues of the Indian community in Qatar.

6. UZBEKISTAN

Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mr. Alisher Shaykhov, visited India from 7-8 March 2006. The Uzbek Minister of Foreign Economic Relations came to attend the Sixth Session of the Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation between India and Uzbekistan.

7. RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Chairman of the Government [Prime Minister] of the Russian Federation Mr. Mikhail Fradkov visited India on 16-17 March 2006. Bilateral issues were discussed with the visiting Russian Prime Minister. Trade, financial issues, investments, cooperation in oil & gas sector and nuclear power sector, visa issues were among the topics covered during the talks. Following two government organization level agreements in the space sector were signed during PM Mr. Fradkov's visit:

- (i) Agreement between the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Federal Space Agency (ROSCOSMOS) for launching of Russian navigation satellites GLONASS-M by a variant of Indian Geo-Synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV), and
- (ii) Agreement between the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Federal Space Agency (ROSCOSMOS) on joint development of GLONASS navigation satellites GLONASS-K.

In keeping with the time-tested strategic relations India and Russia meet at the Summit level as well as at the level of Defence Ministers and External Affairs Minister [in the two inter-governmental commissions]. In addition, there are a large number of projects and cooperation programmes spanning areas such as S&T, Space, oil & natural gas, nuclear energy, trade and economy, mining &

metallurgy, power, culture and tourism etc. India has entered into agreements of cooperation in diverse fields with countries of the Central Asian region. There are many assistance and aid programmes extended to these countries. Regular contacts are kept at different levels by way of bilateral visits. Efforts are also made to have closer cooperation at multilateral forums.

8. SENEGAL

A delegation headed by Dr. Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs of Senegal visited India from 22 - 25 March 2006. Minister of Industry and Crafts Ms. Bineta Ba Samb and Mr. Ousmane Ndiaye, Director General of Chemical Industries were members of the delegation.

During the visit, the delegation held meetings with Shri Anand Sharma, Minister of State for External Affairs and Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers and discussed issues of bilateral interest as well as International Affairs. Issues pertaining to the restructuring and revival of Industries Chimiques du Senegal, which is an important supplier of phosphoric acid to India, were specifically discussed.

9. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

A high-level delegation from Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) visited India from April 4 - 8, 2006. The delegation was led by Mme Aichatou Mindaoudou, Foreign Minister of Niger and included Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mr. Lawan Gana Guba, Minister for African Integration and NEPAD of Nigeria, Mr. Aziz Sow, Minister of Integration and NEPAD of Senegal, Dr. Kofi Konadu Apraku, Minister of State for Regional Cooperation and NEPAD of Ghana and Mr. Christian Adovelande, President of ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID).

Wide-ranging deliberations and discussions on issues of mutual interest were held with the delegation. A Joint Statement issued at the end of delegation-level talks reflects mutual desire to strengthen cooperation between India and ECOWAS. During the visit ECOWAS conveyed its support for India's candidature for Permanent Membership of UNSC.

10. FINLAND

PM Matti Vanhanen paid an official visit to India from March 10-15, 2006. He was accompanied by Mrs. Susanna Huovinen, Minister of Transport and Communications, officials, and a high level delegation. Discussions were held on a wide spectrum of bilateral, regional and international issues with the visiting dignitaries.

11. CYPRUS

President Tassos Papadopoulos, accompanied by his wife Mrs Fontini, paid a State visit to India from April 11-16, 2006. The President's delegation included the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Goerge Iacovou, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism Mr. Yogos Lillikas, officials and a 21-member business delegation. A joint stamp was released during the visit. Discussions were held on a wide spectrum of bilateral, regional and international issues with the visiting dignitaries.

12. LATVIA

Foreign Minister, Dr. Artis Pabriks visited India during March 20-24, 2006. He was accompanied by officials and a business delegation. Discussions were held on a wide spectrum of bilateral, regional and international issues with the visiting dignitaries.

13. ICELAND

Minister for Education, Science & Culture, Mrs. Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir, paid an official visit to India during 26 February to 3 March 2006. The invitation had been extended to the Foreign Minister who was unable to visit owing to bereavement in his family, and Ms. Gunnarsdottir substituted in his place. The visiting Minister was accompanied by a 35-member business delegation. Discussions were held on a wide spectrum of bilateral, regional and international issues with the visiting dignitaries.

Government is continuously taking steps to improve bilateral relations in the political, economic, scientific, technological, educational, cultural and other areas with all the countries, including Finland, Cyprus, Latvia and Iceland.

14. USA

President of the United States of America, H.E. Mr. George W. Bush visited India from 1-3 March 2006. He was accompanied by US Secretary of State Ms. Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor Mr. Steve Hadley and US Trade Representative Mr. Robert Portman. The two sides had discussions on economic and trade issues, energy security and clean environment, global safety and security, innovation and knowledge economy, democracy and global affairs. Discussions were also held on cooperation in the field of civilian nuclear energy cooperation and the two sides announced the intention to establish a Bi-National Science and Technology Endowment Fund and a standing Science and Technology (S&T) Joint Commission. No agreements were signed during the visit. Following the talks between Hon'ble Prime Minister and President Bush, India - US Joint Statement was issued on March 2, 2006.

Part-II (e) to (g) : The details of visits undertaken by the Prime Minister and External Affairs minister during the above period; the details of discussions held and the outcome thereof; and the steps taken by the Government to further improve the relations with these countries are given below:

1. GERMANY

Prime Minister visited Germany from April 22-25, 2006. He was accompanied by Minister of Commerce & Industry and Minister of Science & Technology. PM, along with German Chancellor Ms. Angela Merkel, jointly inaugurated the Hannover Industrial Trade Fair on April 23, 2006, where India was the Partner Country. PM had talks with German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel. PM called on President Horst Kohler and Bundestag President Norbert Lammert in Berlin. Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier and Minister for Economy & Technology Michael Glos called on PM. The discussions held on the occasion covered a wide range of areas of bilateral cooperation including economic and commercial links, S&T and education. Multilateral issues relating to UN Reforms were also discussed. This would promote greater cooperation between India and Germany in the areas of their mutual interest.

2. UZBEKISTAN

At the invitation of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mr. Islam Karimov, Prime Minister paid an official visit to the Republic of Uzbekistan on 25-26 April 2006. The two sides had detailed exchange of views on the issues of further development of bilateral relations in political, trade and economic, scientific and technical, cultural and humanitarian and other spheres of cooperation, as well as on regional and international issues of mutual interest. During the visit, following seven bilateral agreements were signed:

- (i) Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan on establishing the Uzbekistan India Entrepreneurship Development Centre at Tashkent;
- (ii) Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas of the Republic of India and the National Holding Company `Uzbekneftegaz` of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Cooperation in the field of Oil and Natural Gas;
- (iii) Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the Ministry of Coal and Mines of Republic of India and the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Geology and Mineral Resources;
- (iv) Memorandum of Cooperation between GAIL (India) Limited and Uzbekneftegaz;
- (v) Work Plan for 2007 under the Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation in the field of Agricultural Research and Education between the Department of Agricultural Research and Education of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Government of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- (vi) Memorandum of Understanding between State Trading Corporation of India and O`zbekyengilsanoat State Joint Stock Company of Uzbekistan;
- (vii) Memorandum of Understanding between Delhi University and Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies.