

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:185

ANSWERED ON:22.11.2006

VISITS OF FOREIGN DIGNITARIES

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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of visits made by foreign dignitaries to India during the last three months till date:
- (b) the issues on which deliberations were held with each of these dignitaries;
- (c) whether any bilateral agreements were signed with them:
- (d) if so, the details thereof:
- (e) whether there is any proposed visit of foreign dignitaries in the near future:
- (f) if so, the details thereof:
- (g) the details of visits undertaken by the PM and External Affairs Minister during the above period;
- (h) the details of discussions held and the outcome thereof: and
- (i) the steps taken by the Government to improve the relations with these countries ?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA)

Part I (a) to (f) and (i) The details of foreign dignitaries who visited India during the last three months till date, the issues on which deliberations were held with them, bilateral agreements signed and details thereof and proposed visits of foreign dignitaries in the near future and the steps taken by the Government to improve the relations with these countries are given below, country-wise:

1. NEPAL

Mr. K. P. Sharma Oli, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Nepal visited India from November 5-8, 2006. The two sides comprehensively reviewed the entire gamut of our bilateral relationship, including the implementation of economic package which was announced after the Prime Minister of Nepal H.E. G. P. Koirala's visit to India in June this year. The visiting Minister briefed the External Affairs Minister on the latest situation in Nepal including the ongoing peace negotiations.

India attaches the highest priority to its relations with Nepal with whom we are partners in peace, progress, prosperity, stability and economic recovery of Nepal and towards this end, is committed to render all assistance and support within its means to the Government and people of Nepal

2. MALDIVES

Dr. Ahmed Ahaheed, Foreign Minister of Maldives visited India from October 23-28, 2006. Besides calling on the Prime Minister, the visiting Minister also met the Defence Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The deliberations during the visit focused on a review of the existing state of bilateral cooperation and on identifying ways and means to further strengthen bilateral relations.

3. AFGHANISTAN

H.E. President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan is on a visit to India from November 15-19, 2006. He is accompanied by 7 Cabinet Ministers and Ministerial -level advisers, in addition to the members of the Afghan National Assembly and a high-level business delegation. During the visit, Prime Minister and President Karzai jointly inaugurated the Second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. They will also address the concluding session of the Regional Business Conference on Afghanistan, jointly hosted by FICCI, CII and ASSOCHAM and the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA). President Karzai would be conferred with the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development.

4. IRAN

Dr. Manouchehr, Foreign Minister of Iran visited India from 16-17 November 2006. The two governments are in regular touch through high level exchange of visits to discuss and improve all aspects of bilateral relations.

5. CHINA

At the invitation of the President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the President of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Mr. Hu Jintao will pay a State Visit to India from November 20 to 23, 2006. The visit of the Chinese President is a part of high-level exchanges between India and China in recent years.

During the visit, President Hu Jintao will call on the President of India who will also host a state banquet in his honour. The visiting dignitary will hold talks with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and interact with other senior leaders, besides his other engagements.

India and China have taken a number of initiatives to improve bilateral relations across a range of areas, without allowing existing differences to affect the overall development of their ties. China is set to emerge as India's leading trade partner in the near future. Though facing many common challenges, both countries are exploring cooperative approaches to a range of issues including terrorism and protection of the environment.

6. BRUNEI

Mr. Pehin Dato Lim Jock Seng, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade-II of Brunei Darussalam visited India from October 10-13, 2006. The visiting Minister held discussions on a wide range of bilateral and multilateral issues.

7. EGYPT

Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Foreign Minister of Egypt is scheduled to visit India from 15-17 December 2006 to co-Chair the 5th Session of the India-Egypt Joint Commission Meeting to be held in New Delhi.

8. JORDAN

His Majesty King Abdullah-II of Jordan is visiting India from November 29 – December 2, 2006 to discuss bilateral relations.

9. SYRIA

Mr. Walid El-Mouallim, Foreign Minister of Syria is scheduled to visit India from 21-23 December 2006 to discuss bilateral discussions.

10. RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Mr. Sergei Lavrov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation visited India from 16-17 November 2006. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed during the visit.

His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of Russian Federation is scheduled to visit India and to be the Chief Guest at the Republic Day Celebrations on 26th January 2007. He is expected to have bilateral meeting with Prime Minister and other dignitaries.

There is a close relationship between India and Russia covering a wide area including defence, space, nuclear energy, trade and economy, science and technology, culture etc. There are regular expert/ official level exchanges and visits, including annual meeting at the level of Cabinet Ministers, to plan, monitor and further strengthen mutual cooperation in all areas.

11. SOUTH AFRICA

Mrs. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa paid a visit to India from 10-13 September 2006 at the invitation of Hon'ble Vice- President. She was accompanied by a high-level delegation, which included several Ministers. During her visit she met President, Vice-President, Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of UPA and also held meetings with business organisations like CII, FICCI and Tatas.

12. BURUNDI

The 2nd Vice President of the Republic of Burundi, H.E. (Madame) Marine Barampama paid an official visit to India from 6th to 11th October, 2006. She attended the COMESA-India Ministerial level Talks held in New Delhi as well as participated in the India-Africa Partnership Conclave organized by CII at New Delhi from October 9 to 11, 2006. During the visit she had meetings with the Minister of State for Agriculture, Shri Kantilal Bhuria and discussed bilateral cooperation in the agriculture area. She also visited National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) to explore possibility of cooperation in the small-scale industry area.

13. NAMIBIA

Dr. Marco Hausiku, Namibian Foreign Minister paid an official visit to India from October 26 to 30, 2006. Talks were held with EAM on October 26 during which both sides discussed bilateral cooperation in education, agriculture, trade, mines and energy, technical training and defence. EAM offered training for Namibian diplomats on WTO issues, trade and development, diplomacy and international relations. During the discussions, ongoing negotiations for finalizing bilateral MOUs on agriculture, cooperation in mineral

resources and energy, education, on Cultural Exchange Programme, IT kiosks' project, Pan African eNetwork, were reviewed. EAM underlined the importance of cooperation with Namibia in the context of the launch of the India-SADC Forum in Windhoek in April 2006 and the forthcoming negotiations with the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), of which Namibia is also a member.

14. UGANDA

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda, H.E. Mr. Sam Kutesa paid an official visit to India from 29 October to 2 November 2006. During his meeting with EAM on November 1, the two ministers discussed a broad agenda of bilateral cooperation in areas like human resource development, energy, Pan-African e-network, technical training and transport. Mr. Kutesa also met the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Delhi, Minister of Small Scale Industries and Minister of Commerce & Industry. He invited business CEOs in Mumbai to invest in Uganda in sectors like hydropower, textiles, motorbikes.

15. TANZANIA

Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, Foreign Minister of Tanzania is scheduled to pay an official visit to India from 22-25 November 2006.

16. BOTSWANA

H.E. Mr. Festus Mogae, President of Botswana is scheduled to pay an official visit to India from 7-13 December 2006.

17. CONGO

Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Foreign Minister of Congo visited India from 24-29 October 2006. In his meeting with EAM, issues pertaining to bilateral cooperation and reforms in the UN including the Security Council were discussed..

18. COMESA Ministerial Delegation:

A delegation from the Common Market for the Eastern & Southern Africa (COMESA) led by Hon Mitali Kabanda Protais, Minister of Trade and Industry of Rwanda and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of COMESA, visited New Delhi from October 4-11, 2006 for the India-COMESA Ministerial Meeting. Among others, the delegation also included Hon. Madan Dooloo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation of Mauritius. The Vice President of Burundi, Mrs. Marina Barampama who was in New Delhi on a bilateral visit, also joined the COMESA Meet.

The delegation paid a courtesy call on Rashtrapatiiji who outlined his vision for increased India-Africa trade and investment cooperation. Delegation level talks were held with MOS for External Affairs, Shri Anand Sharma on October 6, 2006. At the end of official talks, a joint communiqué was signed, wherein it was agreed to intensify efforts for the development of infrastructure in COMESA countries; advance Institutional Capacity Building; explore the possibility of Government of India's participation in the PTA Bank and the African Trade Insurance Agency; cooperate in production of agro-inputs etc. The delegation also met Shri Kamal Nath, Minister of Commerce & Industry.

19. AFRICAN UNION

Dr. Alpha Konare, Chairman of the African Union is scheduled to visit India from 18-22 December 2006. The visit would be utilized to foster greater cooperation between the African Union and India and exchange of views on reforms in the UN including the Security Council.

20. ROMANIA

H.E. Mr. Traian Basescu, Romanian President, paid a State Visit to India from 22-24 October 2006. He had meetings with President, Prime Minister, Vice-President and Chairperson of UPA, Smt. Sonia Gandhi. Bilateral relations including in political and economic fields were discussed.

Four Agreements/MoUs were signed during the visit:

- i) Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for 2007-09;
- ii) Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation;
- iii) Agreement between small scale industries of India and Romania; and
- iv) MOU between the Foreign Service Institute of India and Romanian Diplomatic Institute

Government is continuously taking steps to improve bilateral relations in the political, economic, scientific, technological, educational, cultural and other areas with Romania.

21. NORWAY

Norwegian Crown Prince Haakon and Princess Mette-Marit visited India on a six days official visit from 29 October-4 November 2006 at the invitation of the Hon'ble Vice President of India. The Crown Prince called on Rashtrapatiiji and met the EAM.

The Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Store will be on two days official visit to India during December 14-15, 2006

Government is continuously taking steps to improve bilateral relations in the political, economic, scientific, technological, educational, cultural and other areas with Norway.

22. HUNGARY

Dr. Kinga Goncz, Hungarian Foreign Minister, paid a five day official visit to India from November 2-6, 2006. Government is continuously taking steps to improve bilateral relations in the political, economic, scientific, technological, educational, cultural and other areas with Hungary.

23. UNITED KINGDOM

Ms. Margaret Beckett, UK Secretary of State, visited India from November 1-9, 2006. She visited Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai. Discussions took place on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues.

24. BELGIUM

H. E. Mr. Guy Verhofstadt, Prime Minister of Kingdom of Belgium, visited India from 2-7 November 2006. He was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister & Finance Minister, Mr. Didier Reynders, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Karel de Gucht, Secretary of State for Administrative Simplification, Mr. Vincent Van Quickenborne.

The main issues discussed during the meeting related to enhancing of economic partnership, investments from both sides, scientific and technological cooperation, Festival of India being organized in Brussels, consular matters, UN reforms and developments in the EU. Two agreements were signed:

- i) Social security Agreement.
- ii) An agreement on Cooperation in the fields of Science and Technology.

There is regular exchange of visits in order to facilitate and strengthen regular consultations between the two countries on issues of mutual interest. Efforts have also been made to ensure significant growth in bilateral trade and investment.

25. NETHERLANDS

Dr. Bernard R. Bot, Minister of Foreign Affairs, visited India from 5-6 November 2006. Bilateral relations, regional and global issues were discussed.

The government is working towards strengthening political and strategic dialogue, encouraging and facilitating trade and investment, promoting economic and scientific cooperation and supporting cultural ties with the Netherlands.

26. ITALY

A visit by the Prime Minister of Italy is scheduled in February 2007; dates are being finalised.

27. PORTUGAL

A visit by the President of Portugal is proposed in January 2007; dates are being finalised.

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

1. BRAZIL

Prime Minister had bilateral meetings with the Brazilian President on 12 September 2006 and also attended IBSA meetings on 13 September 2006. During his visit to Brazil, the following agreements and MOU were signed:

- i) Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation
- ii) Air Services Agreement
- iii) MOU between Bureau of Indian Standards and ABNT
- iv) MOU on Cooperation in the Field of Human Settlements
- v) MOU for conduct of 'Weeks of Indian Culture in Brazil' and 'Weeks of Brazilian Culture in India'
- vi) MOU on Plant Health Cooperation
- vii) MOU between BEML and CCCE, a Brazilian company, for manufacture of railway wagons
- viii) MOU between ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) and Petrobras of Brazil
- ix) Work Plan for Cooperation in Agricultural Research.

PM had an interaction with a group of Brazilian intellectuals and cultural personalities. The Brazilian side showed keenness for linkages with Indian universities and cultural organisations as well as for co-production of films. PM was accompanied by a 50-member business delegation and their meetings with their Brazilian counterparts have opened the door for increase in trade, investment and joint ventures.

2. FIRST INDIA, BRAZIL AND SOUTH AFRICA (IBSA) SUMMIT

The 1st India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Summit was held in Brasilia on 13 September 2006. The Indian delegation was led by Prime Minister. President Lula of Brazil and President Mbeki of South Africa also participated in the Summit.

A Joint Declaration was adopted during the 1st IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa) Summit meeting.

The Joint Declaration deals with various international and regional issues of common concern, as well as trilateral cooperation in various sectoral areas. A number of initiatives have been identified in several sectors to pool together the expertise available in the three countries and to utilize synergies available in trade and technologies.

3. CUBA

NAM SUMMIT

Prime Minister led the Indian delegation to the 14th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana (Cuba). The Conference programme included the Preparatory Senior Officials' Meeting on 11-12 September, 2006 followed by the Ministerial Meeting on 13-14 September and Summit Meetings on 15-16 September. The theme of the General Debate at the Plenary was "Purposes and Principles and the role of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Present International Juncture".

PM's participation at the 14th NAM Summit was given high importance and was received very positively by the Cuban hosts as well as the NAM membership at large. He was the third speaker at the Plenary session on 15 September after Malaysia and South Africa. Considering that Malaysia was present as the outgoing NAM Chair & South Africa as the Chair of the G 77, in effect, PM's speaking slot was the first among other HoG/S. In an overwhelming gesture, President Fidel Castro of Cuba, still convalescing and hence unable to participate in the Summit, received PM for a bilateral meeting on 16 September, 2006. The response of NAM member countries to the statement made by PM at the Plenary was very positive, with a number of them supporting his ideas and proposals in their statements. On the sidelines of the Summit, PM met President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan. He also met President of Iran, President of Venezuela, President of Sri Lanka, President of Mongolia, Prime Minister of Malaysia, Prime Minister of Mauritius and Secretary General of the United Nations.

India was able to play a major and constructive role in the discussions at the Summit. India emphasized that if NAM was to be revitalized, it should adopt a contemporary and forward-looking approach, focusing on key issues of common concern; issues that unite rather than divide the 118 member countries. India also counseled objectivity, moderation and balance in NAM deliberations.

BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS

PM had meetings with Mr. Fidel Castro and with the Acting President, Mr. Raul Castro, on 16 September 2006. In this meeting, Mr. Castro expressed admiration for India's political and economic achievements and leadership of developing countries. He thanked India for ITEC assistance and for setting up an IT Training Centre. The Centre was inaugurated on 14 September, 2006, by Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Anand Sharma. Government of India has spent Rupees three crores in setting up this Centre.

PM thanked the Cuban side for the eight oilfields they have awarded to ONGC Videsh Ltd. (OVL) for exploration and production.

PM offered India's support to Cuba during the term of the Cuban presidency of the NAM. The Cuban leaders expressed support for India's candidature to permanent membership of UNSC saying that "India would be a great asset in the UN Security Council, where it could assume its natural role of leadership." The two sides agreed to expand cooperation in the areas of mutual interest between the two countries.

4. SOUTH AFRICA

Prime Minister paid a visit to South Africa from September 30 – October 3, 2006 at the invitation of President Thabo Mbeki. During the visit, he participated in the Satyagraha Centenary Celebration. President Mbeki assured South African support to the India – US nuclear deal in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

The Tshwane Declaration issued at the end of the visit, reaffirmed the strategic partnership between India and South Africa. Both President Mbeki and Prime Minister decided to intensify bilateral cooperation and raise the existing strategic partnership to even higher levels. They also reaffirmed their determination to explore opportunities for cooperation in various sectors particularly in energy, tourism, health, automobiles, auto components, chemicals, dyes, textiles, fertilizers, information technology, small and medium enterprises and infrastructure.

The two leaders reaffirmed the need for a decision on expansion of the UN Security Council and reiterated their commitment that it must be expanded to include developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America in both its permanent and non-permanent categories. They also expressed their deep concern over international terrorism, extremism, trans-border organized crime and illicit trafficking in humans and arms and drugs. They viewed terrorism as serious threat to sovereign states, international peace, security and development. They reaffirmed the inalienable right of all States to the peaceful application of nuclear energy, consistent with their international legal obligations.

PM reiterated India's commitment to meeting South Africa's skills shortages and agreed to raise the number of ITEC slots to 100 for capacity building and technical assistance. South Africa acknowledged the contribution our President's Pan – African e-connectivity project would make towards addressing the continents' needs, including in tele – education and medicine.

5. UNITED KINGDOM

PM Manmohan Singh visited London for the third India-UK Summit from Oct. 9-11, 2006. Discussions were held on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. India and the UK share a strategic relationship which is multifaceted and has developed substantially during the last few years.

There is a regular exchange of visits both at the ministerial and official levels to facilitate and strengthen regular consultations between the two countries on issues of mutual interest. Further bilateral visits are under discussion; no dates have been finalised so far.

6. FINLAND

7TH EU SUMMIT

PM Manmohan Singh led a high level delegation to Helsinki for the 7th India-EU Summit on October 13, 2006. He was accompanied by Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shri Kamal Nath, and Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Anand Sharma. The EU was represented by Finland PM and President of the European Council, Matti Vanhanen, High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Dr. Javier Solana, President of the European Commission, Mr. Jose Manuel Barroso, European Commissioner for Trade, Peter Mandelson and European Commissioner for External relations, Ms. Benita Ferrero Waldner. Discussions were held on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues.

BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS

PM's bilateral visit coincided with the 7th India-EU Summit held in Helsinki. PM held bilateral talks with his counterpart apart from delegation-level talks. PM called on Finnish President Tarja Halonen, who indicated she was looking forward to her forthcoming visit India in January 2007 for a TERI Conference on Sustainable Development. It was the first visit to Finland by an Indian PM in 20 years. The visit took place just seven months after the Finnish PM Matti Vanhanen visited India. Discussions were held on a wide spectrum of bilateral, regional and international issues with the host government.

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