

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:159

ANSWERED ON:01.12.2004

VISIT OF FOREIGN DIGNITARIES TO INDIA

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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the foreign dignitaries who visited India since August, 2004 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 along with the gain likely to be accrued to India as a result of these agreements; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Government to strengthen the relations with the other countries?

Answer

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

The details of foreign dignitaries who visited India since August 2004 till date are given below, country-wise:-

NEPAL

(a) - (e) H.E. Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, Prime Minister of Nepal accompanied by a high-level delegation which included senior Ministers of his Cabinet, paid an official working visit to India from September 8-12, 2004. During his stay, he held wide ranging discussions with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. The priority focus of discussions was on security-related issues of mutual concern arising from the internal security situation in Nepal and the Maoist problem.

The other issues discussed related to joint flood management and control, inundation problems affecting people on both sides of the border, early conclusion of Extradition Treaty and Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal matters, economic cooperation and infrastructure developmental projects in Nepal, etc.

An Agreement was signed on Cooperation in the fields of Culture and Sports, which would provide the necessary framework for institutionalized cooperation in these areas.

A Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the field of Weather Forecasting was concluded, which envisages the setting up of an INSAT Ground Receiving Station in Nepal.

BANGLADESH

(a) Foreign Minister M.Morshed Khan visited India from October 31- November 2, 2004.

(b) Matters of bilateral interest including the intensification of bilateral economic and commercial relations and other issues of mutual concern were discussed during the visit. Indian concerns on border management, the issue of Indian Insurgent Groups and illegal migration were reiterated. Bangladesh assured India that it is committed to not allowing the use of its territory for activities prejudicial to India's interests. The Foreign Minister of Bangladesh invited Prime Minister to attend the 13th SAARC summit to be held at Dhaka in January 2005.

(c) No agreement was signed during the visit.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) Institutionalized interaction at multiple levels between the two governments on a large number of issues takes place regularly; initiatives have been undertaken to intensify economic relations and improve its institutional framework and increase people-to-people contact; a number of special measures have been taken in the recent past including extending flood relief assistance of Rs.100 crores and US\$150 million credit line. India remains committed to the SAARC process and it has shouldered a major share of responsibility for SAARC activities and has vigorously promoted trade and other forms of economic, social and technical cooperation within SAARC. India also actively supports people to people initiatives aimed at fostering greater mutual understanding and goodwill in the region.

MALDIVES

(a) Mr. Ahmed Abdullah, the then Minister of Health of Maldives visited India from August 24-26, 2004 as the Special Envoy of President of Maldives.

(b) Mr. Abdullah had met External Affairs Minister on August 25, 2004 and exchanged views on recent developments/matters of bilateral interest. He also handed over a letter from President Gayoom of Maldives addressed to the PM

(c) No agreement was signed during the visit.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) India and the Maldives enjoy close and friendly relations. The warmth of these relations has been kept up through regular high-level exchanges. India is engaged in providing economic and technical assistance to Maldives in its efforts to develop infrastructure facilities in the Maldives. We also provide training facilities to Maldivian officials in varied areas in civil and defence sectors.

SRI LANKA

(a) President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga (Nov 3-7, 2004) Leader of Opposition Ranil Wickremesinghe (Oct 10-14), 2004

(b) The whole range of bilateral relations and other issues of mutual interest were discussed during the visits. The Indian leadership was also briefed by the visiting leaders about the status of the peace process in Sri Lanka.

(c) No agreement was signed during the visit.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) There is frequent contact at multiple levels between the governments of the two countries; work on strengthening the framework of economic cooperation through a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement has begun; Defence Cooperation is increasing; infrastructural and transport linkages are being augmented.

PAKISTAN

(i) (a) to (d) Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Mr Khurshid M. Kasuri, accompanied by the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, visited India from September 4-8, 2004 and held discussions with External Affairs Minister, on September 5-6, 2004. They reviewed the overall progress in the Composite Dialogue. The Ministers agreed to a number of technical level meetings between the two countries on various subjects, including, expert level meetings on Conventional and Nuclear CBMs, inter alia, to discuss the draft agreement on advance notification of missile tests; meeting between railway authorities on the Munnabao - Khokhrapar rail link; meeting between Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Pakistan Rangers; meeting between Narcotics Control Authorities, including for finalisation of an MOU; meeting between the Indian Coast Guards and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency to, inter alia, discuss the Memorandum of Understanding for establishing communication link between them; and meeting on all issues related to commencement of a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. The two Ministers also agreed to the establishment of a Committee of Experts to consider issues related to trade; a Joint Survey of the boundary pillars in the horizontal segment of the international boundary in the Sir Creek area; the addition of a new category of Tourist Visa in the visa regime between the two countries, and to promote group tourism; and enhanced interaction and exchanges among the respective Foreign Offices, including study tours of young diplomats/probationers to each other's country.

(e) Government remains committed to establishment of peaceful, friendly and cooperative relations with Pakistan. Continuous efforts have been made to intensify the ongoing process of confidence building, dialogue, and cooperation with Pakistan. One round of the Composite Dialogue (February -September 2004) was completed successfully. Wide ranging proposals for confidence building, promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields and enhancing commercial and economic relations were made by India. Both sides have been able to identify areas of convergence and future cooperation. The process has been taken forward by high-level political contacts, including the meeting between Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Musharraf in New York on September 24, 2004; and regular interactions between External Affairs Minister and the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. The visit of the Prime Minister of Pakistan to New Delhi on November 23-24, 2004 in his capacity as the Chairperson of SAARC, also facilitated forward movement on the bilateral front.

(ii) (a) to (d) The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Shaukat Aziz, visited India on November 23-24, 2004 in his capacity as the Chairperson of SAARC. During his meeting with Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, in addition to the exchange of views on matters related to SAARC, the two sides also exchanged views on bilateral issues.

(e) Government remains committed to establishment of peaceful, friendly and cooperative relations with Pakistan. Continuous efforts have been made to intensify the ongoing process of confidence building, dialogue, and cooperation with Pakistan. One round of the Composite Dialogue (February -September 2004) was completed successfully. Wide ranging proposals for confidence building, promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields and enhancing commercial and economic relations were made by India. Both sides have been able to identify areas of convergence and future cooperation. The process has been taken forward by high-level political contacts, including the meeting between Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Musharraf in New York on September 24, 2004; and regular interactions between External Affairs Minister and the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. The visit of the Prime

Minister of Pakistan to New Delhi on November 23-24, 2004 in his capacity as the Chairperson of SAARC, also facilitated forward movement on the bilateral front.

MYANMAR

(a) H.E. Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman of State Peace and Development Council (Head of State) of the Union of Myanmar, accompanied by a high-level delegation paid a State visit to India from 25th to 29th October, 2004.

(b) During the VVIP visit from Myanmar, a range of bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of common interest were discussed.

(c) During the VVIP visit, three bilateral documents were signed, namely,

(i) MoU on Cooperation in Non-Traditional Security Matters;

(ii) The Cultural Exchange Programme; and

(iii) MoU for a Pre-feasibility Study in respect of Tamanthi Hydro-Electric Project.

(d) The documents signed with Myanmar would facilitate cooperation in security matters, cultural exchanges and energy sector.

(e) The Government remains in regular and close contact with all the countries for strengthening our ties in the bilateral, regional and multilateral context. This involves high-level bilateral visits, contacts at the multilateral institutions and the day-to-day efforts by our Mission.

THAILAND

(a) Foreign Minister of Thailand, H.E. Surakairt Sathirathai, visited India from 4th to 6th November, 2004 to attend the Hindustan Times Seminar.

(b) There was no bilateral substantive meeting with Foreign Minister, H.E. Surakairt Sathirathai, as he visited India mainly to participate in the Hindustan Times Seminar.

(c) As it was not a bilateral visit, no agreements were signed during Foreign Minister, H.E. Surakairt Sathirathai's visit.

(d) & (e) The Government remains in regular and close contact with all the countries for strengthening our ties in the bilateral, regional and multilateral context. This involves high-level bilateral visits, contacts at the multilateral institutions and the day-to-day efforts by our Mission.

AFGHANISTAN

(a) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan paid an official visit to India from August 31-September 3, 2004.

(b) The two sides discussed bilateral, regional and international issues of common interest. The focus of the discussions were on India's Assistance program to Afghanistan's reconstruction.

(c) Yes.

(d) An MOU on Mutual Cooperation between the Foreign Service Institute of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Institute of Diplomacy of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Afghanistan was signed during the visit. Under the MOU, the two Institutes will cooperate in training and building expertise of the diplomatic cadre of Afghanistan. The MOU provides, among others, for participation by diplomatic officials in each other's training programmes conducted by the respective institutions to strengthen bilateral relations with Afghanistan.

(e) To strengthen relations with Afghanistan, there have been intensive political interactions with a cross-section of Afghan leadership through high level political exchanges and Government of India has provided extensive humanitarian, financial and project assistance for Afghanistan's reconstruction.

NEW ZEALAND

(a) H E Rt. Hon. Helen Clarke, Prime Minister of New Zealand - State Visit to India - October, 2004

(b) During the visit, PM Clarke called on the President and had talks with the Prime Minister, EAM and Commerce and Industry Minister. PM Clarke also addressed a combined gathering of the CII and FICCI. A wide range of bilateral, regional and multilateral issues were discussed during the visit.

(c) No agreement was signed

(d) Does not arise

(e) Govt. is committed to strengthening relations with all the countries in the Pacific region. .

SINGAPORE

(a) Dr. Tony Tan, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Security and Defence of Singapore visited India from October 24 - 2 November

(b) During the visit, Dr. Tony Tan had talks with EAM, Defence Minister, Home Minister, HRD Minister and National Security Advisor. The visit was to gain insights into India's security structures to fight domestic and international terrorism. A wide range of other bilateral, regional and multilateral issues were discussed during the visit.

(c) No agreement was signed

(d) Does not arise

(e) Govt. is committed to strengthening relations with all the countries in the South East Asia region.

JAPAN

(a) to (e) Foreign Minister Ms. Yoriko Kawaguchi visited India from August 12-14, 2004. The two sides discussed bilateral relations, regional and international issues. It was decided that India and Japan would support each other's candidature for the permanent seat in the UN Security Council and closely work with each other. The two sides also decided to establish a Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and establish a bilateral dialogue on UN reforms.

KOREA

(a) to (e) President Mr. Roh Moo-hyun visited India from October 4-6, 2004. An extradition Treaty and a Treaty on Mutual legal Assistance was signed. A joint Statement was issued during the visit. The two sides also decided to establish a new dialogue on Foreign Policy and Security, and to establish a Joint Study Group to comprehensively review bilateral economic and commercial linkages.

KUWAIT

(a) Sheikh (Dr.) Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait visited India from 24th to 26th August 2004.

(b) Deliberations were held on a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest.

(c) Yes.

(d)-(e) (1) Extradition Treaty

(2) Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters

(3) MOU for Establishment of Indo-Kuwait Strategic Consultative Group

When the Extradition treaty comes into force, any person accused or convicted of an extraditable offence, who is wanted by one of the signing States, shall be extradited.

Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal matters will improve the effectiveness of both countries in the investigation, prosecution and suppression of all types of crime, and tracing, restraint, forfeiture or confiscation of the proceeds and instruments of crime, through co-operation and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters.

MOU for Establishment of India-Kuwait Strategic Consultative Group will facilitate period meetings between the Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs and the Under Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, to enhance economic, political and security cooperation between the two countries on a sustained and long-term basis.

GCC

(a) Mr. Abdul Rahman Bin Hamad Al-Atiyya, Secretary General of Gulf Cooperation Council visited India from 24th to 26th August 2004.

(b) Economic Cooperation between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council was discussed.

(c) Yes.

(d)-(e) Framework Agreement on Economic Cooperation between India and the Member States of GCC.

The agreement seeks to promote economic cooperation between the two sides in various fields through various means such as exchange of information and expertise, removal of trade barriers, enhanced communications and contacts between business

organizations, encouragement of capital flows, business delegations and through a Free Trade Agreement.

SENEGAL

- (a) External Affairs Minister of Senegal visited from 8-11 September 2004;
- (b) Deliberations were held on increasing cooperation between both countries.
- (c) No agreement was signed during the visit.
- (d) Does not arise.
- (e) India is taking steps to increase its relations with West Africa politically, economically and commercially. Launch of TEAM-9, an initiative between India and eight countries of West Africa would help to bring the relationship much closer. New lines of credit have been established to give a boost to our bilateral economic and commercial relationship.

NIGERIA

- (a) President of Nigeria had a transit visit from 2-3 November 2004.
- (b) Deliberations were held on increasing cooperation between both countries.
- (c) No agreement was signed during the visit.
- (d) Does not arise.
- (e) India is taking steps to increase its relations with West Africa politically, economically and commercially. Launch of TEAM-9, an initiative between India and eight countries of West Africa would help to bring the relationship much closer. New lines of credit have been established to give a boost to our bilateral economic and commercial relationship.

COMOROS

- (a) - (d) Mr. Soef Mohd El Amine, Minister of External Affairs and Cooperation visited India from 23-27 August 2004. The visiting Minister met Shri Natwar Singh, Minister for External Affairs, Shri Md. Ali Ashraf Fatmi, Minister of State for Education and Shri Mahavir Prasad, Minister of Small Scale, Agro & Rural Industries. Matters of mutual interest both in bilateral and multilateral fields were discussed. Comoros Minister sought India's assistance in diverse fields like agriculture.
- (e) As a part of India's `Focus Africa` policy, Government has been consistently trying to improve and strengthen our relations with African countries. Conscious of the economic difficulties being faced by some of the African countries, India has been helping these countries by providing them aid in the form of foodgrains and medicines. With a view to assist their human resource development India is also imparting training to African nationals in various fields.

LESOTHO

- (a) - (d) Mr. Mohlabi Tsekoa, Minister of Foreign Affairs visited India from October 11-16, 2004. He held talks with the Indian delegation led by Minister of State for External Affairs, Rao Inderjit Singh on matters of mutual interest. Lesotho side sought India's assistance in the fields of agriculture, small-scale industries, health, human resource development and military training. The delegation also held meetings with Secretary (A & C), Ministry of Agriculture, and Secretary, Deptt. of Small Industries, and discussed cooperation between the two countries in the fields of agriculture and small scale industries.
- (e) As a part of India's `Focus Africa` policy, Government has been consistently trying to improve and strengthen our relations with African countries. Conscious of the economic difficulties being faced by some of the African countries, India has been helping these countries by providing them aid in the form of foodgrains and medicines. With a view to assist their human resource development India is also imparting training to African nationals in various fields.

MAURITIUS

- (a) - (d) Mr. Krishan Cuttaree, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Regional Cooperation visited India from November 12-19, 2004. The visiting Minister met Prime Minister, Minister for External Affairs, Minister of Finance, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of Information Technology. Matters of mutual interest both in bilateral and multilateral fields like WT O were discussed.
- (e) As a part of India's `Focus Africa` policy, Government has been consistently trying to improve and strengthen our relations with African countries. Conscious of the economic difficulties being faced by some of the African countries, India has been helping these countries by providing them aid in the form of foodgrains and medicines. With a view to assist their human resource development India is also imparting training to African nationals in various fields.

RUSSIA

- (a) - (e)

I The Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Lavrov visited India on 8-10 October 2004. The bilateral issues with specific focus on increasing Indo-Russia trade was discussed. In addition, regional and international issues were also discussed, and both sides discussed ways and means to Simplify visa regime between the two countries. No agreement was signed during the visit.

II The Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Alexander Zhukov visited India from 18-20 November, 2004. The Russian DPM had come to India to co-Chair the 10th Session of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission on trade, economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation (IRIGC).) A Protocol on the decisions arrived at in the meeting of the 10th Session of IRIGC was signed between the Russian Deputy Prime Minister and EAM, the co-Chairman from the Indian side.

The Protocol signed between India and Russia provides for strengthening of relations between the two countries in the fields of trade, economy, science and technology and culture. India hopes that through increased trade and other exchanges in technology and culture with Russia, Indian interests in Russia would be served better.

UZBEKISTAN

(a) - (e) The Uzbek Foreign Minister, Mr. Sadik S. Safayev visited India on 29-30 October, 2004. Bilateral, regional, international political issues and consular, air services, trade and commercial potential areas, information technology, food processing and tourism related issues were discussed. An MOU on Information Technology between the Uzbek Foreign Minister and our EAM was signed. The MOU signed between India and Uzbekistan provides for setting of a centre for information technology in Tashkent, Uzbekistan through Indian assistance. Through the involvement in the setting up of the technology centre, the Indian side hopes to get spin offs in varied areas of information technology development in Uzbekistan.

FRANCE

(a) French Foreign Minister, Mr. Michel Barnier visited India from 27-28 October 2004.

(b) The both sides reviewed bilateral relations and exchanged views on regional and international developments of mutual concern. The French Foreign Minister reiterated support for India`s candidature in an expanded UNSC.

(c) No agreement was signed during the visit.

(d) Does`nt arise.

(e) France is a strategic partner of India with which we wish to maintain close interaction through exchange of high level visits and cooperation in multilateral for a.

GERMANY

(a) German Chancellor Mr. Gerhard Schroeder visited India for Annual Summit from 6-7 October 2004.

(b) The two sides had wide ranging discussions on bilateral cooperation, regional and international issues including UN Reform. In a strategic move, both India and Germany agreed to support each other`s candidature in an expanded UNSC.

(c) Yes

(d) An MoU on cooperation in S & T was signed during the visit between Department of S&T and the Max Planck Society. The MoU will further boost cooperation in the key area of S&T with Germany.

(e) India` attaches special importance to its relations with Germany and is eager to expand and intensify bilateral relations to a level befitting the strategic partnership betw een the two countries. The Agenda for Indo-German Partnership in the 21st Century, which both sides had adopted in May 2000, outlines strategic dimensions of the relationship. India and Germany have annual Summit level interactions.

COMMONWEALTH

(a) Commonwealth Secretary General, Mr. Donald McKinnon visited India from 27-29 October 2004. No Agreement was signed during the visit.

(b) Discussions focused on expanding India-Commonwealth relations, including in the area of technical assistance and support for small states, apart from regional and international issues of mutual concern and the preparations for the next CHOGM at Valletta (Malta) in 2005.

(c) No agreement was signed during the visit

(d) Does not arise

(e) India is a founding member of the Commonwealth and has taken keen interest in promoting cooperation in Commonwealth fora, through greater involvement in exchange programmes and technical assistance

MEXICO

(a) to (d) Dr. L.E. Derb, Foreign Minister of Mexico visited India from 13-14 August 2004. Decisions were taken on initiatives such as EXIM Bank Line of Credit, Joint Business Group, Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement for increasing bilateral trade.

(e) The thrust of our policy in the Latin American and Caribbean regions is to strengthen and widen the existing relationship to realize greater political understanding to work together at bilateral and multilateral level, exploring ways to enhance trade and commerce. Initiatives are taken to engage regional groups for political dialogue. India has signed framework Agreement with regional groupings such as MERCOSUR, CAN (Andean Community), CARICOM and SICA covering the whole region.

VENEZUELA

(a) to (d) Mr. Jesus Arnaldo Perez, Foreign Minister of Venezuela visited India 1-2 September 2004. During the visit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Co-operation concerning the Diplomatic Corps training and Academies of the two countries was signed.

(e) The thrust of our policy in the Latin American and Caribbean regions is to strengthen and widen the existing relationship to realize greater political understanding to work together at bilateral and multilateral level, exploring ways to enhance trade and commerce. Initiatives are taken to engage regional groups for political dialogue. India has signed framework Agreement with regional groupings such as MERCOSUR, CAN (Andean Community), CARICOM and SICA covering the whole region.

SURINAME

(a) to (d) Ms. Maria E. Levens, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Suriname visited India 16-18 November 2004 to attend the Indo-Suriname Joint Commission meeting. In this meeting, agreement was reached for expansion of co-operation and trade.

(e) The thrust of our policy in the Latin American and Caribbean regions is to strengthen and widen the existing relationship to realize greater political understanding to work together at bilateral and multilateral level, exploring ways to enhance trade and commerce. Initiatives are taken to engage regional groups for political dialogue. India has signed framework Agreement with regional groupings such as MERCOSUR, CAN (Andean Community), CARICOM and SICA covering the whole region.