

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:131

ANSWERED ON:30.11.2011

INDO-PAK TALKS AT SAARC

Ahir Shri Hansraj Gangaram;Joshi Shri Pralhad Venkatesh

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the issues considered/negotiated at various levels with Pakistani authorities during the SAARC Conference at Maldives recently; and

(b) the details of the agreements arrived at during the discussions/negotiations including the issue of cross border terrorism?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS(SHRI S.M. KRISHNA)

(a) & (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) AND (B) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.131 REGRADING "INDO-PAK TALKS AT SAARC" FOR ANSWER ON 30.11.2011

Prime Minister (PM) met Pakistan Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on the margins of the 17th SAARC Summit in Maldives on November 10, 2011. The two Prime Ministers had an extensive exchange of views on the SAARC Summit and on the entire gamut of India-Pakistan bilateral relationship. In the discussions, the two Prime Ministers agreed to take the process of engagement forward in a positive spirit. They emphasised the importance of regional cooperation to realise the common vision of peace, shared progress and prosperity. The leaders agreed on the need for the two countries to work closely to realise the goals and objectives of SAARC.

On India-Pakistan bilateral relations, PM mentioned that terrorism is a perennial concern and it now affects Pakistan also. We have an obligation to work together to ensure that it does not spoil the atmosphere of our bilateral relations. PM stressed that it is imperative to bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai terror attacks to justice. Prime Minister Gilani assured PM that all possible steps were being taken in the context of the joint fight against terror. The two leaders agreed that terrorism poses the most serious threat to peace and stability in the region and needs to be countered effectively. In this context, they emphasised the importance of the forthcoming meeting between the Home Secretary of India and the Interior Secretary of Pakistan.

The Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction that in keeping with the mutual understanding reached at Thimphu in April, 2010 to bridge the trust deficit and restore the dialogue process, the dialogue had been resumed and that the dialogue had made substantive progress on many issues. They agreed to continue the dialogue process with the aim of building a mutually cooperative and productive relationship between the two countries keeping in mind that there is a need for the countries to have an environment which is free of hostility and violence. In keeping with the decisions taken during the Pakistan Foreign Minister's visit to India in July, 2011, the meetings of the Secretaries are being taken forward. The India-Pakistan Joint Commission would be resumed. The leaders agreed that the measures to facilitate trade and travel across the Line of Control agreed between the Foreign Ministers during their July, 2011 meeting should be implemented expeditiously.

In the area of trade and economic relations, it was agreed that process of trade normalisation between the two countries will be pursued to its logical conclusion by conducting trade on an MFN basis at the earliest, and also that all countries in the South Asian region would move forward on meeting their obligations under SAFTA. It was also agreed that people are at the heart of the relationship between the two countries, and that the people-to-people contacts and cultural exchanges should be promoted. In this context it was decided that the liberalised visa regime which has been negotiated should be put in place at the earliest.

External Affairs Minister and Foreign Secretary also met the Pakistan Foreign Minister and Foreign Secretary respectively, on the sidelines of the 17th SAARC Summit to prepare ground for the meeting of the two Prime Ministers.