

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1000

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TIES WITH RUSSIA

Dhruvanarayana Shri R. ;Krishnaswamy Shri M.;Shetkar Shri Suresh Kumar;Singh Shri Pradeep Kumar

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether strategic relationship between Russia and India have got strained;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (c) the efforts being made to bridge the differences in bilateral issues including settling the nuclear liability issue; and
- (d) the other steps being taken to cement ties with Russia in future?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR)

(a) & (b) No.

Since the signing of the `Declaration of Strategic Partnership between India and the Russian Federation` in October 2000 in New Delhi, the India-Russia bilateral relations have been characterized by steadily growing bilateral cooperation in the political, strategic and economic spheres. The two countries share a comprehensive dialogue architecture based on the key pillars of close political coordination & cooperation in the fields of defence, civil nuclear energy, space, hydrocarbons and S&T. On the global stage, there has been greater convergence and commonality of views between India and Russia on major regional and international issues. The 11th Annual Summit (Dec 2010; New Delhi) marked the first decade of the strategic partnership, when bilateral relations were elevated to a "special and privileged" status. In 2012, the two countries celebrated the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, which precedes India's independence.

India and Russia (only one of two countries) have an institutionalized mechanism of Annual Summits between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation. The Summits are held annually on a rotational basis and reflect the close political bonds at the highest levels. The Summits serve as an important occasion to assess the progress made and guide the future direction of the strategic partnership. Hon'ble Prime Minister paid an official visit to the Russian Federation on 20-22 October 2013, for the last (14th) India-Russia Annual Summit, where he held talks with the President of the Russian Federation. The Joint Statement issued at the Summit titled "Deepening the Strategic Partnership for Global Peace and Stability" stresses the continued commitment of both sides to promote and strengthen in every possible way this special and privileged strategic partnership.

As in the previous years, a series of other productive visits took place in 2013 to promote bilateral cooperation. These included the visits to Russia of the Hon'ble External Affairs Minister (in April and October, 2013), Hon'ble Home Minister (in April, 2013), Hon'ble Minister of Commerce & Industry (in April, June and September, 2013), Hon'ble Finance Minister (in July 2013) and the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri (in November 2013). The year also witnessed enhanced bilateral parliamentary exchanges and particularly, the visit by Chairperson of the Federation Council (Upper House) of the Russian Federation to India in February 2013. Bilateral interactions and intense dialogues between the National Security Councils, the Foreign Offices and the various Ministries and Departments of the two countries on current bilateral, international and regional issues, are a regular feature.

The Kudankulam nuclear power project is a tangible symbol of the India-Russia nuclear cooperation. Unit-1 at Kudankulam was synchronized to the power grid in October this year to eventually deliver 1000 MW of power. Work on Unit 2 is ongoing.

Defence cooperation is a crucial element of the strategic partnership. In the current year, the Russian-built frigate INS TRIKAND and the aircraft carrier INS VIKRAMADITYA were inducted into service. In addition to such acquisitions, the two countries also have ongoing multi-year joint collaborative projects (such as the BrahMos supersonic missiles), based on technology transfer, joint ventures, co-development and co-production. Joint military exercises INDRA were also conducted in India in October.

In the area of hydrocarbon cooperation, India's investments in the Sakhalin I project as well as Imperial Energy in Tomsk region contribute substantially to India's energy security.

Under the flagship Integrated Long Term Programme for Science and Technology, India and Russia have undertaken more than 400 projects and multi-fold exchanges between the scientific institutions spread over two decades. Two India-Russia S&T Centres have been set up in Moscow and Gurgaon during 2012-13.

In the backdrop of a fragile global economic environment, bilateral trade turnover grew by around 25 percent to cross USD 11 billion in 2012 for the first time. A well laid out institutional mechanism under the bilateral Inter-Governmental Commission for trade and economic cooperation, as well as several business-to-business platforms, aim to create an enabling environment for enhancing the overall trade and investment turnover.

People-to-people contacts have been increasing between the two countries, including the flow of tourists, which increased by over 20 percent in each of the past two years. A Festival of Russian Culture in India in 2012 and a Festival of Indian Culture in Russia in 2013 were both held successfully.

There has been increasing convergence and commonality of views between India and Russia on major current regional and international issues, like situation in Afghanistan, the Middle East, cooperation within BRICS, countering terrorism and drug trafficking, reform of IFIs, etc. Russia has overtly supported India's membership at major global/regional forums like the SCO, NSG and the UNSC.

During the 14th Annual Summit, Hon'ble Prime Minister emphasized that "no country has had closer relations with India and no country inspires more admiration, trust and confidence among the people of India". He also stated that "the strength and the intensity of the relationship would remain undiminished" and that Russia would remain "an indispensable partner" for India's defence needs and energy security. He also mentioned that while the two countries had developed broad-based and diversified patterns of relationships, one of the "fundamental foundation of India's foreign policy" is India's partnership with Russia.

(c) The elaborate multi-layered interactive architecture between the two countries provides in-built methods to discuss and address outstanding differences.

During the last Summit, the relevant agencies were tasked by the leaders to resolve the outstanding legal issues pertaining to proposed nuclear power Units 3 and 4 at Kudankulam.

(d) During the 14th Annual Summit, Hon'ble Prime Minister reiterated India's commitment to fully implement the March 2010 road map on civil nuclear cooperation. Under this, further nuclear power plants are envisaged to be built in due course.

Indian companies continue to prospect collaborative ventures with Russian companies. These include supplies in LNG, as also investments in new fields in Russia or third countries. In a new long-term initiative, both countries have also agreed on a joint study group to explore the possibilities of direct pipeline transportation of hydrocarbons from Russia to India.

Under S&T cooperation, newer avenues are being entered into, such as joint R&D projects with potential for technology development and generation of new intellectual property.

New initiatives on trade and investment have been introduced over the past one year. A new Joint Working Group on Modernization as well as on Investment met in October to discuss investment projects in infrastructure, mining, civil aviation, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, telecommunications and natural resources. A Joint Study Group for a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement with the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union, with Russia's support, is also being discussed.

City-to-city/sister-cities cooperation are also being encouraged with a view to promote multifaceted engagement in economy, culture, health, education and public policy at a sub- regional level between the two countries.