

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3210

ANSWERED ON:09.12.2009

BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH EURASIAN COUNTRIES

Shanavas Shri M. I.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the steps taken by the Government to extend bilateral cooperation with Eurasian nations especially with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan;
- (b) the agreements signed/likely to be signed with Shanghai Cooperation Organisation; and
- (c) the chances of India for becoming a member of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation from its current observer status?

Answer

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

(a) India enjoys excellent bilateral relations with countries in the Eurasian region based on historical legacy, friendship and mutual advantage. With particular reference to the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, India has sought to develop multi-faceted bilateral relations since their independence in 1991. At the political level, there has been regular exchange of visits at high level. In the year 2009, President Nursultan Nazarbayev came on a State Visit to India in January when he was also the Chief Guest at the Republic Day parade. President Pratibha Devisingh Patil went on a State Visit to Tajikistan in September. Prime Minister attended the Summit Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in June at Yekaterinburg in Russia. The External Affairs Minister visited Belarus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in September-October. With each of these countries, bilateral institutional mechanisms, by way of Inter-Governmental Commissions and Foreign Office Consultations, function effectively and there are Joint Working Groups on Counter-Terrorism with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. India has also undertaken several development assistance projects in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Academic exchanges and people to people contacts have been encouraged and take place regularly. India also offers large number of scholarships to scholars from the region.

(b) India has an Observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Observer states do not participate in discussions leading to adoption and signing of documents in the meetings of the SCO.

(c) The member states of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation have not taken a decision on the expansion of the organisation and on taking new members. A decision on joining the SCO as member can only be taken by India when the Organisation decides to take new members. If the Organisation wishes India to join as a Member, we would welcome the opportunity to participate more fully in its deliberations.