

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:560
ANSWERED ON:02.12.2015
Relations with Neighbouring Countries
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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the strategic relations between India and her neighbours are getting strained;
- (b) if so, the details and the reasons therefor;
- (c) the efforts made to remove differences relating to various disputed issues; and
- (d) the further steps envisaged to strengthen bilateral relations with neighbouring countries?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) to (d) No. The details are given in the Annexure.

Annexure
Relations with neighbouring countries

Name of the country Details of relations

Afghanistan The Strategic Partnership Agreement, signed with Afghanistan in 2011, is under active implementation. Government is developing close and extensive cooperation with Afghanistan in a number of spheres where that country requires assistance for successful political, economic and security transitions.

Bangladesh India enjoys close, neighbourly ties with Bangladesh, the two countries being united by a shared history and common heritage, linguistic and cultural ties, and close people to people contacts. The warm bilateral relations have continued through regular exchange of bilateral visits. Prime Minister paid a successful visit to Bangladesh on June 6-7, 2015. Twenty two (22) agreements/MoUs/instruments were signed/exchanged during the visit including Exchange of Instrument of Ratification of the 1974 LBA and its 2011 Protocol; Exchange of Letters between the Foreign Secretaries on Modalities for implementation of the 1974 LBA and its 2011 Protocol; Agreement on two Bus Services: Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati and Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala; Agreement on Coastal Shipping; MoU on usage of the Chittagong and Mongla ports; Renewal of the Bilateral Trade Agreement and the Protocol on Inland Waterways and Trade (PIWTT); MoU for extending a new Indian Line of Credit (LoC) of US\$ 2 billion to Bangladesh, etc. President of Bangladesh paid an official visit to India in December, 2014 during which he held discussions with President, Prime Minister and interacted with other senior Leaders. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid a one day visit to India in August 2015 to attend the funeral of Smt. Suva Mukherjee, wife of President Pranab Mukherjee. Ministerial visits take place regularly between the two countries.

Several institutional mechanisms are also in place between the two countries such as the Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) at the level of Ministers of Foreign/External Affairs; Home Minister Level Talks; Home Secretary Level Talks/JWG on Security; DG level talks between BSF and BGB; Commerce Secretary & Shipping Secretary Level Talks; Joint River Commission; Joint Working Group (JWG) on Sub Regional Cooperation on water and power, and trade and connectivity; JWGs on power, trade, textiles, fisheries and health; Joint Science and Technology Committee etc. The meetings of these institutional mechanisms take place regularly.

The passage of the Constitution (One Hundredth Amendment) Bill, 2015 to implement the India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement, 1974 and its Protocol of 2011, unanimously by our Parliament is a landmark in bilateral relations. Subsequently, Instruments of Ratification of the Agreement were exchanged on June 6, 2015 during Prime Minister's visit to Bangladesh. The Agreement paves the way for settlement of the land border between the two countries after decades.

Bhutan India and Bhutan share unique, close and special friendly relations, which have remained steadfast over time. We are privileged to be Bhutan's primary socio-economic developmental and trading partner. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Bhutan in June 2014 as his first overseas visit after assuming office, in keeping with the tradition of our leadership beginning their overseas engagements with Bhutan. Hon'ble Rashtrapatiiji visited Bhutan in November 2014. Prime Minister of Bhutan Tshering Tobgay visited India for Prime Minister Modi's swearing-in ceremony in May 2014 and on official visit twice during 2015 in January and November. These high-level visits reinforced the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between India and Bhutan and strengthened our special and unique age-old friendship. Our successful cooperation in the hydropower sector is a classic example of mutually beneficial collaboration, providing clean electricity to India and export revenues for Bhutan.

China During the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to India in September 2014, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping agreed to build a closer developmental partnership and make it a core component of our bilateral relations. The Closer Developmental Partnership was further consolidated during the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to China in May 2015.

India and China have common interests on several multilateral issues of global importance like climate change, WTO, reform of the international financial institutions etc. This is reflected in close cooperation and coordination between the two sides within the BRICS, G-20 and other fora.

China disputes the international boundary between India and China. The two sides have agreed to each appoint a Special Representative (SR) to explore the framework for a boundary settlement from the political perspective of the overall bilateral relationship. India and China are committed to resolving bilateral issues through dialogue and peaceful negotiations and in a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable manner.

Both sides have agreed to maintain the momentum of high-level exchanges and deepen cooperation with a determination to add new content and substance to the relationship.

Maldives India and Maldives maintain a regular dialogue to strengthen bilateral relations.

Myanmar India's relations with Myanmar are rooted in cultural and social ties. We share friendly relations with both these countries which have been strengthened by the regular exchange of visits, including at the highest levels. Besides the high-level visits, bilateral relations are regularly reviewed at the various established mechanisms like Joint Consultative Commission (at the level of Foreign Minister), Foreign Office Consultations (at the level of Foreign Secretary), talks at the level of Home Secretary etc

Nepal India has always stood for peace, prosperity and progress of Nepal. Throughout the process of Constitution making in Nepal, India supported a broad-based and inclusive Constitution. A political resolution of the internal issues in Nepal that have arisen after the promulgation of the new Constitution in September 2015, would address the concerns of the disaffected sections of the Nepalese society, leading to a return to peace and normalcy in the affected areas in the Terai region of Nepal.

Our unique, centuries-old civilizational ties with Nepal, based on shared geography, history, culture, language and religion and characterized by close political relations, wide-ranging economic cooperation and deep-rooted people-to-people friendship, have been rejuvenated since May 2014 with sustained interaction at the highest political level, including Hon'ble Prime Minister's two visits to Nepal in 2014. The India-Nepal Joint Commission was revived at the level of External Affairs Minister in July 2014. On 11 October 2015, Hon'ble Prime Minister called Prime Minister Shri K.P.Oli following his election and conveyed his hearty congratulations. Hon'ble External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj met the then Foreign Minister Shri Mahendra Bahadur Pandey in New York on 30 September 2015. She hosted the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shri Kamal Thapa on 18 October 2015. India continues to maintain close engagement and bilateral exchanges with Nepal, as well as extend all assistance in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Nepal, for peace, stability and socio-economic development of the country.

Pakistan India is willing to address all outstanding bilateral issues with Pakistan through bilateral peaceful means. However, continued support by Pakistan to terrorism directed at us from the territory under Pakistan's control has prevented creation of necessary environment. Government has urged Pakistan on several occasions to fulfil its assurances, given and reiterated at the highest level, to put an end to anti-India activities on its soil and territories under its control.

Sri Lanka India enjoys historically friendly bilateral relations with Sri Lanka covering all areas of contemporary relevance. The relationship has been further strengthened by the five high level visits that have taken place between India and Sri Lanka so far in 2015.