

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1926
TO BE ANSWERED ON **03.07.2019**

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

1926. SHRI KHAGEN MURMU:
SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAISI:
SHRI SYED IMTIAZ JALEEL:
DR. SUKANTA MAJUMDAR:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Prime Minister has recently visited neighboring countries including Sri Lanka and Maldives;
- (b) if so, the details thereof including the details of agreements signed and proposals made for new projects with each country;
- (c) whether the Prime Minister held discussions with Sri Lanka on issues related with Bay of Bengal initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) the present status of India's relations with Maldives and Sri Lanka in the wake of increasing influence of China in neighboring countries;
- (e) the new services likely to be started with Sri Lanka and Maldives by India in the near future;
- (f) whether the Prime Minister has also invited President/Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka and Maldives to India and if so, the details thereof; and
- (g) the other steps taken by the Government to improve relations with other neighboring countries?

ANSWER
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN]

(a) & (b) Yes. Prime Minister visited Maldives on 8-9 June 2019. Six Agreements in the areas of White Shipping, Hydrography, Health Cooperation, Ferry and Cargo Services and Cooperation in Capacity Building in Customs and Civil Services were signed with Maldives. Prime Minister also visited Sri Lanka on 9 June 2019. The main purpose of the visit was to convey our solidarity with Sri Lanka in the aftermath of terror attacks.

(c) The visit to Sri Lanka was of bilateral nature and discussions were held to further strengthen our relationship.

(d) India's relations with Sri Lanka and Maldives stand on their own footing and are independent of the relations of these countries with any third country.

(e) India and Maldives have agreed to start a ferry service between Kochi in India and Kulhudhuffushi and Male in Maldives. This was announced during Prime Minister's recent visit to Maldives.

(f) High level exchanges between India and Sri Lanka and India and Maldives are a regular phenomenon because of the importance GOI attaches to these countries.

(g) Under its 'Neighborhood First' policy, Government of India is committed to developing friendly and mutually beneficial relations with all its neighbors. India is an active economic partner of its neighbours and is involved in various development projects in neighbouring countries.
