

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1863  
ANSWERED ON:08.03.2006  
VISA FREE FACILITY FOR JOURNALISTS  
Sikdar Smt. Joytirmoyee

**Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether the decision taken in November, 2005 regarding introducing visa-free facility for journalists of South Asian Region is yet to be implemented;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) the steps taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (d) the response of other SAARC countries thereto?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA)

(a) The twenty-sixth session of SAARC Council of Ministers held in Dhaka on November 11, 2005, decided to expand the list of persons entitled under the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme to include amongst others the accredited journalists of five year standing from the SAARC Member States. The Report of Council of Ministers was approved at the 13th SAARC Summit held in Dhaka on November 12-13, 2005.

(b), (c) & (d) Steps are being taken by the Government to implement this decision.