

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:256

ANSWERED ON:26.07.2006

FOREIGN VISITS OF PM AND EAM

Kharventhan Shri Salarapatty Kuppusamy; Pallani Shamy Shri K.C .; Pradhan Shri Dharmendra; Shaheen Shri Abdul Rashid

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of visits by foreign dignitaries to India during the last two months till date;
- (b) the issues on which deliberations were held between them;
- (c) whether any bilateral agreements were signed with them;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) the details of visits undertaken by the Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister during the above period.
- (f) the details of discussions held and the outcome thereof; and
- (g) the steps taken by the Government to further improve the relations with these countries?

Answer

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

Part-I (a) to (d) and (g): The details of foreign dignitaries who visited India during the last two months till date, issues on which deliberations were held with them, bilateral agreements signed and the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government to further improve the relations with these countries are given below, country wise.

1. NEPAL

H.E. Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala (GPK), Prime Minister of Nepal accompanied by a five-member Ministerial, media and business delegations paid an official visit to India from 6-9 June 2006 at the invitation of our Prime Minister. The two Prime Ministers shared their views and assessments of the situation in both the countries. They agreed that the restoration of democracy in Nepal provided a historic opportunity for a qualitative enhancement of bilateral relations between the two countries.

During the visit, it was agreed to enhance the India – Nepal development partnership and to revive bilateral initiatives and mechanisms in the areas of socio-economics cooperation. Government of India, inter alia, expressed its readiness to extend immediately a one-time grant of I.Rs. 100 crore to the budget of Government of Nepal, offered a soft credit line of US\$ 100 million for the execution of infrastructure development projects, and enhance its 'Aid to Nepal' budget.

2. SRI LANKA

The Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Mangala Samaraveera visited India from May 6-9, 2006 and again from June 20-22, 2006 to brief the Indian leadership on latest developments pertaining to the situation in Sri Lanka. While reiterating India's abiding commitment to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, the Indian side emphasized the need to make all possible efforts to strengthen the ceasefire and to work towards the devolution package that would command consensus among the major political parties in Sri Lanka with a view to restore ethnic harmony.

India's engagement with Sri Lanka continues to remain wide-ranging and multi-faceted. The Government continues to pursue its efforts to strengthen mutual understanding with the country and to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in various spheres.

3. AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Dr Rangin Dadfar Spanta visited India on June 29 - July 1, 2006. He called on Prime Minister and held discussions with Minister of State for External Affairs Shri Anand Sharma as well as Foreign Secretary. Issues related to India-Afghanistan bilateral relations and regional and international issues of mutual concern were discussed. Dr. Spanta also conveyed his personal condolences on the recent attacks on Indians in Afghanistan. He also thanked Prime Minister for the supportive role played by India for Afghanistan's entry into SAARC. Dr. Spanta also briefed the Indian leadership on his recent visits with President Karzai to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and CICA Summits as well as on bilateral visit to Beijing and Dr. Condoleezza Rice's visit to Kabul. It was agreed that there would be regular Foreign Office consultations between India and Afghanistan.

4. KUWAIT

His Highness Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, paid a State visit to India from June 14-19,

2006. During the visit, His Highness the Amir held wide-ranging and very fruitful talks with the President and the Prime Minister. The two sides reviewed the existing bilateral relations, exchanged views on strengthening bilateral cooperation and stressed the need for consolidating this relationship to build a strong partnership for the 21st century. The two sides also discussed regional and global issues of mutual interest. It was also agreed that the India – Kuwait Joint Commission for Economic and Commercial Cooperation would hold its next session in the last quarter of 2006.

Agreements on Avoidance of Double Taxation (DTAA), Cooperation on Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS), and Cultural Exchange Programme (2006-08) were signed.

5. MAURITIUS

The Vice President of Mauritius, Mr. Abdoul Raouf Bundhun paid an official visit to India from May 7-16, 2006. During his visit Mr. Bundhun met President, Vice President and Prime Minister. MOS (AS) also called on him.

6. ETHIOPIA

Mr. Addisu Legesse, Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia (who is also the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development), visited India (Mumbai and Pune) from May 15-20, 2006. During his visit Mr. Legesse met Agriculture Minister in Mumbai on May 20 and discussed possibilities of cooperation with India in the field of agriculture.

7. MALAWI

A multi-Ministerial delegation from Malawi led by Foreign Minister, Mr. Davies Katsonga visited India from May 9 – 12, 2006. During the visit, delegation level talks were held with MOS(AS). MOS(AS) proposed MoUs with Malawi for joint exploration and exploitation of mineral resources; cooperation in agriculture including irrigation technologies, seeds technology; MoU between Bureau of Indian Standards and Malawi Bureau of Standards; MoU for filling skill gaps and capacity building in public service; MoU on health and medicine and MoU with TCIL on Pan-African Project, IT Training Centres, etc. Joint Working Groups on trade and investment; collaborative programmes for development of thermal and hydropower projects, assistance in rural electrification, resource assessment for Solar and Wind energy projects, training programmes in forest management institutes including exchange of experts for genetic and germ plasma conservation and for environmental studies, setting up of commercial fishing farms, collaborative programmes in the transport and infrastructure projects were also proposed..

The delegation also met Commerce and Industry Minister and the Finance Minister. They requested for extension of a Line of Credit of US \$ 30 m for irrigation projects, construction of silos for storing food grain and developing tobacco processing industry in Malawi. Follow up action on the discussions is being taken.

8. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

A delegation led by Mr. Ramzani Baya, Foreign Minister of Democratic Republic of Congo, visited India from May 2-7, 2006. Various issues of bilateral, regional and international interests were discussed.

In an effort to strengthen Indo – Congo overall bilateral relations, preparations are underway to reopen our Embassy in Democratic Republic of Congo in August 2006.

9. GABON

Mr. El Hadj Omar Bongo Oudimba, President of Republic of Gabon alongwith a delegation of 80 members visited India from May 3-7, 2006. MOS(AS) called on the visiting President. The accompanying Ministers of Economy, Finance, budget and Privatisation, the Minister of Mining, Energy, Oil and Water Resources and the Minister of Commerce and Industrial Development met with their Indian counterparts. Various issues of bilateral, regional and international interests were discussed.

10. ANGOLA

A delegation led by Mr. Joao Miranda, Foreign Minister of Republic of Angola visited India from May 10-13, 2006 and had a meeting with MOS (AS). The visiting Minister also had meetings with Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas. Various issues of bilateral, regional and international interests were discussed.

11. NIGERIA

A delegation led by Mr. Oluyemi Adeniji, Foreign Minister of Nigeria visited India from May 19-20, 2006. The visiting Minister had a meeting with MOS(AS) and various issues of bilateral, regional and international interests were discussed.

12. GHANA Mr. Nana Akufo-Addo, Foreign Minister of Ghana visited India on June 9, 2006 and had a meeting with MOS (AS) and various issues of bilateral, regional and international interests were discussed.

13. BENIN

Madame Mariam Aladji Boni Diallo, Foreign Minister of Benin and her delegation visited India from June 26-27, 2006. The visiting Minister had a meeting with MOS (AS) and various issues of bilateral, regional and international interests were discussed.

14. MOROCCO

Mr. Mohammed Benaissa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Morocco, visited India from June 25-27, 2006. During the visit, discussions were held on bilateral relations, regional and multilateral issues. The visiting Minister called on the Prime Minister, Minister for Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food & PDS, Shri Sharad Pawar; Minister for Tourism and Culture, Smt. Ambika Soni; and Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri E. Ahamed.

Discussions held with Minister of State for External Affairs focused on means to strengthen bilateral relations including soliciting Morocco's support for our candidature for UN Security Council and Secretary General of the UN General Assembly. Discussions with Minister for Agriculture focused on strengthening cooperation in the agricultural sector by exchange of scientists in order to impart India's expertise in different aspects of agriculture. Possibilities for exports of agricultural machinery or setting up of joint ventures were also explored. Discussions with Minister for Tourism and Culture included opportunities provided by the Moroccan government for setting up of hotel chain by Indian hoteliers, the desirability to expand cultural interactions by initiating translation of Indian classical

books into Arabic, etc.

15. SPAIN

Prime Minister of Spain, Mr. Luis Zapatero visited India from July 2-4, 2006. He was accompanied by the Spanish Minister of External Affairs and Cooperation Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos and the Minister of State for Commerce, Mr. Pedro Meija. The discussions covered a wide range of areas of bilateral cooperation including enhancing economic partnership and cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Multilateral issues relating to Alliance of Civilizations were also discussed.

Two MoUs and a Treaty were signed during the visit. These include an MoU on Institutionalisation of Political Dialogue; Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty on Criminal Matters and an MoU between Technology Development Board (TDB) and Centre for Development of Industrial Technology (CDTI).

The Government of India continues to take several steps to further improve the relations, including through closer political dialogue, enhancing trade and investment links, promoting cooperation in scientific, cultural and academic links and other areas of mutual interest.

16. ARGENTINA

The Foreign Minister of Argentina Mr. Jorge E. Taiana visited India from July 4-6, 2006. Strengthening of bilateral relations and cooperation in multilateral issues of common interest were discussed with the visiting dignitary. The following Agreements were signed during the visit of the Foreign Minister of Argentina:

- (i) MoU between Ministry of Agriculture of India and the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food of the Argentina Republic for cooperation in the field of agricultural research;
- (ii) MoU on Antarctic Cooperation between the Government of India and the Government of the Argentine Republic; and
- (iii) MoU between Indian Institute of Public Administration and Under Secretariat of Public Affairs of the Chief of Cabinet Office of the Argentine Republic.

The Government's initiatives to improve relations with Argentina include an invitation to the President of Argentina to visit India in December this year and promotion and facilitation of trade between the two countries in collaboration with the private sector and with the other Ministries of the Government of India.

17. ECUADOR

The Foreign Minister of Ecuador, Mr. Francisco Carrion Men, visited India from July 17-19, 2006. Strengthening of bilateral relations and cooperation in multilateral issues of common interest were discussed with the visiting dignitary. The following Agreements were signed during the visit of the Foreign Minister of Ecuador:

- (i) MoU on Cooperation between the Diplomatic Academies of the two countries
- (ii) Exchange Programme for Cooperation in Education;
- (iii) Agreement on Cultural Cooperation;
- (iv) Arrangement between the two countries for gainful employment of spouses of diplomatic/consular missions; and
- (v) MoU between ONGV Videsh Ltd(OVL) and PetroEcuador on Hydrocarbon Cooperation.

With regard to Ecuador, the Government is making efforts to strengthen relations through more dialogue and interaction. The Government is encouraging ONGC Videsh Ltd. to explore opportunities for acquisition of oilfields in Ecuador and the Government of Ecuador has been requested to facilitate this.

Part-II (e) to (g): The details of visits undertaken by the Prime Minister and External Affairs minister during the above period; the details of discussions held and the outcome thereof; and the steps taken by the Government to further improve the relations with these countries are given below:

RUSSIA

Prime Minister visited St. Petersburg from July 16-18, 2006. He shared with the G-8 and the Outreach countries participating in the St. Petersburg Summit, our perspective on global energy security, education and the fight against infectious diseases, which were the main themes of the St. Petersburg Summit. In addition, views were also exchanged on international terrorism, other challenges to global security, world trade and regional and international issues.

The G-8, the Outreach countries participating in the St. Petersburg Summit and the Heads of International Organizations adopted a Statement on the terrorist acts in India on 11 July 2006. This Statement, inter alia, expresses readiness to undertake all necessary measures to bring to justice perpetrators, organizers, sponsors of these and other terrorist acts, and those who incited the perpetrators to commit them.