

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1195

ANSWERED ON:29.11.2006

OPENING BORDERS FOR TRADE

Hussain Shri Anwar;Rijiju Shri Kiren;Sarvey Shri Sathyanarayana

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is contemplating to open up the borders of North-Eastern-States with the neighbouring countries to improve border trade;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to issue around 5000 passports to truck drivers to improve border trade with neighbouring countries;
- (d) if so, whether discussions are also underway to resolve pending border issues with such countries ;
- (e) if so, the details of meetings held in this regard during the last two years, country-wise; and
- (f) the likely increase in trade activities as a result thereof?

Answer

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

(a)&(b) Yes. The government has decided to set up several state-of-the-art Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) along the India-Myanmar and India-Bangladesh borders. Details of these ICPs are enclosed as an annexure. India has an open border with Bhutan and there exists a free trade regime under a bilateral agreement between the two countries. Trade infrastructure along India's borders with Bhutan is being improved; entry/exit points have been increased to 16 in 2006 from 12. Border trade between India and China through Nathu La resumed on July 6, 2006.

(c) A proposal has been received for issue of passports to truck drivers operating between India and Bangladesh for trade.

(d)&(e) The India-Bhutan Border Management and Security Group meets every year to discuss issues relating to security and management of the border between the two countries. Border District Coordination meetings are held annually to promote closer interaction and coordination on border-related issues of mutual concern at the field level. India and China appointed in June 2003, Special Representatives on the boundary question. They have held eight meetings so far; the last meeting was held in China in June 2006. With Bangladesh, border related issues are discussed in the Joint Boundary Working Group, which met in July 2006 in Dhaka. With Myanmar, these issues are discussed annually at the national level. The delegations are led by the Home Secretaries. The last meeting was held in September 2006. Sectoral and field level issues are discussed in meetings of senior officials held annually (last meeting in May 2006) and Army Border Liaison Meetings held biannually (last meeting in October 2006).

(f) Improved border connectivity and contacts are expected to bring economic benefit to the people of the North Eastern States and provide a fillip to India's trade with countries in this region.