

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:128

ANSWERED ON:07.03.2007

VISIT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER TO PAKISTAN

Aaron Rashid Shri J.M.;Bhadana Shri Avtar Singh

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether he visited Pakistan recently;
- (b) if so, the details of the talks held on issues like Siachen, Terrorism, Prisoners of War, Economic and Trade Co-operation, Nuclear Risk Reduction and Group tourism and the outcome thereof;
- (c) whether Pakistan has agreed to release prisoners of war languishing in their jails;
- (d) if so, whether Pakistan has agreed to permit the relatives of the Indian prisoners of war in Pakistan jails to enable their identification; and
- (e) the extent to which the said visit is likely to further improve the cordial relations between the two countries?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE)

(a) - (e) A statement is placed on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT AS MENTIONED IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.128 (PRIORITY-VIII) FOR ANSWER ON 07.03.2007 REGARDING 'VISIT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER TO PAKISTAN'

(a) and (b) Yes. The External Affairs Minister visited Pakistan on January 13-14, 2007 to convey the invitation of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz to attend the 14th SAARC Summit to be held in New Delhi in April 2007. During his visit, EAM held bilateral talks with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri. Both sides agreed to establish a committee on prisoners comprising retired judges of the superior judiciary to visit jails in the two countries and propose steps to ensure humane treatment and expedite release of prisoners who have completed their prison terms; to expedite the liberalisation of the visa regime and agreed to complete the work in February 2007; that several agreements which are close to finalisation including the Agreement on

a) Reducing the Risk from Accidents relating to Nuclear Weapons

b) Speedy return of inadvertent Line Crossers and

c) Prevention of incidents at Sea will be concluded during the February 2007 visit of Foreign Minister Kasuri to India. On Siachen, both sides discussed the issue and decided that the officials would meet at an early date to address the issue. Both sides also agreed to facilitate movement of diplomats to Noida and Gurgaon in India and Taxila and Hasan Abdal in Pakistan. Procedures for this will be worked out. They also agreed that the first meeting of joint anti-terrorism mechanism would take place before the end of March 2007. Regarding Sir Creek, the officials concerned will be directed to expedite their work. The joint survey of Sir Creek has begun on 15th January 2007. Both sides also decided to launch the Fourth Round of Composite Dialogue with the Foreign Secretary talks on 13-14 March 2007.

(c) - (e) According to available information there are 74 Indian PoWs in Pakistani Jails. However, Pakistan does not accept the presence of any Indian PoW in its jails. During EAM's visit to Pakistan in January 2007, the matter was taken up with the Pakistani authorities and they have accepted to allow a delegation of families of PoWs to visit various Pakistani jails. We have proposed April 2007 for the above visit.