

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:58
ANSWERED ON:07.07.2004
CHANGE IN INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY
Khan Shri Sunil

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether; the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) has provided the framework for an independent foreign policy; and
- (b) if so, the details of the proposed changes in the foreign policy?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) Yes.

(b) A statement is placed on the table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN PARTS (A) TO (B) OF THE REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.58 TO BE ANSWERED ON 7.7.2004

1. Government is determined to maintain India's independent foreign policy, built on national consensus and based on supreme national interests. To this end, India is expanding its network of international relationships - preserving solidarity with traditional allies and strengthening new partnerships. India is also working with like-minded nations for an equitable, multi-polar world order, which takes into account the legitimate aspirations of developing countries.

2. In consonance with our desire to live in a neighbourhood of peace and prosperity, relations with India's neighbours are being accorded high priority as has been evidenced in the recent discussions with Pakistan, the visit of the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to India, and the External Affairs Minister's visit to Nepal. India remains fully committed to the peace process with Pakistan. This commitment has been reaffirmed and infused with greater substance following the External Affairs Minister's recent meetings with his Pakistani counterpart in Qingdao and Jakarta, as also during the Foreign Secretary level talks held in June, wherein it was reiterated that the dialogue between the two countries should lead to peaceful resolution of all bilateral issues including Jammu & Kashmir to the satisfaction of both sides in an atmosphere free of terrorism and violence.

3. With Sri Lanka, Government has stressed that it supports a process of seeking a negotiated settlement acceptable to all sections of Sri Lankan society within the framework of a united Sri Lanka and consistent with democracy, pluralism and respect for individual rights. It believes that an enduring solution has to emerge purely through internal process. India maintains an abiding interest in the security of Sri Lanka and remains committed to its territorial integrity and sovereignty. India would welcome a resolution of the current impasse in the peace process and an early resumption of negotiations. Any interim arrangement should be an integral part of the final settlement and should be within the framework of the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

4. The choice of Nepal as External Affairs Minister's first destination abroad reflects the importance India accords to our closest neighbour. India's policy to support Nepal in strengthening its security capabilities and in developing its infrastructure including in the field of water resources. India has also agreed to share her experience in holding elections with Nepal's Election Commission and the Election Commissioner of Nepal has been invited to visit India soon.

5. The Government attaches prime importance to its relations with Afghanistan with whom we share deep historical and cultural ties. The Afghan National Security Advisor, Zalmay Rasool's recent visit to India is a reflection of the importance that the Government of Afghanistan attaches to its relations with India.

6. The positive developments in India's relations with China have encouraged both countries to engage in the process of further diversification and expansion of these relations. Both countries have reiterated their commitment to developing their long term constructive and cooperative partnership on the basis of mutual sensitivity to each other's concerns, equality and the principles of Panchsheel. In the External Affairs Minister's meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing in Qingdao in June 2004, the Chinese side conveyed its desire to work with India to develop deeper relations. The process of resolution of the boundary question is also to be seen from the political perspective of India-China bilateral relations.

7. The Government is determined to work closely with the US Administration to consolidate partnership in all areas. Both countries have clear commonalities in shaping a democratic and pluralistic world order, which is free of terrorism. In the External Affairs Minister's two meetings with US Secretary of State Colin Powell over the last one month in Washington and Jakarta, discussions on bilateral, regional and global issues have been held in an open, friendly and frank manner.

8. With Russia, the further diversification of India-Russia relations, particularly in defence, high technology, space and nuclear energy, while intensifying economic cooperation is being pursued. The recent meetings of the External Affairs Ministers and the National Security Advisor with the Russian leadership have reaffirmed the desire of both the sides to consolidate and further deepen the bilateral relations in political, strategic, economic and defence fields.

9. The Government welcomes the unanimous UN Security Council Resolution No.1546 on Iraq. The role of the UN has been unanimously accepted and it is India's expectation that the UN will play a central role in the developing situation in Iraq. The Government have seen the endorsement of the Interim Government of Iraq as the first step towards the transparent transfer of full sovereignty to the people of Iraq and have stated that the priority should be to ensure an early return to conditions of security and normalcy for all the people of Iraq.

10. Our traditionally strong relations with the countries of Southeast and West Asia, based on cultural affinities, economic interaction and a vibrant Indian expatriate community are being further strengthened.

11. From June 13-16, the Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri E. Ahamed visited Saudi Arabia. This was the first high level contact with Saudi Arabia after the formation of the new Government in India. An Agreement on issues pertaining to Indian Haj pilgrims was also concluded with the Saudi Haj Minister during this visit.

12. India's commitment to further strengthening relations with ASEAN countries has also been underscored during the External Affairs Minister's recent visit to Jakarta for the 11th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting. During this visit, the External Affairs Minister also held bilateral consultations with his counterparts from New Zealand, Canada, Russia, Mongolia, Vietnam, the Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, China and Lao PDR. An MOU on combating international terrorism with Indonesia was also signed by External Affairs Minister with his Indonesian counterpart during this visit.

13. The Government continues to fully support the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. The relationship with Israel, which is being developed on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation in no way dilutes India's principled support for the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

14. It is also India's vision that SAARC should be an active body. The present Government is committed to carry forward the process of active engagement with all members of the SAARC in all areas of cooperation.

15. Government have also stressed that the Non Aligned Movement needs to change. The international agenda of the 21st Century is different from that of the era in which the Movement was founded. It has also stressed the need for a reform of the UN Security Council in order to make it more democratic so that it reflects more realistically the present world order.