

Bilateral arrangements

42. SHRI SABIR ALI:

SHRI MOHAMMED ADEEB:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the bilateral arrangements with different countries for strengthening our ties with them, country-wise; and

(b) the plans for the future in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) and (b) The Government of India accords highest priority to strengthen political, economic and cultural relations and build strong and enduring partnerships with all countries on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect. India always strives to promote peace and stability to enable accelerated economic development within the framework of its enlightened national interest. This is facilitated through a series of mutually agreed bilateral/regional/multilateral cooperative programmes and through regular engagement, particularly by high-level inter-actions. Official-level consultations supplement these efforts which encompass diverse areas of exchanges including social, economic, cultural, educational, scientific and technical cooperation.

Sikhs living as refugees in Pakistan

43. SARDAR TARLOCHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that large numbers of Sikhs have taken shelter in Gurudwara Panja Saheb in Pakistan;

(b) the number of Sikhs that are living as refugees in this camp and in a similar Gurudwara in Peshawar;

(c) whether any officer of his Ministry has visited these camps;

(d) whether any aid has been sent by Government of India for these refugees; and

(e) whether Government has taken up their welfare with Pakistan Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) Yes.

(b) Government has seen media reports stating that there are about 2000 Sikh refugees at Gurudwara Panja Sahib. Some reports indicate the presence of refugees at Gurudwara Bhai Joga Singh in Peshawar, but their number is not known.

(c) No.

(d) No.

(e) Yes.

PMs message to Pakistan

44. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received any response to Prime Minister's message of peace to Pakistan as spelt out by PM in Parliament in June, 2009 session;

(b) if so, the details of the response for a dialogue between the two neighbouring nations; and

(c) the steps since taken in the light of the Pakistan's response?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) to (c) Subsequent to the Prime Minister's statement in the Parliament on 9th June, 2009, Prime Minister met the President of Pakistan on the sidelines of the SCO-BRIC summit in Yekaterinburg on 16th June, 2009 and discussed India-Pakistan relations. It was agreed that the two Foreign Secretaries would discuss the primary issue of terrorism before the leaders of India and Pakistan met on the sidelines of the NAM summit at Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt in mid-July, 2009.

Visit of US Under Secretary of State

45. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs visited New Delhi to help chart out an Indo-US strategic partnership agenda;

(b) if so, the details of the agreement and the documents signed and worked out as a result thereof; and

(c) the steps since taken in pursuance thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) Mr. William J. Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, US State Department visited New Delhi on June 10-11, 2009. He held talks with Foreign Secretary during which they reviewed the bilateral agenda, considered new elements of bilateral cooperation and discussed regional and global issues of common concern.

(b) No agreement or document was signed during the visit.

(c) Does not arise.

Signing of CTBT

46. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US Government Administration has lately requested Government to persuade India to sign CTBT;