

[5 May, 2005]

RAJYA SABHA

there should be no distinction between Permanent Members who have the veto and those who don't."

(b) Discussions on the issue of UN Security Council reform are underway in the UN among member States including G-4 countries.

(c) There is a steady accretion of support for India's candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Several countries have expressed support for India's candidature either in the UN or in the context of bilateral exchanges. Such support is expressed in different forums and forms and it is, therefore, difficult to give a definitive number on countries which have specifically supported India.

Foreign Minister's Myanmar visit

4534. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI:

SHRIMATI SUKHBUNS KAUR:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the areas of mutual interest discussed with Myanmar when he visited Myanmar recently;

(b) whether Myanmar has agreed to help India in fighting insurgence and terrorists activities on Indo-Myanmar border; and

(c) the reasons for Myanmar's cancelling the Gas pipeline deal just a few days before his visit?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Minister of External Affairs, Shri K. Natwar Singh paid an official visit to Myanmar from 24-27 March 2005. During the visit, wide-ranging discussions were held on all aspects of the bilateral relationship including cooperation in counter-insurgency, cross-border infrastructure development projects, assistance in the field of science and technology, energy cooperation and bilateral trade. In addition, both sides exchanged views on politico-economic developments within their respective countries and on regional and sub-regional issues of mutual interest.

(b) The Myanmar side reassured EAM of its commitment not to permit its territory to be used for insurgent activity against India and

emphasized that a suitable security environment in the border region was a subject of mutual interest and a shared goal. Both sides agreed to strengthen dialogue and concrete cooperation to counter terrorist activities along their border.

(c) The trilateral gas pipeline project has not been cancelled by Myanmar. Both India and Myanmar agree on the importance and potential benefit of the pipeline.

Preferential trade agreement between India and South Africa

4535. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM:

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and South Africa have agreed to put on fast track conclusion of a preferential trade for establishing trade agreement on customs and a bilateral investment promotion treaty for establishing closer relations between business communities of both countries.

(b) if so, whether underlining importance of strengthening economic linkages between two countries, Minister of State for External Affairs and South African Minister discussed policy frame work to facilitate interaction between private sector of both countries;

(c) if so, what are main outcome of decision taken and whether any agreement have been reached; and

(d) if so, by when it is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Talks at present are going on between India and Southern African Customs' Union (SACU) of which South Africa is a member for signing of a PTA. Both sides are keen that this agreement should be finalized as soon as possible. The signing of a Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA) between India and South Africa has been under consideration for some time. The text of such an agreement is being negotiated between the two countries.

(b) Honourable Rao Inderjit Singh, Minister of State in the External Affairs Ministry reviewed with his South African interlocutors during his