

(v) EAM visited Islamabad on July 15, 2010.

These meetings were aimed at reviewing India's bilateral relationship with Pakistan and to build trust and confidence between the two countries. India has advocated a step-by-step, graduated and forward looking approach to expanding dialogue to cover all issues of mutual interest and concern. Government is committed to taking all necessary steps to safeguard the nation's security.

#### **Support to Palestinian cause**

3305. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that there is a continuous social, economic and psychological blockade of the Palestinian people by Israel;

(b) the steps Government has taken to support Palestinian cause and severing of military ties with Israel, boycott, divestment and sanction (BDS) against Israel; and

(c) the reasons for Government going against India's long held position on Palestine?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) Government are aware of the restrictions placed on the Palestinians residing in Gaza Strip.

(b) India has called for an early and significant easing of restrictions on the free movement of persons and goods within Palestine. The Government of India remains committed to assisting Palestine in a variety of ways. The Chancery and residential complex of the Embassy of Palestine in New Delhi, a gift from the people of India, and foundation stone for which was laid during the visit of President of Palestine National Authority His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas in October 2008, is nearing completion. Following the first ever grant of US\$ 10 million as budget support to the Palestine National Authority in 2008-09, Government again extended a grant of US\$ 10 million to the Palestinian National Authority in 2009-10. Last year, India enhanced its contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) from US\$ 20,000 to US\$ 1,000,000 per annum. The contribution for the current financial year has been made. We have also pledged to contribute to UNRWA the amount of US\$ 1 million next year as well.

Our bilateral relations with Israel that include cooperation in the areas of agriculture, high technology sectors and defence, are without prejudice to India's well-known and principled position on the Palestinian issue.

(c) India's well-known and principled position on our unwavering support to the Palestinian issue has remained unchanged. India's abiding commitment to the Palestinian cause

is an important component of our foreign policy. Our support to the Palestinian cause is reiterated at every available opportunity and forum including during the recent visit of the Hon'ble President to Syria and by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in his message on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, organized by the UN on 29 November, 2010.

India believes that the conflict in West Asia is essentially political in nature and cannot be resolved by force. India had welcomed the 'direct talks' between Israel and Palestine. We are hopeful of resumption of the 'direct talks' that remain stalled. In line with our support for UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, India supports a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and UNSC Resolutions 1397 and 1515. India has supported the Arab Peace Plan, which calls for withdrawal of Israel to pre-1967 borders, along with recognition of Israel and the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

#### **Cultural ties with Seychelles**

3306. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether MoU to promote cultural ties with Seychelles was signed recently;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the amount allocated for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) No MOU at the Governmental level was signed recently with Seychelles,

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

#### **Manmohan-Medvedev Summit**

3307. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Manmohan-Medvedev summit took place;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and outcome thereof; and
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) Yes. The Annual India-Russia Summit was held on 6-8 December, 2009 in Moscow. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Medvedev participated in this Summit.