

Meeting with External Affairs Minister of China

†952. SHRI NARESH AGRAWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the issues discussed in the meeting of the External Affairs Minister of China and the External Affairs Minister of India after the formation of new Government;
- (b) whether India raised the issue of land grabbed by China; and
- (c) if so, China's reaction thereto, and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) to (c) Foreign Minister of China Mr. Wang Yi visited India on 8-9 June, 2014 as the Special Envoy of the President of China. Various economic and political issues of bilateral, regional and international significance were raised and discussed in a frank and cordial manner. The discussions were comprehensive and substantive. The two delegations agreed that peace and tranquility on the border is the basis for the continued expansion of India-China relations.

Policy to improve relationship with SAARC countries

†953. SHRI SATYANARAYAN JATIYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state the Government's policy to make mutual relationship with South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations effective and cordial and the areas in which our relation with each country of SAARC nations exists at present and proposal to be expanded in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): India's relations with SAARC countries are based on shared partnership and mutuality of interests. India has enhanced its engagement with all SAARC countries both bilaterally and through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations. India will continue to pro-actively engage with all members to develop cooperative linkages in the fields of trade, commerce, investment, infrastructure and connectivity, health, education, agriculture etc. in the framework of SAARC as well as bilaterally.

Government of India's policies and programmes in enhancing bilateral relationship with SAARC countries is given below:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Afghanistan

India has a close strategic partnership with Afghanistan covering a broad spectrum of areas including an active role in providing development and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan, regular high level exchanges, both at the official and political levels, and economic, security and cultural cooperation. A sovereign, independent, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan is in India's strategic interest. This is based on India's historical and civilisational links with Afghanistan and has been strengthened by India's active role in the development of Afghanistan based on the understanding that social and economic development is the key to Afghanistan enhancing its contribution to regional stability. India is working with Afghanistan for its regional integration with the SAARC economy.

Bangladesh

Government has taken several steps to strengthen its bilateral relations with Bangladesh based on a vision of durable and long-term cooperation to achieve mutual peace, prosperity and stability. Considerable progress has been achieved in key areas of cooperation such as border management and security, power, land boundary, transit, connectivity, people-to-people linkages, capacity building, trade and investment, development partnership etc. Bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh have received a major boost in recent years and both sides have agreed on a Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development that lays down the roadmap for our future cooperation. High-level exchanges, visits and meetings take place regularly across established institutional mechanisms, alongside wide-ranging people-to-people interaction.

Bhutan

Our relations with Bhutan are unique and special, characterized by shared history and geography. We are a privileged socio-economic developmental partner of Bhutan since 1961. Key areas of our cooperation include developmental assistance, connectivity, education, capacity building, hydropower development and defence-security cooperation. Key focus areas in the years ahead include further development of Bhutan's hydropower resources for mutual benefit, closer educational cooperation, enhanced connectivity and continued defence-security cooperation.

Maldives

India and Maldives enjoy close, cordial and multi-dimensional relations. We attach the highest importance to our ties with Maldives. India and Maldives share an excellent and robust defence and security relationship.

Nepal

Our relations with Nepal are rooted in shared history, geography and age-old civilizational linkages. Today our multi-faceted relationship includes close cooperation in the fields of trade and investment, developmental assistance, water resources and power, defence and security, culture and education, and extensive people-to-people linkages across the open border. Key focus areas for further intensification of our ties in the years ahead include exchange of high-level visits, hydropower development, enhanced developmental cooperation, trade and connectivity, cultural and educational exchanges, as well as close security cooperation.

Pakistan

Government remains committed to building peaceful, friendly and cooperative ties with Pakistan, in an environment free from terror and violence. It is India's desire to intensify and accelerate the process of trade normalization and implement the steps agreed in September, 2012 at the Commerce Secretary level. It is the Government's hope that bilateral relations with Pakistan will progress in economic, cultural and political fields in the same manner that India's relations with her other SAARC neighbours have progressed in recent years, built on partnerships for development and mutual prosperity. It is India's expectation that Pakistan abides by its commitment to prevent its territory and territory under its control from being used for terrorism against India.

Sri Lanka

India's relations with Sri Lanka are based on close people-to-people contacts and deep rooted ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial ties steeped in antiquity. India greatly values its relations with Sri Lanka. In the recent past bilateral cooperation has seen significant acceleration and expansion in all areas of mutual interest, including trade and investment.

India is Sri Lanka's largest trade partner and one of the largest Foreign Direct Investors. India has taken up the issue of expediting the process of national reconciliation in a manner that meets the aspirations of the Tamil community. Other important issues taken up include early and full implementation of the 13th Amendment and beyond, fishermen's issue, India's development assistance programme and economic and commercial cooperation, in particular, early launch of 500 MW Sampur Coal Power project and greater connectivity between the two countries.