

Indo-Pak border

*148. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY:
SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have not ruled out the possibility of altering Indian's borders with Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute;

(b) if so, whether there is any departure from the past policy; and

(c) if not, Government's views to get a solution on the Kashmir dispute?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) The Government have made their consistent and principled position abundantly clear that the State of Jammu & Kashmir is an integral part of India. Pakistan is in illegal and forcible occupation of a part of the State.

India is committed to a peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues with Pakistan.

Relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh

*149. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the extent of progress made in developing relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh in socio-economic and political fields;

(b) whether the issue of trade and commerce from the North-Eastern region with Bangladesh and with other regions of our country across Bangladesh has been taken up so far; and

(c) the achievements in this respect so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) Government is committed to the development of peaceful, friendly and cooperative relations with Pakistan. Several significant steps have been taken to normalise diplomatic and other links, and promote people to people contacts. In this context, there have been exchanges at the level of Parliamentarians, jurists, journalists, sportsmen, artistes, businessmen, etc. Prisoners and fishermen have been released on both sides, and the visits by pilgrim groups resumed. In addition, a ceasefire along the International Border, Line of Control and the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) in Jammu

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RAJYA SABHA

and Kashmir has been in effect from the midnight of November 25, 2003. In the Joint Press Statement of January 6, 2004, President Musharraf reassured the Prime Minister of India that he will not permit any territory under Pakistan's control to be used to support terrorism in any manner. The Foreign Secretaries of the two countries met on February 18, 2004 to commence the process of the Composite Dialogue. The ongoing process of confidence building and dialogue with Pakistan has been taken forward and intensified. External Affairs Minister met Foreign Minister Kasuri of Pakistan on a couple of occasions and they reviewed progress on all aspects of bilateral relations. There have been positive interactions between the drug control authorities of the two countries, and BSF and Pakistan Rangers. The Expert level Dialogue on Nuclear CBMs on June 19-20 resulted in several measures to enhance communication links, and working for confidence building measures such as Agreement on pre-notification of flight testing of missiles. The Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan met on 27-28 June, 2004. Recalling the reassurance contained in the Joint Press Statement of January 6, 2004, they exchanged views on carrying the process forward in an atmosphere free from terrorism and violence. The two sides proposed a comprehensive framework for conventional CBMs aimed at initiating and enhancing communication, coordination and interaction. They agreed, *inter alia*, to restore the strength of respective high commissions to the original level of 110, and release all apprehended fishermen. It was also agreed to schedule the meetings of the remaining six subjects of the Composite Dialogue on Siachen, Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project, Sir Creek, Terrorism and Drug Trafficking, Economic and Commercial Cooperation and Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in various fields, between the third week of July and the first half of August, 2004.

2. Relations with Bangladesh have expended in recent years, including in the socio-economic and political fields. High-level exchanges, including regular formal and informal consultations between the Foreign Ministers, characterise the relationship. Meetings of the Ministerial level Joint Economic Commission and the Joint Revers Commission are held periodically. Other structured bilateral interactions include those between the Foreign Secretaries, the Home Secretaries, the Commerce Secretaries, the BSF and the BDR. There are also Joint Working Groups between the Home Ministries, on trade and on customs cooperation. Cooperation on cultural and academic matters

are covered by a bilateral agreement. A revised bilateral visa agreement was signed in 2001. As a result of these exchanges and other initiatives to promote bilateral ties, there has been a greater degree of trust and mutual understanding on political matters and significant increase in trade, in people to people contacts and in cultural exchanges between the two countries.

3. The Government is committed to promoting increased trade and commerce between the North Eastern Region and Bangladesh and other parts of the country and has raised the issue of grant of transit for Indian goods through Bangladesh with the Government of Bangladesh at various levels. Bangladesh has not agreed to grant of these transit facilities over land, though transit through inland waterways takes place in accordance with a bilateral protocol signed in this regard.

Asian Highway Network

*150. SHRIMATI JAMANADEVI BARUPAL:
DR.T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the country has signed a historical international agreement for completing 140,000 km. Asian Highway Network which would significantly promote regional integration and co-operation;

(b) if so, whether apart from India, countries such as Pakistan, China, South Korea and Vietnam have signed the inter-Governmental agreement at the ministerial segment of the 60th session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific;

(c) if so, whether this agreement is a landmark and would further facilitate border crossing for people, vehicles, goods and other benefits to landlocked countries; and

(d) by when this work is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU):(a) and (b) India, along with 5 other countries including Pakistan, China, Republic of Korea and Vietnam, has signed the Inter-Governmental Agreement on Asian Highways during the 60th Annual Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP) held in April, 2004. The agreement is for development of the Asian Highway Network in each country to a minimum acceptable standard within the framework of National Programme.