

Dissemination of information on foreign affairs

2886. SHRI MANISH GUPTA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has an established mechanism for the collation and dissemination of information on foreign affairs/issues for the public and if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether there has been a decline in the number of white papers and position papers drawn up by the Ministry for public consumption and if so, details thereof; and

(c) the details of roles envisaged by the Ministry for Indian communities abroad?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) and (b) Yes, the Ministry has an established mechanism to engage with the public on information of foreign affairs. The Official Spokesperson conducts a weekly press briefing to familiarise the public with India's positions on current matters of concern. The Ministry also maintains its web portal www.mea.gov.in and other social media platforms to disseminate information related to developments in the foreign policy/relations domain. The Ministry utilizes publications, documentaries/films and programmes like SAMEEP (Students and MEA Engagement Programme) and Videsh Aaya Pradesh Ke Dwaar (Regional Media engagement programme) to enhance its outreach among the public

(c) The Government has brought about a transformational change in its engagement with the Indian diaspora. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention, PBD Conferences, Regional PBDs, Youth PBD, Know India Programme, Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children, Bharat Ko Jaaniye Quiz are some of the important programmes undertaken by the Government to strengthen diaspora's connect and engagement with India. Government's efforts are also aimed at harnessing the diaspora for supporting ongoing flagship programmes viz Swachh Bharat Mission, National Mission for Clean Ganga, Make in India, Digital India, Skill India, Start-up India, Stand-up India.

Bilateral relations with Maldives

2887. SHRI SAMBHAJI CHHATRAPATI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the visit of the Prime Minister to Maldives was aimed at giving a push to the bilateral relations between the two countries.

(b) the major areas identified by both the countries for follow up action in future and whether some agreements were also signed on the occasion; and

(c) whether cultural interaction between the two countries also figured during the discussions and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) to (c) Yes. Under its 'Neighborhood First' policy, Government of India is committed to developing friendly and mutually beneficial relations with all its neighbors, including Maldives.

During Prime Minister's visit to Male in June 2019, India and Maldives agreed to further strengthen and deepen their partnership. GoI has agreed to develop people centric and socio-economic projects in the areas of water and sanitation, urban development and community infrastructure, supporting local SMEs, development of sports and furthering cooperation in sectors like port development, health, education, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, environment and energy. Six agreements were signed in the areas of white shipping, hydrography, health cooperation, ferry and cargo services and cooperation in capacity building in customs and civil services.

A comprehensive Culture Action Plan has been devised to further the cultural and educational interaction, including *inter alia* through exchange of cultural delegations, capacity building exercises, facilitating digitization of traditional knowledge, restoration of historical sites etc.

Bilateral discussion with president of france

†2888. DR. KIRODI LAL MEENA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister has held bilateral discussion with the President of France during G20 summit;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the issues like opening a collective front against terror financing and extending cooperation in maritime security were also discussed; and

(d) if so, the details of response of French Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) Yes.

(b) to (d) During the brief pull-aside meeting on 28 June, 2019, both leaders

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.