

(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.

exchanged their views on matters of mutual interest including on bilateral cooperation; climate change; terrorism; and the international situation. They agreed to work for further enhancement of our Strategic Partnership.

Arrangements for bringing Indian citizens

†2889. SHRIMATI KANTA KARDAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the countries with whom Government has made arrangements for bringing Indian citizens; and

(b) whether Indian citizens residing in the Middle East/Arabian countries also want to return to India and are seeking Government's help in this regard and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) and (b) Assistance for bringing back Indian nationals who are stranded or in a distress situation abroad due to various reasons including diversion of flight; loss of travel document; over stay beyond the visa period; maltreatment by the foreign employer; being stuck in a conflict or disaster affected country/region, etc., forms an integral part of the consular services rendered by Indian Missions and Posts abroad and does not require formal arrangements with foreign countries. Indian Missions and Posts actively follow up any such case, including with authorities concerned in the Governments of foreign countries.

The Government attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and well-being of Indians in foreign countries, including in the Middle East/Arabian countries. Indian Missions and Posts abroad remain vigilant and closely monitor incidents/cases of Indian nationals getting stranded or being in a distress situation in foreign countries, and extend them all possible consular assistance including helping them to complete their documentation such as issue of Emergency Certificates before they can be repatriated to India.

Further, the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) is set up in Indian Missions and Posts abroad for providing assistance to overseas Indian nationals in distress situations, including air passage, on a means tested basis in deserving cases.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.