

[6 March, 2003]

RAJYA SABHA

States, that cross-border terrorism against India continues, despite assertions to the contrary by President Musharraf.

Indo-Nepal talks

1632. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indo-Nepal high level talks were held to establish better relations between both the countries;

(b) if so, the specific areas in which Indo-Nepal talks were held; and

(c) the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes.

(b) and (c) In keeping with the close relationship between India and Nepal, several high-level interactions have been held and continue to take place between the two countries. The then Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba paid an official goodwill visit to India from March • 20-25, 2002. His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, King of Nepal, paid a State Visit to India from June 23-28, 2002. External Affairs Minister Shri Yashwant Sinha visited Nepal from August 19-24, 2000 to participate in the Meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers when he also held bilateral discussions.

At the official level consultations were held across a broad spectrum of areas through existing bilateral mechanisms between India and Nepal. Important bilateral meetings include the Home Secretary Level Talks (New Delhi, February 6-7, 2002), Joint Group of Experts on the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project (Kathmandu, July 23-24, 2002), Inter-Governmental Committee on Trade, Transit and Cooperation to Control Unauthorized Trade (New Delhi, August 15-18, 2002) and the Joint Technical Level India-Nepal Boundary Committee (New Delhi, October 22-23, 2002).

The Chief of Army Staff General S. Padmanabhan visited Nepal from May 13-16, 2002 and his Nepalese counterpart Gen. Pyar Jung Thapa visited India from December 18-24, 2002.

In addition, Governments of India and Nepal have also been holding bilateral discussions on several other issues at the level of senior officials.

The third round of discussions on the Agreement on Regulation of Vehicular Traffic and the Rail Services Agreement was held in Kathmandu on February 8-12, 2003. The first round of discussion on the Extradition Treaty and the Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters was held in Kathmandu on February 16-19, 2003. During these discussions, substantial progress was achieved towards forging a common position on these subjects.

The bilateral meetings provided precious opportunities to review and strengthen our bilateral relations and exchange views on issues of mutual concern and interest.

Indo-Russian discussions

1633. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the discussion held during his visit to Moscow in February 2003;

(b) Whether the discussions covered the Indo-Russian joint venture at Kudankulam nuclear power project;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether it is a 'act that Russia has sold military hardware to Pakistan; and

(e) if so, what are its consequences?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) During his visit to Moscow on 19-20 February 2003, Shri Yashwant Sinha, Minister of External Affairs, held wide ranging talks with the Russian leaders on issues of mutual interest. He met Mr. Vladimir V. Putin, President of the Russian Federation, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov and Industry and Science & Technology Minister Ilya Klebanov. In these talks, the two sides reviewed their bilateral relations and noted the convergence of views , major international issues.

(b) No.

(c) Does not arise.