

Indo-Iran relations

1619. PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indo-Iran relations have further improved after the President Khatami's visit to the country; and

(b) if so, whether Government would take the house into confidence on whether or not Government were considering to offer the desired servicing of Iranian sub-marines in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes. The recent visit of President of Iran H.E. Seyyed Mohammad Khatami which took place from 24 to 28 January 2003 has further consolidated India-Iran relations. During the visit, wide ranging discussions on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest were held. The New Delhi Declaration, signed by the Prime Minister and the Iranian President, puts forth the vision of strategic partnership between India and Iran for a more stable, secure and prosperous region and for enhanced regional and global cooperation. It touches all aspects of cooperation —bilateral economic cooperation, cooperation in the field of hydrocarbons, science and technology, information technology, education and training, reconstruction of Afghanistan, international terrorism, and other global issues.

In addition to the New Delhi Declaration, a Memorandum of Understanding on the Road Map to Strategic Cooperation was also signed which sets a five-year target oriented framework for milestones towards the strategic partnership. Six other documents: Agreement on Science and Technology cooperation; MoUs on cooperation in hydrocarbons sector, Vocational Training and Urban Water Management; Cultural Exchange Programme (2003-2005); and Framework Agreement on operationalisation of USD 200 million Indian line of credit to be implemented by Exim Bank through a group of Iranian Banks, were also signed.

(b) No such proposal is under consideration.

Curbs on Pakistan nationals' travel in India

1620. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that his Ministry has objected to the Ministry of Home Affairs' plan to curb Pakistan nationals' travel in India;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of the agreed formula finally arrived at?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) to (c) Government policy regarding travel of Pakistani nationals to India is worked out through a process of consultation and coordination between the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of External Affairs. The process of consultation and coordination had led to the decision to introduce pre-verification for Pakistani nationals.

Communication infrastructure in Myanmar

1621. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY:
SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state the action taken to develop the communication infrastructure in Myanmar who is to share its border with India for the prosperity of entire region connecting India's North East to South Asia in view of reluctance of Bangladesh to offer transit facilities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): In order to develop better connectivity with Myanmar, India has taken up several mutually beneficial cross-border projects; India has upgraded the 160 km. long Tamu-Kalemyo-Kalewa road across Manipur and has also undertaken to maintain it for 6 years; India has also agreed to build the Rih-Tiddim and Rih-Falam road sections from Mizoram at the request of Myanmar. A detailed project report is being prepared for a multi-modal transport project involving development of a highway from Kalewa to Indo-Myanmar border at Mizoram and upgradation of Sittwe port in Myanmar. In addition, a highway project connecting India-Myanmar-Thailand from Moreh (Manipur) to Mae Sot (Thailand) has been agreed between the three countries.

In the area of telecommunications, there is a proposal to establish hotlines between two banks of India and Myanmar in the border areas. The establishment of telephone link will help in the operationalisation of L/C business and streamline the trade transactions. ISRO has assisted Myanmar in setting up of a Data Processing Centre in Myanmar for remote