

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3201
TO BE ANSWERED ON 14.03.2018

RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

3201. SHRI MOHD. SALIM:
SHRI MD. BADARUDDOZA KHAN:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has taken any new policy initiative after June, 2014 to ensure friendlier relations with our major neighbouring countries; and
- (b) if so, the details of these initiatives and the overall impact of the same?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD.)]

(a) & (b) Yes. In accordance with the high priority accorded by the Government to relations with our neighbouring countries, several policy initiatives have been taken since June 2014 to ensure friendlier relations. These include initiatives for improving connectivity, addressing developmental challenges, building shared prosperity and security, and building greater trust and confidence. Details of the initiatives are placed at **Annexure-I**.

POLICY INITIATIVES FOR FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

S.No.	Name of Country	Whether Government has taken any new policy initiative after June 2014 to ensure friendlier relations with our major neighbouring countries, if so, what are the details of these initiatives, what is the overall impact of these initiatives? (a)
1.	AFGHANISTAN	<p>The India-Afghanistan strategic relationship has seen further consolidation since June 2014, with expansion in the multifaceted cooperation in all areas, including political, defence, security, trade and investment, connectivity, development partnership, social & cultural issues, education and capacity building. This was facilitated by several high level visits and exchanges, including two visits to Afghanistan by Prime Minister of India, four visits to India by President of Afghanistan, H.E. Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani; two official visits to India by Chief Executive of Afghanistan H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and a large number of visits of other senior Afghan dignitaries to India, including Vice President of Afghanistan, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, and other Cabinet Ministers and senior officials of Afghanistan.</p> <p>During this period, India has successfully completed large scale development projects such as the Afghan Parliament building in Kabul, Afghan-India Friendship Dam in Herat, restoration of <i>Storay</i> palace in Kabul, participation of Afghanistan in South Asia Satellite, etc. This year, key developments included the launch of air-freight corridor between India and Afghanistan, inauguration of first phase of Chabahar port in Iran which will connect Afghanistan to India, commencement of Indian wheat supplies of 1,70,000 tonnes to Afghanistan via Chabahar port in Iran; and unveiling of the 'New Development Partnership' which aims to utilize India's new assistance of US\$ 1 billion on developmental priorities of Afghanistan.</p> <p>India has also expanded its support in human resources development and capacity building. In addition to already successfully running training and scholarship programmes, India has started a new scholarship scheme for the next of kin of the martyrs of Afghan security forces and offers tailor made courses for Afghan government officials.</p> <p>Success of India's bilateral relationship with Afghanistan can be gauged by the description of India by Afghan leadership as the preferred development partner. India continues to enjoy high level of public confidence and support in Afghanistan. During this time, India's constructive and positive role in Afghanistan also garnered wide appreciation from the international community.</p>
2.	BANGLADESH	<p>India and Bangladesh enjoy close and multi-faceted relations. Since June 2014, India's robust partnership with Bangladesh has been further strengthened. Significant initiatives to advance bilateral ties include:</p> <p>Intensification of High-level exchanges: Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh in June 2015 and Prime Minister of Bangladesh visited India in April 2017. These visits have significantly advanced our mutual understanding and bilateral cooperation in areas such as economy, transit and connectivity, infrastructure, shipping, rail, road,</p>

		<p>nuclear energy, power, oil and gas, capacity building, solar energy, telecommunications, space, cyber security and blue economy. Visit of External Affairs Minister to Dhaka in October 2017 for the Joint Consultative Commission has given further impetus to our engagement with Bangladesh.</p> <p>Land Boundary Agreement: Exchange of Instrument of Ratification of the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement and its Protocol of 2011 and Exchange of Letters on the Modalities for their implementation during the visit of our Prime Minister to Bangladesh resulted in the settlement of the long outstanding land boundary between the two countries.</p> <p>Economic cooperation and connectivity: The EPC Contract for the 2x 660 MW Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant at Rampal, Bagherhat was awarded in July 2016 to operationalize the Joint Venture project between NTPC India and Bangladesh Power Development Board. Work on the project has commenced. India has been exporting 600 MW of electricity to Bangladesh to meet its energy demands. An additional 60 MW of electricity is being exported from Tripura to Bangladesh since April 2017. Petronet LNG Limited, India and Petrobangla, Bangladesh signed an MoU in December 2016 for installation of LNG terminal at Kutubdia by Petronet. ONGC commenced exploration activities under two Production Sharing Contracts signed between Petrobangla of Bangladesh and the Consortium of ONGC Videsh Ltd and Oil India in two shallow off-shore blocks in Bangladesh in 2016. To enhance connectivity and boost bilateral trade, the Phulbari-Banglabandha Immigration Check Post and Petrapole Integrated Check Post were inaugurated in 2016. A rail link is being implemented between Agartala in India and Akhaura in Bangladesh.</p> <p>Development cooperation: Bangladesh is the largest recipient of India's Line of Credit (LoC) with a total of US\$ 8 billion committed for its infrastructure development. During the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Dhaka, Government of India extended Line of Credit of US\$ 2 billion to Bangladesh while another Line of Credit of US \$ 4.5 billion was committed to Bangladesh during the visit of Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India in April 2017. Some of the major projects under implementation or those that have been identified for implementation under the Line of Credit include Bhairab and Titas Rail Bridges, construction of Khulna-Mongla Port Rail Line, supply of locomotives and passenger coaches, procurement of buses and dredgers, and other projects in Information and Communication Technology, Shipping, Health and Technical Education Sectors, Ports and Airports. Fifteen Small Development Projects were inaugurated in October 2017 in Bangladesh in the areas of health, sanitation and education.</p> <p>People-to-people ties: To strengthen cultural ties between the people of India and Bangladesh, India has sought to facilitate easier cross border mobility of people from the two sides. The Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala and the Guwahati-Shillong-Dhaka bus services links were inaugurated in June 2015 while the Kolkata-Khulna-Dhaka bus service commenced since April 2017. The new Bandhan Express between Kolkata and Khulna, end-to-end immigration and customs services for the existing Maitree Express (Kolkata to Dhaka) at the International Rail Passenger Terminus at Kolkata and two rail brides -Bhairabh and Titas were inaugurated in November 2017.</p>
3.	BHUTAN	<p>India and Bhutan share unique and historical ties of friendship and cooperation characterized by deep mutual trust and understanding. Since June 2014, bilateral ties have witnessed sustained progress in diverse areas of cooperation such as trade and transit, economic and development partnership, hydropower development, border management & security, water resources, education, culture & capacity building. Significant initiatives taken to advance bilateral ties include:</p> <p>High-level exchanges: Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi chose Bhutan as his first foreign destination in June 2014.</p>

		<p>This was followed by the visit of Hon'ble Rashtrapatiji in November 2014. His Majesty the King of Bhutan visited India most recently in November 2017. Prime Minister of Bhutan Lyonchhen Tshering Tobgay has visited India several times in the last three years. Such intensive bilateral exchanges have imparted fresh momentum to the multi-faceted bilateral relationship.</p> <p>Development cooperation: For the 11th Five Year Plan (2013-2018) of Bhutan, Government of India extended development assistance of Rs. 5000 crore to Bhutan. This included Rs. 2800 crore Project-Tied Assistance, Rs. 850 crore Programme grant and Rs. 850 crore towards Small Developmental Projects. The projects implemented under India's developmental assistance programme have benefitted the people of Bhutan and generated goodwill for India.</p> <p>Economic Cooperation: Hydropower cooperation with Bhutan forms the core of bilateral economic cooperation. Three GOI-assisted hydro-electric power projects namely, 1200 MW Punatsangchhu-I, 1020 MW Punatsangchhu-II and 720 MW Mangdechhu Projects under inter-governmental mode and Kholongchhu Project (600 MW) under joint venture framework, are under various stages of implementation. The India-Bhutan Trade and Transit Agreement, renewed in November 2016, came into force w.e.f. 29 July 2017, leading to further enhancement in trade and investment through additional trade facilitation measures.</p> <p>Capacity building and people to people ties: Since 2014, the Government of India has expanded its scholarship programme for students from Bhutan to pursue higher studies in India. GOI has also expanded its technical training programmes to officials from Bhutan in several fields.</p>
4.	CHINA	<p>During the visit of Chinese President Mr. Xi Jinping to India in September 2014, the two sides forged a Closer Developmental Partnership, which was further consolidated during the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to China in May 2015.</p> <p>The two leaders have since met several times on the sidelines of multilateral summits, most recently during the BRICS Summit, which China hosted in Xiamen in September 2017. During these meetings, various issues of mutual interest and concern were discussed and both sides emphasized the importance of strengthening of bilateral Closer Developmental Partnership.</p> <p>In our multifaceted engagement with China, in areas where we have commonality of views, engagement has expanded and upgraded in recent years. Issues where there are differences are being handled through dialogue to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution based on mutual respect and due sensitivity to each other's interests, concerns and aspirations.</p> <p>Both sides share the view that India-China bilateral relationship has an important role to play in the 21st Century in Asia and in the world, and that it serves the shared interest of the two sides to strengthen their Closer Developmental Partnership.</p> <p>In view of the significance of the bilateral relationship, both sides are working towards utilizing their bilateral dialogue mechanisms to promote mutually beneficial cooperation, and enhancing communication at all levels in order to build greater trust and understanding.</p> <p>Both sides agree that progress in bilateral relations should be guided by the consensus reached between their leaders</p>

		that at a time of global uncertainty, India-China relations are a factor of stability and India and China, in their relationship, must not allow differences to become disputes.
5.	MALDIVES	<p>India's relationship with Maldives is long-standing and time-tested, and based on support for stability, political pluralism and development.</p> <p>As a close neighbour, India has continued its engagement with Maldives encouraging democratic institution building and rule of law in the country to meet the aspirations of its citizens. The relationship was strengthened during the period through exchange of high-level visits, defence and security cooperation, institution and capacity building, assistance in health and education sectors and cooperation across a wide spectrum of mutually beneficial areas.</p>
6.	MYANMAR	<p>High-level exchanges: India's close relations with Myanmar have significantly expanded since June 2014 by regular high-level exchanges including visit of Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi to Myanmar in 2014 and 2017 and the President of Myanmar and State Counsellor of Myanmar to India in 2016. These exchanges provided fresh impetus to bilateral relationship and helped identify potential areas of cooperation, including in sectors such as power and renewable energy, agriculture, banking and insurance, and health.</p> <p>Development cooperation: India has committed to develop Industrial Training Centers at Monywa and Thaton, and to upgrade the Myanmar-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre and the Centre for English Language Training at Yangon. There has been rapid progress in operationalizing the Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education at the Yezin Agricultural University and the Rice Bio Park at the Department of Agricultural Research. Work on upgradation of the Yangon Childrens' Hospital and Sittwe General Hospital and construction of the Monywa General Hospital has been completed.</p> <p>Government of India has also extended assistance to Government of Myanmar in November 2017 through supply of essential requirements for immediate relief of internally displaced persons in Myanmar. In this regard, India and Myanmar also signed an MoU on Rakhine State Development Programme on 20 December 2017.</p> <p>Economic cooperation and connectivity: India and Myanmar have expanded their cooperation in the energy sector. In April 2016, India exported 3 MW of electricity to Tamu in Myanmar through Moreh in India. The MoU on power cooperation signed between the two countries in 2016 established the bilateral institutional mechanism for cooperation in this sector. In September 2017, Numaligarh Refinery of India started supply of diesel to Myanmar across the land border. Establishing connectivity between India and the ASEAN through Myanmar is a key priority. India is cooperating with Government of Myanmar by undertaking important projects in Myanmar, namely the Trilateral Highway project, Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project and Rhi Tiddim road.</p>
7.	NEPAL	<p>India and Nepal share a unique relationship based on age-old historical and cultural linkages and people to people ties. Significant initiatives undertaken to advance bilateral ties since June 2014 include:</p> <p>High level exchanges: Since June 2014, there have been nine visits at the highest level from both the sides. Besides high-level political exchanges, a number of bilateral mechanisms at a functional level have been meeting regularly, covering issues such as trade, economic cooperation, agriculture, water resources, power cooperation, defence and security, post-earthquake construction efforts, culture, education and connectivity projects. The Joint Commission</p>

		<p>Meeting has been held twice in July 2014 and October 2016.</p> <p>Economic Cooperation and Connectivity: Several social and physical infrastructure projects and cross-border connectivity projects are in different phases of implementation. A bilateral 'Oversight Mechanism' has been established to expedite project implementation. Power sector cooperation has deepened with the completion of three cross-border transmission lines during 2016 and 2017. India is currently exporting about 350 MW of electricity to Nepal. Agreement on Electric Power Trade, Cross-border Transmission Interconnection and Grid Connectivity was signed in October 2014. An inter-governmental MoU was signed in August 2015 to build the first cross-border petroleum products pipeline in South Asia on Raxaul/Motihari (India)-Amlekhgunj (Nepal) sector. A Line of Credit of US\$ 550 million has been extended for infrastructure projects. The Integrated Check Post at Birgunj is in advanced stage of implementation and work on two cross-border rail links is progressing steadily.</p> <p>Development Cooperation: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs in 2017 approved the investment for generation component of Arun III Hydro Electric Power Project (900 MW) in Nepal. Pancheshwar Development Authority was constituted in August 2014 for the 5040 MW Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project. An MoU was signed on implementation of Terai Roads project in February 2016. Community-driven Small Development Projects like schools, roads, bridges, irrigation facilities, are benefiting people in different districts of Nepal. An emergency trauma centre was built in Kathmandu and handed over to Nepal in November 2014.</p> <p>Post-earthquake Reconstruction: India was at the forefront of international efforts to assist in post-earthquake relief and rehabilitation efforts in Nepal through "Operation Maitri". India has committed US\$ 1 billion for post-earthquake reconstruction, including US\$ 250 million grant-in-aid and US\$ 750 million in Lines of Credit. Sector-specific MoUs signed in August 2017 have paved the way for implementation of reconstruction projects in housing, health, education and cultural heritage sectors.</p> <p>People to people relations: India offers wide-ranging scholarships to Nepalese students. ITEC slots for training in technical institutes in India were enhanced from 180 to 250 with effect from 2016-17. A Passenger Motor vehicle Agreement was signed with Nepal in November 2014.</p>
8.	PAKISTAN	<p>During the visit of External Affairs Minister to Islamabad on December 9, 2015, both sides agreed to a Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue. Foreign Secretaries of the two countries were mandated to finalise the modalities of the Dialogue. However, the meeting of the Foreign Secretaries could not take place in the wake of Pathankot Air Base terrorist attack on January 2, 2016 and subsequent intensification of cross border terrorism aimed at India and emanating from Pakistan.</p> <p>Government has conveyed that it is committed to resolving all issues peacefully and bilaterally in keeping with the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, in an atmosphere free from terror, hostility and violence. Onus is on Pakistan to create such a conducive atmosphere.</p>
9.	SRI LANKA	<p>Since June 2014, the Government has taken several steps to revitalise our traditionally close and friendly ties with Sri Lanka. An elaborate architecture of multifaceted and comprehensive cooperation has been put in place, with frequent high-level exchanges and wide-ranging development cooperation.</p> <p>Our engagement is focused on greater connectivity, cooperation in all domains and broader people-to-people</p>

		<p>contacts. India's relations with Sri Lanka witnessed all round progress during the period through regular exchange of visits, including at the highest levels.</p> <p>The relationship is marked by growing cooperation in the field of trade and investment, infrastructure development, education, culture, health, tourism, agriculture and defence. Strong economic ties underpin the relationship, encompassing development partnership, Lines of Credit and joint ventures for development of bilateral economic projects in Sri Lanka. The two countries also continue to cooperate on various regional and global issues.</p>
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