

SUO MOTO STATEMENT BY EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER
IN BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT ON 5 DECEMBER, 1996
ON THE VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA TO INDIA

His Excellency Mr. Jiang Zemin, President of the People's Republic of China, paid a State visit to India from 28 November, 1996 to 1 December, 1996 at the invitation of the President of India. President Jiang had meetings with our President, Vice-President, Speaker, Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition in Parliament and myself. He had detailed talks with Prime Minister. He also met leaders of political parties. Separately, I had a long meeting with my counter-part, Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen. These talks were held in a cordial and friendly atmosphere. The Chinese President also interacted with the business community and visited Agra.

2. This was the first visit by a President of the People's Republic of China to India. The visit was a part of the continuing process of dialogue at the highest level initiated with the visit of former Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, to China in 1988. Our former President, Shri R. Venkataraman, and former Prime Minister, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, have visited China. We have received Premier Li Peng and other high-ranking Chinese leaders in India. The Parliaments of the two countries have maintained contacts with the visits of the Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha, Hon'ble Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha to China and their Chinese counter-parts to India. These high-level exchanges have permitted us to discuss, in a constructive manner, all relevant issues in our bilateral relations.
3. In recent years, India-China relations have acquired maturity and substance. While continuing to address outstanding issues, including the boundary question, we have sought to expand mutually beneficial cooperation in all areas. Hon'ble Members will agree with me that this policy, pursued over last several years, reflects the consensus in this House which transcends party lines.
4. Both sides have expressed their satisfaction with the outcome of the visit, which afforded us an opportunity to assess the current state of relations and the prospects for our relationship until the end of the century and beyond. During their talks, Prime Minister and President Jiang agreed that India and China should work towards a constructive and cooperative relationship, while continuing to address outstanding differences. They also shared the assessment that friendly

and good-neighbourly relations between India and China served the fundamental interests of the two peoples.

5. A significant outcome of the visit has been the signing of the Agreement on Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas. This agreement is built on the foundation of the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas, signed in September 1993 during the visit of the then Prime Minister, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, to China. The Agreement of 1993 committed the two countries to respect the line of actual control (LAC) and take a series of steps to clarify the LAC, devise additional confidence building measures (CBMs) and move towards force reduction in border areas. The present Agreement on CBMs stipulates that neither side shall use its military capability against the other side. It lays down some important guiding principles for reduction or limitation of identified categories of military forces and armaments to mutually agreed ceilings within mutually agreed geographical zones along the LAC. The depth of the geographical zones as well as the ceilings will be decided in subsequent negotiations in the Joint Working Group and the Expert Group. The Agreement also provides for a number of important CBMs, which will help in preserving peace and tranquillity in border areas. The two sides have also agreed to accelerate the process of the clarification of the entire LAC, including through an exchange of maps.

6. The Agreement on CBMs represents a major step forward in our efforts to ensure that the India-China border areas remain peaceful. We believe that the full implementation of the two agreements will help in advancing our agenda of developing an institutionalized framework for consultations, cooperation and maintenance of peace and tranquillity in border areas, and, for moving towards force reduction or limitation, along the India-China LAC in a manner which fully safeguards our national security interests.

7. During discussions between Prime Minister and the Chinese President, the two sides have agreed to continue their efforts to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question. This understanding is reflected in the Agreement on CBMs. The new Agreement, like the Agreement of 1993, makes due provision for the fact that its implementation will be without prejudice to the respective positions of India and China on the boundary question.

12. The visit of the Chinese President to India represents a significant step forward in the process of steady improvement of our relations with our largest neighbour, China. It provided the two countries an opportunity to assess the present state of relationship at the highest level and also move towards a long-term basis for a cooperative and constructive relationship. While reiterating their determination to resolve the boundary question in a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable manner, the two sides agreed, in the interim, on concrete measures to ensure that peace and tranquility was effectively maintained in the border areas. We also utilized the visit to convey to the Chinese side our concerns on some vital issues affecting the unity, territorial integrity and security of India.
