

[English]

Dredging at Kandla Port

*214. SHRI VIJAY PATEL : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Kandla Port Trust has formulated a plan or project for dredging the silt;

(b) if so, the estimated cost thereof;

(c) whether the National Ship Design Research Centre has been asked to design the dredger for this purpose; and

(d) if so, the present position and the total time required to build up the dredger and to hand over the same to the Kandla Port Trust?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) The estimated cost is Rs. 29 crores for 1996-97 and Rs. 30 crores for 1997-98. Maintenance dredging is done by Dredging Corporation of India throughout the year.

(c) Yes Sir.

(d) It is proposed to replace dredger M.D. Kutch Vallabh at a cost of Rs. 150 crores during the 9th Plan period.

[Translation]

Hepatitis

*215. SHRI RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY :

SHRI MANI BHAI RAMJIBHAI CHAUDHARI :

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Desh mein Hepatitis Rog Bade Paimane par Failne ki Ashanka" appearing in the 'Rashtriya Sahara' dated January 7, 1997;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the remedial steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The news-item talks of the danger posed by Hepatitis-B Virus in the country and suggests remedial measures for prevention.

(c) An Expert Committee has given certain recommendations in regard to the introduction of Hepatitis-B under the immunization programme. It has been decided to immunize the hospital workers of Central Government Hospitals in the first instance.

[English]

Population Control

*216. SHRI MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether any targets have been fixed to control population during Ninth Five Year Plan;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether uniform laws do not exist to control the population;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) whether there are certain communities, which have been exempted or are not bound to accept the advice to check the population and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) and (b) The IX Plan document, which will include Department-wise policies and outlays has not yet been finalised by the Planning Commission. The Approach Paper to the Ninth Plan prepared by the Planning Commission has duly emphasised the urgent need to control rate of growth of population.

(c) to (e) The National Family Welfare Programme is voluntary in nature. The Programme aims to provide information as well as facilities to all the eligible couples irrespective of community. The strategy adopted under the programme is to motivate the people to accept the small family norms.

National Sports Federation

*217. SHRIMATI SARADA TADIPARTHI : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the National Sports Federation has failed to lead the country towards rapid development in the field of sports;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the measures proposed to be taken to broadbase the sporting activities to bring a sense of national pride?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S.R. BOMMAI) : (a) and (b) It would not be correct to say that the National Sports Federations have failed to lead the country towards rapid development in the field of sports. While it may be difficult to pinpoint any definite set of reasons for India's poor performance at the International level, they could broadly be identified as under :

(i) Lack of long term commitment for the development of sports in India at the National and State level;

- (ii) Non-availability of infrastructural facilities right upto the grass root level including training areas, standard sports equipment etc.;
- (iii) Inadequate monetary resources; and
- (iv) Lack of integration of Physical Education and sports with educational curriculum.

(c) The measures proposed to be taken for broadbasing of sports activities to bring a sense of national pride include : effective integration of sports and games with the educational curriculum; particular emphasis on promotion of sporting activities in rural areas and on creation of sports infrastructure throughout the country; and a set of various incentives and awards to sports-persons who win medals at the International level.

[Translation]

Visit by Cyprus President

*218. SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM :
SHRIMATI BHAVNABEN DEVRAJ BHAI
CHIKHALIA :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the President of Cyprus had visited India recently;
- (b) if so, the details of talks held between him and Indian leaders regarding trade and economic matters; and
- (c) the extent to which relations are likely to be strengthened between India and Cyprus as a result of this visit?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) Yes Sir, The President of Cyprus, Mr. Glafcos Clerides visited India from 10-15 February, 1997.

(b) The talks between President Clerides and Indian leaders were wide-ranging, encompassing different aspects of Indo-Cypriot relations as well as cooperation between the two countries in the multilateral arena. The talks covered, inter alia, a number of political issues, including those of special interest to either side. It also afforded an opportunity to our two countries to build on the traditionally close political ties between us by deepening our economic relations. Recognising the opportunities ahead for increasing Indo-Cypriot trade and economic co-operation, President Clerides brought with him a business delegation from Cyprus. Discussions were held on ways that Indian companies could expand business relations with Cyprus in the context of the latter's impending admission into the European Union. During the visit an agreement was signed between the Cypriot Foreign Minister and our Minister of Surface Transport on Maritime cooperation.

(c) The visit of the Cypriot President has strengthened bilateral ties between India and Cyprus by re-enforcing a traditionally close relationship. The two sides reiterated their traditional support to each other on bilateral and multilateral issues of particular importance to either country, including the question of permanent membership of the UN Security Council. The visit of President Clerides also provided an opportunity to reaffirm our shared commitment to NAM. In this context the Cypriot Foreign Minister confirmed that he would attend the NAM Ministerial Conference in New Delhi next month. The visit also paved the way for a closer economic partnership which will be particularly useful as Cyprus moves towards joining the European Union. Our future ties should be considerably enhanced by the role Cyprus can play as a gateway for expanding India's economic relations with Europe.

[English]

Tolls on National Highways/Bypasses and Bridges

*219. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE :
SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO :

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

- (a) whether there is a proposal under consideration of the Government to levy tolls on national highways, bypasses and bridges;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the amount likely to accrue to the Government annually on account of this toll tax; and
- (d) the justification and reasons for levying such a toll tax by the Union Government?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. It is proposed to levy toll on improved 4 lane sections of National Highways, bypasses and bridges.

(c) As the toll will be fixed considering the cost of facility, savings to the user and the period of concession, it will vary from case to case. It is, therefore, not possible to give the accrual annually.

(d) As improvements to the National Highways would result in substantial savings to the road user, a part of such savings will be collected as toll.

Financial Assistance to Private Hospitals

*220. CHAUDHARY RAMCHANDRA BENDA : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the Government have provided any financial assistance to certain private hospitals; and