

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) and (b) The question of transport between India and Bangladesh including bus service between Calcutta and Dhaka has been raised with the Government of Bangladesh. In this context, it has been decided to hold discussions on a Motor Vehicles Agreement between the two countries.

As far as direct rail link between the two countries is concerned, at present there are four interchange points/routes in operation between India and Bangladesh where only freight traffic is interchanged. There is no proposal for passenger train service between India and Bangladesh.

HUDCO Office at Tripura

50. **SHRI BAJU BAN RIYAN:** Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government propose to open a regional office of HUDCO in Tripura;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the steps taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (d) the time by which the office is likely to be opened?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (DR. U. VENKATESWARLU): (a) to (c) HUDCO decides to open a regional Office depending on requirements of the State. Earlier HUDCO had considered a request from the Government of Tripura for opening a Regional Office in Agartala, HUDCO clarified to the State Government that the existing Regional Office of HUDCO at Guwahati is effectively catering to the requirements of Tripura. However, to develop a closer rapport with the implementing agencies of Tripura, HUDCO is exploring the possibility of establishing a Development Office at Agartala.

(d) The proposal is yet to be approved by the Board of Directors of HUDCO. HUDCO will be advised to consider the matter and take an early decision.

Drinking Water Scheme in Gujarat

51. **DR. A.K. PATEL:**

SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VERMA:

Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether any drinking water scheme has been launched by the Union Government in Gujarat with the help of Netherland Government;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the details of funds sanctioned and received by the Government of Gujarat so far for the purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (DR. U.

VENKATESWARLU): (a) The Government of Gujarat has launched drinking water schemes in Gujarat with funds provided by the Netherlands Government.

(b) The details are as under:-

(i) Lathi-Liliya Regional Water Supply Scheme in district Amreli costing Rs. 728 lakhs with Dutch assistance of Dutch Guilder (DGL) 9,900 million (grant);

(ii) Sami-harij Regional Water Supply Scheme in district Mehsana costing Rs. 2481.20 lakhs with Dutch assistance of DGL 33.750 million (grant) and

(iii) Santalpur Regional Water Supply Scheme in district Banaskantha costing Rs. 1045.60 lakhs with Dutch assistance of DGL 14.210 million (grant).

(c) As per available information, the Government of Gujarat has incurred an expenditure of Rs. 36.93 crores upto September 1996. The Netherlands Government provides assistance to the Government of India at the rate of 85% of the expenditure incurred, i.e. Rs. 31.39 crores.

Bilateral Issues with Neighbours

52. **SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY:** Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government have taken fresh initiatives to resolve several outstanding bilateral issues with our neighbouring countries during the recent years;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the agenda for action for 1997-98 in normalising and strengthening our relations with neighbouring countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) to (c)

Nepal and Bhutan:

The Prime Minister of India paid an official goodwill visit to Nepal from 5-7 June, 1997. This was preceded by the Nepalese foreign Minister's visit to India in August, 1996 and their Prime Minister's visit in February, 1996.

2. The Trade Treaty between India and Nepal which was valid for five years was revised and renewed through exchange of letters on 3 December, 1996. India has agreed to provide access, free of customs duties and quantitative restrictions, to all articles manufactured in Nepal except three group of items, such as alcohol, tobacco and cosmetics. Nepal's request for an additional transit route to Bangladesh via Phulbari was accepted. It was also agreed that the modalities and working arrangements will be decided within two months. The new arrangements would be reviewed six months thereafter.

3. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed during Prime Minister's visit on civil aviation matters. It has been agreed to revise the existing capacity entitlement from 4000