

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the outcome of the Ninth Session of the SAARC Council of Ministers recently held at Maldives;

(b) whether the issue of regional free trade was initiated by India during the meet especially in the context of changed perspective following Gulf War;

(c) if so, the response of the other member countries thereto and the specific decisions taken thereon;

(d) whether any recommendations made by the SAARC in the field of environment; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI): (a) Among the important outcomes of Ninth Session of SAARC Council of Ministers at Male from July 3 to 4, 1991, were the decisions to set up a Technical Committee on Tourism to promote cooperation in this field and a High-Level Committee on Economic Cooperation to promote regional cooperation in Trade, Manufactures and Services.

(b) and (c) The possibility of moving towards a regional free trade was mentioned by India and supported by some other SAARC countries in the Ministerial-level statements made at the 9th Session of the Council of Ministers. The decision taken on this subject was to set up a High-Level Committee on Economic Cooperation to examine the recommendations of the Study on Regional Cooperation on Trade, Manufactures and Services carried out by an Expert Group, identify measures for immediate action and oversee their implementation. The Study recommends a general freeing of trade in the region through the application of standstill on tariff and non-tariff barriers and their gradual roll-back.

(d) and (e) SAARC is presently engaged in completing two Studies one on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the protection and preservation of the Environment and the other on the Greenhouse Effect. These Studies, which are to be completed soon,

will contain recommendations for regional action in this field. In addition, it has been decided to observe 1992 as the SAARC Year of Environment.

#### **Merger of Departments of Posts and Telecommunications**

3904. SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH:  
SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR  
GANGWAR:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to merge the Departments of Posts and Telecommunications into a single Department;

(b) whether separation of Posts and Telecommunications at Board and Department level was suggested by the Department of Administrative Reforms or any other Expert Committee; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P.V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. A high power Committee "Committee on Telecommunications" constituted under the Chairmanship of Shri H.C. Sarin in 1981 made the following recommendations in this regard which were implemented in 1985.

—the telecommunication branch may be reorganised into a separate Government Department of Telecommunications with its own separate Telecommunication Board which should have the necessary delegated powers for its efficient functioning. The Postal Wing after separating may be suitably reorganised into a separate Government Department of Posts. Both Departments should function under a common Ministry of the Government of India which should be the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications.

—the Department of Telecommunications would be headed by Secretary Telecommunications who should also function as the Chairman of the Telecommunications Board. The Department of Posts would be similarly

headed by Secretary Posts with similar functions and responsibilities.

**Telephone Connections on Priority Basis in Gurgaon**

3905. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of telephone connections sanctioned on priority basis in Gurgaon Telephone Exchange during January 1, 1990 to June 30, 1991;

(b) the total number of telephones out of them installed so far in Gurgaon;

(c) the reasons for delay in installing the remaining telephone connections in Gurgaon; and

(d) the time by which all such connections will be provided?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P.V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) 519 telephone connections were sanctioned on priority basis in Gurgaon during the period.

(b) Out of these, 69 telephone connections have been installed so far.

(c) and (d) While action to provide these telephone connections was under way, some cases of fake out-of-turn sanction orders were brought to the notice by Telecom. Field Units. An investigation by Vigilance Branch was ordered in May 1991 to detect fake cases and action to provide telephones on out of turn sanctions was therefore, withheld pending completion of investigation. Further action is possible only on receipt of the investigation report. However, in respect of recommendations made by Hon'ble M.Ps against their quota, further action for provision of telephones has been initiated separately. These will be installed progressively on priority subject to technical feasibility.

**Kidnappings in Delhi**

3906. SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of incidents of kidnappings that took place in Delhi

during this year along with the details thereof; and

(b) the remedial measures taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI M. M. JACOB): (a) 384 cases of kidnapping have been reported in Delhi during the period from 1.1.1991 to 31.7.1991. Of these cases 112 have been cancelled and 11 have been filed as untraced. Of the remaining 261 cases, 30 are pending trial and 231 are pending investigation.

(b) Among the measures taken are surveillance of known criminals, increased patrolling, proper investigation of reported cases and offering of rewards in some cases. Raids are also conducted in areas of ill repute to trace out kidnapped girls.

**Trifurcation of N.W. Telecom. Circle**

3907. SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a decision had been taken to trifurcate the erstwhile N.W. Telecom. Circle comprising the States of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Union Territory of Chandigarh with headquarters at Chandigarh, Ambala and Shimla;

(b) if so, whether the orders for shifting the headquarters of Punjab Telecom. Circle from Ambala to Chandigarh have not been executed so far; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor and by when the process is likely to be completed?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P. V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) No, Sir. The orders for Trifurcation of N.W. Telecom. Circle were ordered in April, 1986 to the extent as under:—

(i) Formation of an independent Telecom. Circle for the State of Punjab.