

Visit by Crown Prince of Afghanistan

2408. SHRI RAGHUNADAN LAL BHATIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Crown Prince of Afghanistan paid a visit to India recently; and

(b) the steps being taken to improve Indo-Afghan relations in the field of external affairs and trade?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. The visit took place in the month of December, 1972.

(b) Our relations with Afghanistan are extremely friendly and cordial. Both countries have a common approach to many world issues and are working together in the non-aligned and other world forms. Both countries are working for regional co-operation and durable peace in the area.

With a view further to strengthen our bilateral economic and cultural cooperation, the two countries established in 1969 a Joint Commission at Ministerial level and a number of projects have been implemented, while others are in progress.

India's trade with Afghanistan is regulated in accordance with a Trade Agreement which is concluded from year to year. In the year 1971-72, the volume of trade between our two countries amounted to Rs. 14.64 crores. The trade is on the increase and the figures for the period April to August 1972, show that it had reached Rs. 18 crores during those five months.

Visit by Foreign Minister of Spain

2409. SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Foreign Minister of Spain paid a visit to India in December 1972;

(b) if so, the nature of discussions held; and

(c) the salient features of the decisions arrived?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). The talks surveyed the international scene with special emphasis on recent developments in Europe and in the Indian subcontinent. They also covered matters of bilateral interest and Indo-Spanish trade and cooperation. Copies of the Joint Communique issued at the end of the talks, indicating the agreements reached, are placed on the table of the House. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-4426/73].

Industrial Potential of Bharat Aluminium plant at Korba.

2410. SHRI RANABHADUR SINGH: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has announced at Korba that the Bharat Aluminium Company's plant at Korba in Bilaspur District would start production of Aluminium from March this year;

(b) if so, its cost, production; and

(c) the concessions being given to industrialists for encouraging them to launch their units in Korba?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEV PRASAD): (a) The first phase of the Korba (MP) Aluminium Project viz. the Alumina Plant is expected to be commissioned in April, 1973. The second phase of the Project viz. the Smelter is expected to be commissioned in phases commencing from the end of 1974.