

THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS: (SHRI M.M. JACOB): (a) and (b) According to information available, some terrorists fired on a passenger train on June 15, 1991, near Railway Station Badowal on the Ludhiana-Ferozepur section killing fifty passengers. On the same day another group of terrorists fired on a train at Railway Station Kila Rai Pur on the Ludhiana Takhal section killing 25 passengers.

(c) (e) The State Government have paid on ex-gratia grant of Rs. 50,000/- to the next of kin of 23 persons killed, and is making payment to the legal heir of one other victim on receipt of details. In 25 other cases, the victims belonged to other States and the State Government are ascertaining particulars about their legal heirs from the District Magistrates concerned. 17 persons killed were Punjab Government employees and payment of ex-gratia and other relief under the service Rules are being made by the respective departments concerned. The remaining 9 persons have not been identified.

[Translation]

Temporary Workers in Telephone Department

3901. SHRI RAM AWADH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of temporary workers employed in the Telephone Department;

(b) the number of workers belonging to Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes among them;

(c) the number of years for which those workers have been working in the Department;

(d) whether the Government have any scheme to make them permanent in the Department;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P.V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) to (c) The information is being

collected from field units and will be laid on the table of the House.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) Yes, Sir, on availability of requisite number of Group 'D' posts.

(f) Does not arise.

[English]

Outcome of talks held during Maldives meet of SAARC

3902. SHRI DHARMANNA MONDAYYA SADUL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the issue of establishment of Nuclear Free Zone in South Asia was discussed during the recently concluded SAARC Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries Meet at Maldives;

(b) if so, the outcome thereof;

(c) whether the Foreign Secretary held any talks with his Pakistani counterpart during the Meet; and

(d) if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The two Foreign Secretaries discussed bilateral issues, including the schedule of meetings leading to the Fifth Round of Foreign Secretary level talks. India's Foreign Secretary expressed concern about Pakistan's propaganda on the Kashmir issue and its efforts to internationalise it. It was also pointed out to Pakistan that its assistance to terrorism directed against India continued unabated. India's Foreign Secretary touched upon but did not discuss in any substantive details, the Pakistan Prime Minister's recent proposal for a five nation conference to discuss nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia.

(See 197-A to 197-C)

Meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers at Maldives

3903. SHRI SHRAVAN KUMAR PATEL: SHRI SARAT CHANDRA PATTANAYAK:

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