

5. India is unable to export more tobacco because of the declining domestic base.
6. Domestic cigarette industry has not faced international competition.
7. There is lack of growth in the domestic cigarette industry due to discriminatory tariff structure for tobacco products sold in the country.

(c) to (e). Government has a clear cut policy for development and exports of tobacco and tobacco products. The policy has been designed having regard to various considerations like the international demand and supply situation, the interest of the tobacco growers and tobacco industry workers, and the considerations of public health. As regards optimising the exports of tobacco products the following measures are being taken:-

1. Giving wide publicity to Indian cigarettes and other tobacco products through participation in international exhibition.
2. Encouraging trade delegations to purchase Indian tobacco.
3. Permitting export oriented units for export of cigarettes.
4. Permitting foreign investment in cigarette industry mainly for export of cigarettes.
5. Encouraging manufacturers to establish ware-houses in CIS countries for stock and sale of cigarettes.
6. Encouraging cigarette exports to Russia.

The Tobacco Board is carefully examining the recommendations made in the Report and necessary steps as considered suitable in the light of the policy of the Government would be taken.

### **New Sky Policy**

1038. SHRI DHARMANNA MONDAYYA SADUL:  
SHRI GOVINDRAO NIKAM:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal for a new sky policy; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Do not arise.

*[Translation]*

### **Financial assistance to Industrial units In Maharashtra**

1039. SHRI VILASRAO NAGNATHRAO GUNDEWAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state the amount of the assistance sanctioned and disbursed by all India Financial and Investment Institutions to industries in backward areas of Maharashtra during the last two years and the current year, so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY): The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House to the ex-

tent available and permissible under the Rules.

### **SAARC Finance Minister's Conference**

1040. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether he attended the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) Finance Minister's Conference held in Dhaka earlier this month;

(b) if so, the details of the strategies to improve the social and economic well-being and alleviation of poverty of the people of the SAARC region evolved at the conference;

(c) whether he also discussed with the Bangladesh Government the long-pending issue of having a corridor across Bangladesh territory for transportation of goods and passengers between the land-locked north-eastern region and rest of the country;

(d) if so, the reaction of that Government thereto; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY):  
(a) Yes, Sir. The FM attended the Conference.

(b) The Conference, noting that Poverty alleviation strategies of all member countries emphasize access to credit, investment in social development and rural infrastructure, and employment generation, recognised the need to focus on the problems of the hardcore poor. It stressed social mobilisation strategies

that ensure community participation, empowerment of women and the poor, sustainable development, decentralisation of power, participatory planning, and ownership of development programmes by the poor. It also agreed that steps should be taken to bring about a closer interface between government agencies, NGOs and community organisations engaged in poverty alleviation. The Finance Ministers reiterated their commitment to policies and programmes that would; in the short term alleviate poverty in their countries and would lead to eradication of poverty by the year 2002. They affirmed their resolve to mobilise resources required for this effort commensurate with the magnitude of the problem, through policies conducive to such resource mobilisation. They emphasized that the reform programmes should facilitate the acceleration of efforts at poverty eradication, while ensuring that they do not adversely impact on the poor in the short term.

The Ministers decided that a three-tier mechanism should be set up which would act as a forum for exchange of information on experiences of the SAARC countries in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes.

(c) to (e). The issue of transit across Bangladesh to and from our North-Eastern States was discussed with Bangladesh authorities at the higher levels. It was emphasized that this transit access would be a significant source of service of export earnings for Bangladesh and would help in expanding their transport sector, particularly ports and railways. The Bangladesh authorities indicated that they were willing to comprehensively examine bilateral issues.