

in 1975 to advise regarding the modification to the Lepers Act, 1898. The Sub-Committee had recommended repeal of the Lepers's Act, 1898 and for incorporation of the necessary provisions in a Model Public Health Act. As Health is a State subject, the State Governments were advised in November, 1979 to consider taking up suitable legislation for amendment/annulment of the Act, 1898. Model Public Health legislation is in the draft stage.

Joint US Egypt Defence Exercises in Indian Ocean

421. SHRI RAM SINGH YADAV. Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state.

(a) whether it is a fact that US Air and Naval forces and Egyptian forces have decided to carry out defence exercises jointly in Indian ocean during November and December, 1980;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the Government of USA have decided that its A-7 and F-11 bombers stationed at NATO bases in Europe will also participate in these defence exercises;

(c) whether it is also a fact that in principle Indian Government consider Indian Ocean a peace zone;

(d) whether the proposed defence exercises by air and naval forces of America are likely to adversely affect the peace and security of Indian ocean region, India and other littoral countries; and

(e) the policy adopted by the Government of India in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO): (a) and (b) According to reports, 1450 US troops reached Cairo on November 11 to conduct joint exercises with Egyptian troops under simulated combat conditions. The exercises are expected to last about 12 days. There joint exercises are reportedly to be held only over Egyptian territory and not in the

Indian Ocean. A-7 tactical aircraft and support helicopters are to participate in the exercises but we have no information as to whether any of these aircraft will be drawn from NATO bases in Europe.

(c) to (e) India has reiterated on several occasions its firm support for the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace in terms of the UN-Resolution of 1971. India has consistently opposed Great Power military presence in the Indian Ocean which introduces new tensions and conflicts in our neighbourhood and constitutes a threat to peace and stability. India is working with other Non-aligned littoral and hinterland States to preserve the concept contained in the 1971 Declaration which envisages the elimination of Great Power military presence from the Indian Ocean. India supports the convening of the Indian Ocean Conference in 1981. with a view to implementation of the 1971 Declaration.

New Lines in Madhya Pradesh

422. DR. VASANT KUMAR PANDIT: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of proposals which have been sent by Madhya Pradesh Government for (i) new lines, (ii) conversion to Broad-gauge, (iii) extension of existing Railway lines, (iv) completion of on-going surveys, and (v) new surveys;

(b) the decision taken and the progress achieved so far;

(c) the progress achieved on Lalitpur-Sitgrauli-Khajuraho-Satna-Rewa line and Barwadih-Karonji lines;

(d) whether the survey has started on the new proposal of Guna-Shivpuri-Gwalior-Etawah line; and

(e) the surveys from Madhya Pradesh which are under reference to the Planning Commission for clearance?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MALLIKARJUN): (a) Prior to