

On the subject of Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in various fields, the two sides agreed to hold expert level talks on civilian prisoners, railway traffic and starting the bus service between Delhi and Lahore. The two sides also agreed that fishermen who innocently stray into each other's territorial waters should be released immediately on completion of necessary procedures. Both India and Pakistan released fishermen in their custody following these talks. Liberalisation of the visa regime was also discussed. Following expert level talks on bus service between Delhi and Lahore, an agreement and protocol for the regulation of this service was signed between the Governments of India and Pakistan in Islamabad on 17 February, 1999. The inaugural Delhi-Lahore run of the bus service took place on 20th February 99. Prime Minister visited Pakistan on this occasion.

On the subjects of Siachen, Sir Creek and Tulbul Navigation Project, Government gave reasonable, practical and realistic proposals to Pakistan. It has been agreed to continue discussions on all identified subjects.

There has been some progress during the first round of discussions in the composite dialogue process. India's approach to this process is positive and constructive and we look forward to engaging Pakistan in a sustained dialogue on all aspects of our relations, i.e. cooperation, confidence building, and resolution of outstanding issues.

A strong impetus to the comprehensive dialogue process has been provided by Prime Minister's visit to Pakistan on the inaugural run of the Delhi-Lahore Bus Service. In the talks between Prime Minister and his Pakistani counterpart Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, it was decided that the process should be intensified.

The date of the next round of official level talks under the composite dialogue process will be decided through mutual consultation between the two Governments.

Gloomy Picture of State Finances

350. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Planning Commission in its recent report has pointed out a gloomy picture of the State finances pointing out that the States Plans are funded almost exclusively by borrowings; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government as a follow-up measure on the report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Borrowings, on an average, accounted for 84 per cent of total resources for financing the State Plans of 25 States in 1998-99. In addition, a large part of Central Assistance which accounted for 43 per cent of States' Plan resources

is also in the form of loans to the States. Planning Commission has been impressing upon States to generate higher level of own resources through increase in tax and non-tax revenue and also by containing non-plan revenue expenditure.

Use of Hindi in Indian High Commissions and Embassies Abroad

[Translation]

351. SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Hindi is not used predominantly in the Indian High Commissions and embassies;

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to propagate the use of Hindi;

(c) the percentage of amount spent on Hindi books, newspapers, magazines etc. in embassies out of the total allocation made for magazines for the last three years; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to make available bilingual forms for all the forms available in English in the Indian embassies?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a) While the Ministry of External Affairs/Missions and Posts abroad deals primarily with foreign countries and officials, the Missions/Posts are, on a continuing basis, making all efforts for popularisation and progressive use of Hindi abroad. Interactions with the Indian community abroad, including during National Day celebrations, are in Hindi.

(b) The Ministry has a well formulated scheme of propagation of Hindi abroad including dissemination of Hindi literature comprising books in Hindi on various subjects such as Indian culture, art, literature, language, history, philosophy to Indian Missions abroad for building Hindi libraries in the Missions as also for donating to educational institutions and voluntary organisations engaged in promotion and propagation of Hindi abroad. Hindi teaching material including text books dictionaries, audio-visual cassettes, computer Hindi software, CD ROM etc. are also being sent. The Missions on their part maintain close contact with local organisations and Indian community etc., and fulfil their Hindi language related requirements. They also coordinate the work relating to selection of foreign students for studying Hindi at Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra, on Government of India scholarships. Some of our Missions have been organising Hindi conferences, literary events, Hindi essay competitions to promote Hindi in the countries of their accreditation. Some Missions abroad conduct classes for local people keen to learn Hindi. Liberal financial assistance is given to the organisations engaged in the promotion and propagation of Hindi abroad.

Hindi forms an integral part of the Foreign Service Institute training programme. Intensive training about the Official Language Policy of the Government of India and how to implement it, is given to the officials going on posting abroad.

(c) Approximately 15%.